

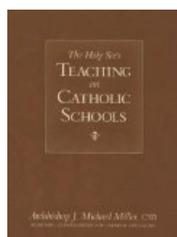
## the Catholic Educator

Recovering an Authentically Catholic  
Philosophy of Education

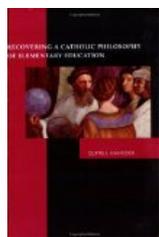
### 4 Books Every Catholic Educator Should Read

Posted on March 7, 2011 by theCatholicEducator

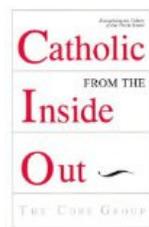
In previous posts I have claimed that a renewal of Catholic schools fundamentally requires a recovery and renewal of an authentic Catholic educational philosophy. I've come to this conclusion after twelve years of working as a teacher and administrator in Catholic schools. Experiences, discussions, and books I've read all, of course, play a role in shaping my view of the situation in which Catholic education finds itself. So in order to both give the reader some background into what has shaped my views and to provide the reader with the ideas which I believe are necessary for the recovery and renewal of a Catholic philosophy of education, I offer the following books as suggested reading.



1) *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools* by Archbishop Michael Miller. This little booklet reminds us from the start of the Church's role in education. Quoting from Vatican II's *Gravissimum Educationis (Declaration on Christian Education)*, Archbishop Miller notes that "[t]o fulfill the mandate she has received from her divine founder of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ, Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it, insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling. Therefore, she has a role in the progress and development of education." Archbishop Miller, drawing from the Church's post-conciliar publications, suggests five essential marks of Catholic schools. Of course, every Catholic educator should also, at some point, read all the Church documents on education that Archbishop Miller lists. However, his little booklet is a great place to start.

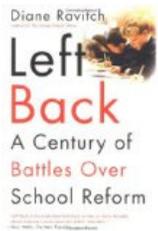


2) *Recovering a Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education* by Curtis L. Hancock. Professor Hancock teaches philosophy at Rockhurst University in Kansas City. His book is the only book that I am aware of that lays out a philosophy of **elementary** education, and one of only a handful (since the 1970's) that discuss the more general topic of Catholic educational philosophy. This book is truly a work of philosophy; do not expect to find in this book suggestions for the classroom. However, a thorough understanding of the educational philosophy outlined by Professor Hancock will nonetheless lead one to desire change in educational theories, content, and methods. This book also provides a nice bibliography on issues related to Catholic educational philosophy.



3) *Catholic From the Inside Out: Evangelizing the Culture of Our Parish School* by The Core Group. This book is a gem. It is both the story of one school's effort to renew its school and it is a little primer on Catholic educational philosophy. The parish decided to renew its parish school and created a core group to spearhead the revival. The book examines some of the principles of what they call "public school progressive education," and how those principles are contrary to a Catholic worldview. They also tell you what they did differently at their school from the perspective of both theory and practice. This book is a real eye opener and it is convincing because it is not just a book of educational philosophy but the story of their school's renewal. If you are looking to start reading about

educational philosophy and how such fundamental ideas can impact practice, this is a great place to start. It is an easy and enjoyable read.



4) *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform* by Dianne Ravitch. This is the only book on my short list that is not specifically Catholic. It is, however, a great introduction to the history of schools in the United States over the last one hundred years. The central theme of the book is the transformation of our public schools. The author traces this transformation from an academic tradition to a progressive anti-intellectual tradition in public schooling. I contend that it is crucial to understand this movement in the public schools because in the last 40 years our Catholic schools have moved in the same direction and are, in many ways (too many ways), indistinguishable from public schools.

I hope that you enjoy these books and that they will inspire you to reflect on what Catholic schools might again one day be.

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