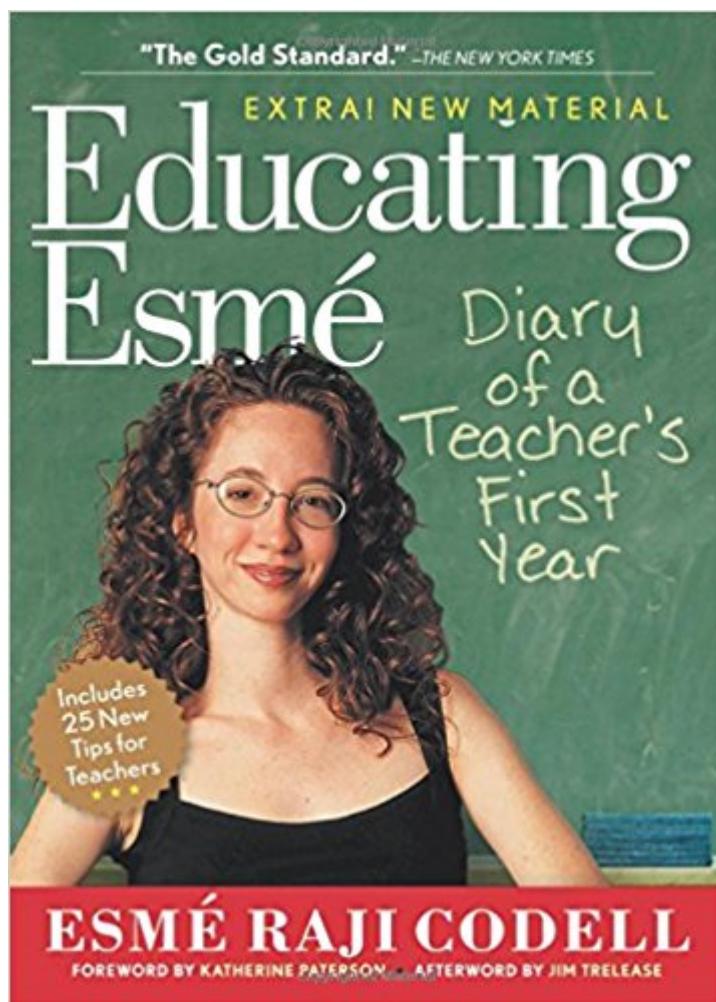


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# **Educating Esmé: Diary Of A Teacher's First Year, Expanded Edition**



## Synopsis

A must-read for parents, new teachers, and classroom veterans, *Educating Esmé* is the exuberant diary of Esmé Raji Codell's first year teaching in a Chicago public school. Fresh-mouthed and free-spirited, the irrepressible Madame Esmé—as she prefers to be called—does the cha-cha during multiplication tables, roller-skates down the hallways, and puts on rousing performances with at-risk students in the library. Her diary opens a window into a real-life classroom from a teacher's perspective. While battling bureaucrats, gang members, abusive parents, and her own insecurities, this gifted young woman reveals what it takes to be an exceptional teacher. Heroine to thousands of parents and educators, Esmé now shares more of her ingenious and yet down-to-earth approaches to the classroom in a supplementary guide to help new teachers hit the ground running. As relevant and iconoclastic as when it was first published, *Educating Esmé* is a classic, as is Madame Esmé herself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Esmé Raji Codell has written a funny, hip diary filled with one-liners and unadorned thoughts that speak volumes about the raw, emotional life of a first-year teacher. Like Ally McBeal in the classroom, the miniskirted and idealistic Codell sometimes fantasizes her career is a musical. Her inner-city Chicago elementary school fades to black as the lunch lady strikes an arabesque or a struggling student performs the dance of the dying swan, all set to her interior soundtrack. (Tina Turner's "Funkier Than a Mosquita's Tweeter" echoes whenever her idea-stealing, dimwitted principal harangues her.) She's a rash, petite, white lady who roller-skates through the halls and

insists that her fifth-graders call her "Madame Esmé." But it's not all fun and games: she introduces us to children who fling their desks and apologize in tears, and at one point, after reporting a disruptive student to her mother, who subsequently thrashes the young girl, she dry heaves into her classroom's trash can. Codell's 24-year-old voice is loud and clear ("Serious gross out," she writes after the scorned principal hugs her), though, on the principle that kids say the darnedest things, she often simply repeats their comments for comic effect. She's got sass, maybe too much self-confidence at times, and though there's no deep introspection in *Educating Esmé*, you'll be convinced her 10-year-old charges emerge the better for knowing her. --Jodi Mailander Farrell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Portions of Codell's diary of her experiences as a first-year teacher in a Chicago inner-city elementary school were first aired on WBEZ radio, in that city, as part of its Life Stories series. Subsequently rounded out into a book, the material still comes across like it's meant to be read aloud. Codell's voice carries the enthusiasm that Aas a 24-year-old hardcore idealist Ashe brought to her difficult job. Hired for a brand-new school, she tells how she let her "na?vet?" work to her own advantage. She invented ways to engage her troubled, sometimes hostile students, relying on jerry-rigged visual aids, group craft projects, role-reversing skits and the like. Villains appear as well, such as her evil principal, Mr. Turner, a "homophobic, backward idiot." Codell throws herself into the reading, imitating her kids' voices, sounding truly exasperated at each obstacle she faces. Based on the 1999 Algonquin hardcover. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the best books about teaching I've ever read. Through humor Esme' manages to capture a provocative look at the underbelly of a school's culture. Though not every school matches her description, there is something every one in education will recognize from their own experience. It is hard to be an Esme' in today's schools, but that is the teacher every parent should want for their children.

To start out, this is not a textbook on how to be a teacher. It is not a psychological explanation of child behavior... it is simply the diary of a first year teacher. If you know that coming in, then be ready for one of the most eye opening books you'll read. With all the talk about what goes on in our schools, it's real look into what it is like being "on the front lines" with the children in america. If you have children entering school, this is an insight into what our teachers are going through (in some

places). They are underfunded, overworked, and are expected to be everything to these children. As a parent, it helped me understand better all the challenges that my children's teachers deal with. I've found myself to be much more sympathetic now, and willing to offer more help. The author is the kind of teacher that many of us had: one that cared enough to give more than just a routine class experience. Sadly, with all the constraints and demands put on them, I fear that we are going to push these people out of the profession if we don't help them soon. That's not to say this book is all gloom and misery. In fact, the author documents very well the joys of teaching and emotions of trying to care for children that don't have the best homelife for education. Please read this if you are a teacher, going into teaching, or have children in our public school education system.

This book is a reprint of a 1999 publication with a foreword by author Katherine Paterson. Probably the most appealing aspect of this book is Codell's honesty, not to mention the genuine excitement she brings to the page about her first year of teaching. She's honest about her principal, a man who has a real flair for mediocrity. Threatened by her competence and verve, he's always on her about something. When she begins to win accolades, he tries to keep her on after her first year, not because she's a great teacher but because she'd be a feather in his cap. Codell's also honest about her abilities and efforts. She often wonders why others are so lazy when she gives so much to her classroom. She's also honest with her pupils, learning very early that she can't pity them, not if she is to help them to learn. When at the end of the year her below-par students actually gain a year or two in achievement on their tests, she is somewhat vindicated for her sometimes unorthodox but lively methods of teaching. Anyone reading this book would have loved to be in her class . . . if she had remained a teacher, that is. One almost wonders why she chose to take the job, to teach or to write a book? The very next year, having trained for such work, she becomes a school librarian. As an American one could feel cheated, in a sense. Why is it that some of the most talented and competent teachers leave the field after such a short time? In Esmé's case it may be that she's just too good, not too good for her students but too good for the system. Why would anyone want to work in a place where there are so many negative people including one's boss? How lovely it would be to work for a district that honors its teachers and pays them well. In a capitalist culture where corporations value their employees by way of the purse, why does that never translate to better salaries for educators, especially the gifted ones who are working harder than anyone else and yet get paid the same as someone next door who's only half as good and only expends a fraction of the energy of someone like Codell? It is a question worthy of extended thought and

research.

This was such a fun book, it was written in an easy to read manner, that really demonstrated the issues with being a teacher, and how hard it is to work in a low socio economic environment. At times I felt Esme was a bit too good to be true, but I understand that mindset and found her to be great. I would have liked more detail inbetween as some chapters were very far apart in time, but I loved reading this, it was an easy and fun read.

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