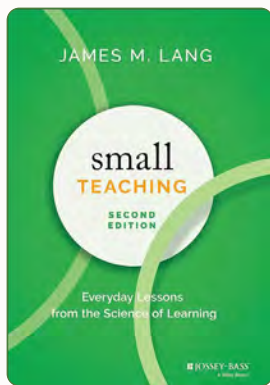


---

---

**Book Review—**  
*Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons  
From the Science of Learning  
(2nd Edition)*



Polly Mayer, MEd, ET/P®

**James M. Lang**  
*Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons From the Science  
of Learning, 2nd Edition*

Jossey-Bass (2021)  
288 pages (hardback) \$31.95, (Kindle) \$19.00

*Are you looking for practical guidance on how to implement the latest cognitive research to support positive change for your clients? This book offers small, manageable changes to improve your ET sessions.*

## BOOK REVIEW

Recently, post-pandemic, I find that I'm drawn to educational titles with words like "small," "bite-size," and "hacks"—I'm interested in the idea that a minimalist approach may offer students who struggle with learning a better entry point. Often, educational therapy students will see changes, and experience success, more quickly when they are offered the chance to make a tiny change in their approach to learning.

In *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons From the Science of Learning*, James M. Lang, a professor of English and the director of the D'Amour Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption College, offers a refreshing and pragmatic approach to enhancing the learning experience through simple, yet powerful, pedagogical strategies. Lang's book is a compelling exploration of how minor adjustments in teaching practices can yield significant improvements in student engagement, understanding, and retention.

The central theme of the book revolves around the concept of "small teaching"—the idea that incremental changes to instructional methods can have a profound impact on student

learning outcomes. Lang meticulously dissects this concept into three, well-researched, categories: retrieval practice, spacing, and interleaving. By incorporating these principles into daily teaching routines, educational therapists can create a more dynamic and effective learning environment.

One of the book's strengths lies in Lang's ability to bridge the gap between educational research and practical application. The author provides a wealth of evidence from cognitive science to support his recommendations yet presents them in a manner accessible to educators across disciplines. Lang masterfully weaves real-world examples and anecdotes from his classroom experience into the narrative, making the book not only informative but also engaging and relatable.

One of the best chapters is Lang's exploration of "Retrieval Practice," where he delves into the science behind how students remember and learn information. The reader gains valuable insights into the power of frequent low-stakes testing, quizzes, and other retrieval activities. Lang convincingly argues that these strategies not only reinforce knowledge but also contribute to better long-term retention.

Another compelling aspect of *Small Teaching* is the emphasis on creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, which is one of the best ways that educational therapists can support their clients. Lang advocates for the importance of connecting with students on a personal level, understanding their diverse backgrounds, and leveraging that knowledge to tailor teaching methods effectively. This humanistic approach adds depth to the book, reinforcing the idea that teaching is not just about delivering content but fostering meaningful connections with students.

While the book primarily targets higher education instructors, the principles of small teaching are adaptable to various educational settings. For educational therapists, Lang's insights could provide a valuable roadmap for modifying and refining intervention practices and offering our clients opportunities for academic success.

## REFERENCES

Lang, J. M. (2021). *Small teaching: Everyday lessons from the science of learning* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

**Polly Mayer, MEd, ET/P®**, is an associate professor in the School of Education and director of the MA Educational Therapy Program at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, CA. She was the clinic director at Raskob Learning Institute and the director of the Educational Therapy Program at Holy Names University. She has a small private ET practice serving high school and college students with EF, reading, and writing challenges. Polly enjoys birding, walking, and playing the piano.