



education review // reseñas educativas

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reseñas educativas (Spanish)
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Brief reviews for February 2006

Bouchard, Margaret T. (2005). *Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners*. New York: Scholastic.

The large number of children classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) has dramatically increased in recent years. This is an especially tricky problem, since it can take up 5-7 years before an ELL student is proficient enough to use English for academic purposes (Cummin, 2003). More and more teachers are facing the dilemma of having students who cannot read content books at grade level. *Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners* offers suggestions for dealing with ELLs of varying proficiency in mainstream content classrooms.

Bouchard combines two ideas in her approach. The first idea is based on the premise that teaching content together with explicit strategies improves comprehension for subject material. This is based on the work of Chamot and O'Malley (1994). The idea in Chamot and O'Malley's work is to teach content in ESL classes. Bouchard has reversed this approach with comprehension strategies for ELL students in mainstream content classes. This idea seems very useful since mainstream teachers are frequently called on to do the job that was once the domain of ESL teachers.

Bouchard's second idea is that incorporating ideas from the learning styles literature can be useful for ELLs. It is not my intention to take a stand on the question of adapting mainstream classroom material to different learning styles. Readers interested in the controversy should read Ellis and Fouts (1993, chapter six) for arguments against and Coffield et al (2004) for arguments supporting this practice. I do, however, have two observations about using learning styles with ELLs.

The first observation is that learning style assessment with ELLs can be difficult. Bouchard suggests self-assessment for students with sufficient reading skills and an observational checklist for students with limited reading skills. I can see potential problems with both of these approaches. Any student capable of accurately filling out the survey on page 18 is probably able to process English academically and might not qualify as an ELL. I say this because the task requires the reader to use written language for some fairly sophisticated metacognition. Observing ELLs is probably the better approach, but students' learning strategies are going to be limited to their language processing and might not be a reflection of general learning style preferences.

The second observation is that Bouchard's book is full of really good ideas on how to present material in ways that help develop comprehension. I don't think you need to be a proponent of learning styles to use her suggestions. She offers of wide range of techniques including frame sentences (p. 24), semantic features (p. 60), and graphic organizers (p. 80).

One weakness of the book is that Bouchard does not identify grade levels for the various strategies. I believe this was intentional in that she is hoping that content teachers from different grade levels can use or modify the strategies. Most of the strategies are appropriate for elementary students. Some strategies, such as semantic feature analysis, are also appropriate for middle school students.

I highly recommend this book as a resource for elementary content teachers with ELL students. Middle school teachers will also find a number of the strategies useful.

References

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Coffield, F., Moseley, D., Hall, E. & Ecclestone, K. (2004). "Should we be using learning styles? What research has to say to practice." The Learning and Skills Research Centre. Accessed from http://www.lsda.org.uk/files/P_DF/1540.pdf on November 14, 2005.

Cummins, J. (2003). "Reading and the bilingual student: fact and friction." In G.G. Garcia (Ed). *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy*. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp.2-33.

Ellis, A. K, & Fouts, J., T. (1993). *Research on Educational Innovations*. Princeton Junction, NJ: Eye on Education

Pages: **270** Price: **\$17.99** ISBN: **0-439-55428-4**

Reviewed by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Bibliographer at the University of Maine. In addition to her M.S. in Library Studies from Florida State University, she has an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida with a specialization in language acquisition and an extensive background in developmental psychology.

Burke, Jim (2005). *Accessing School: Teaching Struggling Readers to Achieve Academic and Personal Success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

In my commute to and from school, I've seen a bumper sticker that says: "If you can read this, thank a teacher." In many cases, the adage on the bumper sticker is true, but some children advance to high school with the ability to read little besides that bumper sticker. In his book *Accessing School: Teaching Struggling Readers to Achieve Academic and Personal Success*, author Jim Burke outlines a plan for reaching high schoolers who have not mastered the basics of literacy.

For high school or even middle grades classrooms, this book provides a solid framework of ideas for reaching and teaching students who lack strong reading skills. In six chapters, Burke spotlights a remedial reading class, called ACCESS, which he pioneered in the Burlingame public schools in California. Burke first provides an overview of the ACCESS class, explaining how and why the class targets low-performing high school students and attempts to fast-forward their learning. In his description, Burke provides ample research to back up his ideas for the ACCESS class. Burke then carefully lays out the set up of the class and provides numerous ideas for engendering academic success in the subsequent chapters. Even though I teach elementary students, I could relate to Burke's ideas about how reading buddies stimulate struggling readers. As the book concludes, Burke looks at how to measure student success and delves into the roles that teachers play in the ACCESS class.

Throughout the narrative, Burke writes with an easy, friendly tone and provides real examples from his teaching career and his own life as a father. Although the book mainly seems geared toward administrators looking to implement a new kind of remedial reading class, many of Burke's ideas are useful for classroom teachers who work with struggling readers on any level.

Pages: **\$24.00** Price: **224** ISBN: **0-325-00737-3**

Reviewed by Katie Wester Neal, who recently completed a Master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania, and currently, teaches fifth grade in Sterling, Virginia. Her academic interests include gender differences in education and helping struggling readers improve.

Capellini, Mary T. (2005). *Balancing Reading and Language Learning: A Resource for Teaching English Language Learners, K-5*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Balancing Reading and Language Learning is a resource for mainstream K-5 reading teachers who have English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classrooms. The book contains a table of contents, 14 chapters, 7 appendices, references, and an index (of subjects and authors). The book begins with assessment, moves

on to planning, and then discusses reading development by type. Capellini discusses the role of read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading for ELLs.

Reading teachers with little or no training in dealing with ELLs will be especially interested in chapter two and the appendices. Chapter two discusses the difficulties with language and reading assessment for ELLs. The appendices include examples of assessment instruments, bibliographies for thematic units, and lists of English-Spanish cognates.

Although the book is designed to be used for all ELLs, it includes special resources for Spanish speakers. This is the largest primary language for ELLs, accounting for approximately 77% nationally (Hopstick and Stephenson, 2003). Capellini is fluent in Spanish and has experience as a bilingual teacher. It might seem unreasonable to expect Capellini to provide support for all of the languages that are used in today's classrooms, but teachers with ELLs who speak Hmong and Russian need special resources too. This is the one weakness of the book.

Capellini begins each chapter with a short anecdote about the experience of a student trying to communicate in a foreign language. The anecdotes perform two functions. They help the reader to view ELLs as unique individuals, and they set the topic for each chapter. The anecdote is followed by a discussion of the chapter subject. Capellini is careful to include relevant research for each chapter to justify her proposed strategies. One of her most important sources is Cummins (2003) who stresses the importance of understanding and developing both social and academic English. Capellini makes the important observation that many ELLs are mistakenly categorized as fluent because they have mastered social English.

The author's training and experiences give her insight into the world of ELLs. In addition to studying Spanish, she has lived in Spain and is married to a man who learned English as an adult. Capellini knows that there are many things ELLs understand but can't express in English. She also knows that there are cultural differences that can initially confuse them. It is her weaving of this knowledge into her book that makes it special.

Capellini does an excellent job combining anecdote, research, and practical tools for reading teachers. This book should be required reading for reading teachers dealing with K-5 English Language Learners. It is an essential purchase for education libraries.

References

Cummins, J. (2003). Reading and the bilingual student: Fact and friction. In G. Garcia (ed) *English learners reaching the highest level of English literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Hopstock, P. J. & Stephenson, T.G. (2003). Descriptive study of services to LEP students and LEP students with disabilities: Special Topic Report #1: Native languages of LEP students. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Pages: **320** Price: **\$30.00** ISBN: **1-57110-367-8**

Reviewed by by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Bibliographer at the University of Maine. In addition to her M.S. in Library Studies from Florida State University, she has an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida with a specialization in language acquisition and an extensive background in developmental psychology.

Carden, Kathleen A. & Godley-Sugrue, Mary (2005). *Grade 1 Writing Curriculum: Week-by-Week Lessons*. New York: Scholastic.

Although educators have long debated approaches to teaching reading and writing, research shows that effective teachers balance both skills instruction and whole language approaches (Pressley, 2003). A teacher adopting such an integrated approach, for example, might directly teach phonemic awareness and structure of language helpful for reading and foster students' development of knowledge about writing in the context of its purposeful use.

For teachers interested in fostering writing skills and confidence among their first-graders, Carden and Godley-Sugrue's *Grade 1 Writing Curriculum: Week-by-Week Lessons* provides a practical classroom resource. This book, the first in a three-book series, is intended to help first-graders form simple sentences and build up to paragraph writing. It offers a full school year's worth of daily journal prompts, weekly lessons, and reproducible planning pages to facilitate direct instruction and guided practice.

The book is organized into 12 chapters. The first two chapters provide an overview of beginning writers' developmental and curricular profiles, and features illustrative student writing samples. The remaining ten chapters outline daily journal prompts, weekly writing instruction, and weekly lessons. The lessons make explicit the writing process from prewriting and generating ideas, to drafting, revising and editing, and finally to sharing the finished written product. Throughout the book, there are helpful teaching hints from the authors, who have 25 years of teaching experience between them. Also included are appendices providing templates and checklists for students, and recommended references for further reading for teachers.

While the writing lessons in this book can seem highly directive, the authors provide a variety of open-ended topics to allow students to respond in their emergent authorial voices. They also offer practical classroom management strategies to create a learning environment conducive to writing, one in which the teacher regularly models writing and students take on more responsibility for planning and checking their own work. Teachers and students also confer about writing, which is essential for providing positive feedback and constructive criticism. Since teachers will want to use particular lessons to address the needs of their students, the included chart highlighting particular genres, skills, and curricular standards is useful.

I particularly liked that the authors included suggestions for journal prompts and technology integration. Asking simple questions of younger students and lower-ability students of any age allows these students to respond with more correct answers, receive ample encouragement, and get help as needed. Using such questions in journals is an excellent way to encourage students to reflect and write. As they progress, students may want to generate their own topics to make their journal entries and learning more meaningful. Teachers may also substitute prompts appropriate to a specific curriculum and encourage understanding across subject areas. Computers can motivate students to get their ideas on paper and facilitate reorganization of ideas without the agony of rewriting by hand. This may be particularly advantageous to students with learning disabilities whose handwriting cannot be read (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). Students can also use materials from other media, such as clipart, to enhance their writing in addition to, or as an alternative to drawing illustrations as recommended by the authors. Students may also use the computer for their journal time.

I would recommend Carden and Sugrue's *Grade 1 Writing Curriculum: Week-by-Week Lessons* to elementary school teachers looking for a practical writing resource filled with purposeful writing activities that they can integrate into a holistic approach to help beginning writers develop the skills they need to succeed.

References

Hallahan, D.P., & Kauffman, J.M. (1997). *Exceptional learners: Introduction to special education* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Pressley, M. (2003) *Balanced Elementary Literacy Instruction in the United States: A personal perspective*. Keynote Paper presented at Literacy Policies for the Schools We Need The International Literacy Conference held at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto November 6 to 8, 2003 <http://literacyconference.oise.utoronto.ca/litinst.html>.

Pages: 160 Price: \$19.99 ISBN: 0-439-52982-4

Reviewed by Nobuko Fujita, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, OISE/UT

Cunningham, Patricia M. (2005). *Phonics They Use: Words for Reading and Writing*. Fourth edition. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

If you're looking for a book that is packed with activities for teaching phonics for reading and writing, particularly at the K-1 level, here it is.

Phonics They Use is written in a cheerful, upbeat style, and it is free of the jargon that clutters some books on education. This book is not written to impress, but to communicate activities to teachers in the clearest, most direct way. And it certainly has activities – pages and pages of them. For anyone who wants to learn about teaching reading or writing in the primary grades, this book would make an excellent resource. It's readable, well- edited, full of useful information, and as textbooks go, the price is a bargain.

In its previous editions this book ran only four chapters – four very long chapters. For this fourth edition, the book has been reorganized into five sections and 15 chapters of ten to 15 pages each, resulting in a more reader- friendly version.

The activities in Part One: Building the Foundations of Phonics They Use focus on print concepts, phonemic awareness, and the like. The activities in this section -- as with most of the book except for chapters 10 and 11 -- are decidedly primary. Again in Part Two: Fluency, most activities are for K-1 readers, though there are also ideas for special cases. Have an older student who needs to read easy books? How about an older student who hates to write? You'll find ideas for both in chapter 5.

Sidebars throughout give related information and extensive lists. Here's examples: sidebar "Fluency and Rate Increase across the Grade Levels" appears as a table on page 56; the highest-utility phonograms, the most common blends, digraphs, and vowel spelling patterns, on page 72 (intended for use with making and "doing" a word wall, for which see p. 68); and 180 or so high-frequency words, in a sidebar on p. 73.

In Part Three: Using Phonics and Spelling Patterns, the emphasis shifts from reading to writing as the chapters look at activities on related words (such as play, player, and replay), using rhymes to help with reading and spelling, and other spelling activities.

Part Four: Big Words suddenly jumps to activities for upper elementary grades (fourth and fifth are mentioned) in its chapters on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The activities assume a fourth- or fifth-grade vocabulary as they work with compound words and introduce a bit of wordsmithing. Want to know the four prefixes that account for 58% of all prefixed words? Take a look on page 142. The three suffixes that account for 65% of all suffixed words? Same page. How about a table with the most common prefixes, their meanings, examples of their use in morphology and spelling? An extensive list fills page 144, and a similar list for suffixes fills page 147.

Part Five: Coaching, Assessment, Research, and Jargon begins with ideas for coaching children one-on-one to use what they have learned about reading and writing, including specific examples of the words a teacher might use in a conference. The book then steps back from its focus on activities to look at assessment and theory. In the assessment chapter, teachers may find useful the checklists on "beginning reading strategies" (p. 173), "sight word, decoding, and spelling behaviors" (p. 177), and a marking system for any 100-word reading assessment (p. 175). The Theory and the Research -- The Why Underlying the How (chapter 14) is a succinct summary of research on phonics education. It begins with a history of the author's own involvement with phonics education, then frames the research summary in terms of "What We Know about How Good Readers Read Words" and "What We Know about How Children Learn to Read Words." It is in this section of the book that the author uses the word "disambiguating" (a new word to me; I read by chunking it into meaningful pieces).

Phonics They Use concludes with a bonus chapter, Phonics Jargon -- For Teachers Only!, intended as a study tool for teachers who may need to take a mandated test of phonics jargon. The chapter makes a wonderful glossary. If you have ever wondered how a digraph differs from a consonant cluster, or what a rime is, or what morphemes are, you'll find them all here -- there are 41 words defined in this section.

There are four pages of references, and the book is thoroughly indexed at six pages. Readable, charming, and full of activities for teachers, you get the sense that Patricia Cunningham wants you to be a great reading teacher. This book can certainly supply teachers and those training to become teachers with many solid phonics activities.

Pages: 212 Price: \$32.99 ISBN: 0-205-41037-5

Reviewed by John Sundahl, a second grade teacher in the Beaverton School District in Beaverton, Oregon and a graduate student at Portland State University. I wrote this review under the supervision of Dr. Dannelle Stevens in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University in Oregon, with help from Kim Monahan and Jan Peterson-Terjeson reading and improving my drafts

McTighe, Jay & Wiggins, Grant (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Second Edition. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

I am taking a Curriculum Development class for my Master's degree and also am participating in a study group through my school district. The study group is for this book, *Understanding by Design*. When I began both, I wasn't anticipating the correlation between the two. I am now thankful that I did both simultaneously because of the insights I have gleaned from them.

While the book is aimed at anyone in education who is interested in curriculum development and assessment; I see this book as something a district would need to embrace as a whole. I don't think it would be practical for a teacher to try designing a unit on his/her own, without administrative support, nor could a

district adopt it without buy-in from its teachers.

With the ramifications of No Child Left Behind, adequate yearly progress, state accountability, etc. fast approaching, school districts are examining and reexamining their curriculum, assessments, instructional delivery and so forth. *Understanding by Design* focuses on what the authors refer to as "backward" design, which I will explain in more detail later. The designing of units takes place in three stages.

The first stage, which is basically chapters 1-6, discusses the tightening of the curriculum. The design effort must clearly define the desired results. The authors talk about focusing on what the big ideas are and developing essential questions related to those ideas. They suggest that readers look to state and district standards, existing curriculum, as well as teacher knowledge to determine what those big ideas should be. The essential questions should foster inquiry, understanding and transfer of learning.

Also in stage 1, the designer(s) needs to determine what understandings the student will have as a result of the unit. There are 6 facets of understanding, according to the authors. They are: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy and self-knowledge. The understandings of explanation and self-knowledge are vital to all units. Other understandings will vary in importance depending on what the big ideas and essential questions are.

The final step in stage 1 is determining the knowledge and skills students will understand at the end of the unit. It is the crux of the authors' message that true understanding requires students be able to take knowledge and transfer it to different and sometimes confusing situations. As the authors' state: "Transfer involves figuring out which knowledge and skill matter for the particular situation and adapting what we know to solve the problem at hand" (p. 41). This is similar to the application and synthesizing stages in Blooms' taxonomy (see Bloom, Madaus & Hastings, 1981, p. 233).

Something that is worth mentioning before I go further - Stages 1 and 2 are developed for the designer's use and it is not until Stage 3 that the learning plan is developed. This is what makes it, as I mentioned earlier, a backward design. The authors go into great detail about how research shows that the assessments must be put into place before the learning plan.

Assessment evidence, then, is Stage 2. This order of unit design development is essential for understanding to occur. Otherwise student misunderstandings will occur that the teacher might never know and never address. This is due to what the authors refer to as "The Expert Blind Spot." The two most common ways of teaching, the authors say, are content-driven units and activity-driven units. These, while they may give students some facts to take away that they didn't know before, do not produce understanding.

Stage 2 requires designers to develop assessments that will truly show that understanding is occurring. The authors are adamant about the importance of authentic performance assessments and go into some detail as to what constitutes an authentic performance assessment. This is not to say that other assessments such as quizzes, tests, observations, journal prompts, etc. shouldn't also be used throughout the unit to check for understanding.

The second but related part of stage 2 is developing criteria to judge the performance assessments. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on how to think like an assessor and the importance of validity. Also, going back to the understandings, the text discusses the need for students to self-assess and to reflect upon how they think they are learning and understanding.

Stage 3 brings us to the learning plan. Chapters 9 and 10 focus on how to plan for learning and how to teach for understanding. The authors are very constructivist in their beliefs. They also refer to didactic or direct instruction and coaching. The learning activities and instruction are what will help students to achieve the desired results (Stage 1). The assessments are how we know understanding is happening (Stage 2).

The authors present an acronym to help plan for learning: *WHERE TO*. The *W* refers to where is the unit going, what should the students expect and where are the students coming from? *H* refers to hooking the students and holding their interests. In the book the authors go into the importance of intrinsic motivation and how real understanding is not going to come from an extrinsic reward but from authentic, genuine learning experiences that will hook and hold the learner. *E* is to equip the students with what they need so that they can experience and explore. *R* is being able to rethink and revise. Here the authors talk about bringing a paradigm shift to teaching so that students aren't always concerned with getting the answer right. Misunderstandings and mistakes will eventually lead to insight and true understanding, The authors point out that teachers should take student misunderstandings as valuable information. Instead of saying "they just don't get it", look at it as the student's failed attempt to transfer knowledge. Therefore, as the student moves on in his/her education the big ideas should always be rethought and revisited. This is referred to later in the article, as the authors discuss the importance of a spiraling curriculum. *E* refers to Facet 6 of the

understandings - having the students evaluate their learning. T refers to the activities being tailored to meet the needs of different learners. O is being organized in order to maintain engagement and sustain effective learning.

A final section clears up misconceptions and discusses how *Understanding by Design* fits into a district's curriculum. As I mentioned at the beginning, I believe a district would need to adopt, as a whole, the idea of creating units using *Understanding by Design*. Starting as an individual teacher, out there on his/her own, would I think be very difficult. There is a need here for professional discussion with other colleagues in order to get feedback.

The authors refer to a scope and sequence curriculum as being outdated and they go as far as to say that that type of curriculum will continue to produce poor performing students. Instead they talk about a spiraling curriculum. The authors write that a spiral approach develops curriculum around recurring, ever-deepening inquiries into big ideas and important tasks, helping students come to understand in a way that is both effective and developmentally wise.

If your district is one of the many struggling with curriculum issues, this book is a great resource for rethinking curriculum and assessment development as well as teaching what is best practice.

References

Bloom, B., Madaus, G., & Hastings, J.T. (1981). *Evaluation to Improve Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pages: 370 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 1-4166-0035-3

Reviewed by Jennifer Reed, a 3rd grade teacher for the Ralston School District in Ralston, Nebraska and a graduate student in Elementary Education at the University of Nebraska

Muldaur, Sheila (2004). *Genre Assessments for Fables, Fairy Tales, and Fantasies. with Reading Passages for Genre Assessments for Fables, Fairy Tales, and Fantasies. The Proficient Reader Record series.* Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers.

Based on the premise that assessment and evaluation drive instruction, Sheila Muldaur sets out to support teachers' learning about how to assess specific genres of literature. Teachers are provided with classroom-ready assessment tools, directions for administration of the assessments, and sample evaluations of student responses. For each genre, two reading passages taken from children's literature are included in an accompanying book. The author focuses on assessments of third and fourth graders as they are becoming more proficient readers.

Through a process of identifying the genres mandated in many state learning standards and investigating features of these genres, Muldaur synthesizes her findings in an organized and systematic manner. Her creation of concise, one-page forms for assessing reading processes and assessing genre understandings provide tools that can be practical and useful for the classroom teacher. She classifies and presents six specific skills for reading process (including anticipating the genre, articulating problem solving, reading with oral fluency, and processing the text) and thirteen skills for understanding genre (including identifying text form, attending to structure, creating word meaning, investigating character, interpreting specific genre features, and using reading for writing). Rubrics for evaluating each of these skills are provided. Using these forms can provide teachers with a means to identify individual and group needs, plan instructional programs, and communicate student progress to parents.

One difficulty with this system is its dependency on one-on-one interviews for collecting the assessment data. While the process is explicitly presented and standardized, teachers may be challenged to find time to implement it. At least fifteen minutes are required for each student interview.

Clearly, Muldaur has condensed much information into these forms and another difficulty with this system is the complexity of the assessment process. I believe teachers will be challenged to implement the entire system as she has designed it. However, there are many excellent sections that teachers will find useful. Particularly helpful are the notes on what the teacher needs to know for assessing each of the particular genre skills as these identify specific characteristics of each genre and compare similarities and differences between them. Although the emphasis of the assessment is on student readers, links to proficient writers are presented. This is valuable for intermediate grades as there is an increasing emphasis on writing.

The book is one of a four-module series on genre assessment and while it can be used as a stand-alone

resource, the author assumes that the teacher is familiar with *Theory and use of genre assessment* and refers frequently to the tenets of the Proficient Reader Record (PRR) described in that module. A prior reading of the entire series would most likely benefit the teacher who is interested in implementing these assessment tools.

Genre Assessments Pages: 127 ISBN: 1572746653

Reading Passages Pages: 11 ISBN: 1572746661

Price for both: \$23.95

Reviewed by Gladys Sterenberg, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge

Parini, Jay (2005). *The Art of Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Will I publish or perish? What first impression will I make on my students? Can I be more dramatic in my presentation? Do they notice that I am almost as young as they are? These and many other questions dashed through my mind. Dressed in my bright red "power" pantsuit, I tilted my head with its short crop of hair in front of my Educational Psychology course on my first day of teaching college. I spoke with a smile even though I was trying to present an air of control of the situation at hand as I addressed my undergraduate students. In a few days I began to find my voice, a style of teaching that gained the respect of my students. In *The Art of Teaching*, Parini explains that,

Few outside the teaching profession understand the courage it takes to step into a classroom, to wear a mask that you know is a construction, hiding behind it, letting it give shape and substance to your formulations, letting the mask become your face. (p.68)

In this intriguing and quick read, Parini reflects on a variety of professors that he has witnessed in the trenches and uses the looking glass to journal about his own journey through three decades in higher education. With great detail and precision he recalls and examines professors based on details such as their lecture style or their clothing. In fact, he has given deep thought to the costume of the professor. He discusses how students perceive a teacher based on whether the teacher is wearing a tweed coat, a white shirt and tie, or a pair of jeans with holes. Each clothing choice demonstrates to the audience an shared stereotype as to how the material will be presented.

In the chapter titled "A Letter to a Teacher" Parini tells the aspiring or new professor everything that he wishes he had known prior to beginning in academia. He feels that it is vital to find one's own voice and notes that voice can be cultivated by watching mentors in action and utilizing their tricks of the trade. He explains that discourse is important in the field because you must be able to defend your stand on a position, however you can also learn from others and admit that you have changed your mind. Instructors need to explain up front to students exactly what is expected for a positive grade in the course. Professors can make each presentation a performance by remembering to catch students' attention and by varying consistency. If an instructor's ego begins to slip, Parini recommends readers remember that they acquired the job because someone felt that they were scholarly.

The concept of "publish or perish" looms over the heads of many new professors. Prior to taking the position the author suggests that readers find out everything they can about the university's tenure policy. Once you know how much you need to publish the trick is to actually write. He explains that before he began writing for living he wrote a list of books that he wanted to write some day. This form of goal setting proved to be valuable to him. He also tries to follow the two-page a day rule that worked for John Updike. Parini elucidates that, "Two pages a day adds up to a long book every year" which even includes revision time. He suggests that you stop writing when you are at a point that you can definitely pick up the next day because you know what is coming next, which is a technique that Ernest Hemingway used in his writing career.

In the preface, Parini states that he welcomes the discussions that may follow from his work. It is my feeling that the discussions will be positive due to the fact that the book naturally generates self-reflection not only on one's own teaching experience in front of the classroom, but also by viewing with open eyes teachers from their own past. This book focuses on the author's relating memories in the lyrical voice of a poet interwoven with the thoughts of authors of classic literature. *The Art of Teaching* is filled with subtle lessons garnered from a lifetime dedicated to observing and teaching the educational process.

Pages: 160 Price: \$17.95(cloth); \$9.95(paper) ISBN: 978-0-19-516969-0(cloth); 978-0-7407-1912-7(paper)

Reviewed by Shellie Hipsky, currently an Assistant Professor of Education at Robert Morris University and an Educational Consultant for the Tri-State Study Council at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Shellie Hipsky's career includes teaching students from kindergarten to graduate school in the U.S. as well as in Rome, Italy. As a recent Assistant Principal in charge of curriculum and supervision at a school for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities, she is acutely aware of teacher and student needs.

Pellegrini, Anthony D. (2005). *Recess: Its Role in Education and Development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

In *Recess*, Anthony Pellegrini marshals theory and empirical evidence from cognitive and social psychology to argue its importance to education and children's development. He builds a compelling case for how play and recess contribute to children's social competence and academic performance.

Well-organized and readable, the book's nine chapters outline the contours of the recess debate (Ch. 1), review historically the place of play and recess in American schools (Ch. 2), examine the research evidence about children's play in educational settings (Chs. 3-8), and discuss the policy implications in support of recess periods for children (Ch. 9). Usefully, seven of the chapters end with practical questions to stimulate further thinking/action on the role of recess in the school day. Comprehensive author and subject indices enhance the book's referencing capacity.

Pellegrini opens by confronting two anti-recess arguments. The first – it takes away from valuable instructional time – is not surprising in our contemporary, post-industrial age dominated by the cult of efficiency. The Puritan/Calvinistic work ethic (work is good; play is not) found in much of the Anglo Saxon world makes recess an easy target for tough-talking school superintendents and politicians that mean "business in making schools more effective" (p. 3). Disturbingly, his analysis of a 1999 US Department of Education survey shows that in kindergarten, only 70 percent of children had daily recess. Drawing mainly from "play theorists" Piaget and Vygotsky, Pellegrini demonstrates how important social and moral lessons are learnt during recess. At the same time, Pellegrini debunks a second popular anti-recess claim – kids get bullied and learn hostile behaviors at recess – by showing that physical and verbal aggression actually accounts for less than 2 percent of all playground behavior. I wonder if this would also be the case in middle and high schools (...interested readers might wish to read *Social life in school: Pupils' experience of breaktime and recess from 6 to 16 Years* by Peter Blatchford).

The six empirical chapters are the heart of Pellegrini's book. They draw extensively from his research conducted over 25 years in the United States and the UK. In relegating the formal research methods and statistical analyses to individual chapter appendices, Pellegrini is able to reach a wide range of teacher-leaders, scholar-researchers, students, and parents. Each chapter makes good sense of relevant theory, which is explained clearly and exemplified using observation, questionnaire, and interview data. The selected results help to characterize the school playground as an important venue for children's social development, to look at its gender segregation, to explore the potential effects of gender on young children's play preferences, and to consider the importance of games for children in school.

In the process, Pellegrini makes an important distinction between play (e.g. fantasy, rough-and-tumble) and games (e.g. soccer). Whereas games are rules-based and require the integration of multiple perspectives, play makes less cognitive demands of young children because they are mainly concerned with their own perspective. Both, however, shape the development of children's preoperational (i.e. play) and operational (i.e. games) intelligence. Hence the play and games that children undertake in the natural, unstructured environment of recess periods provide rich opportunities for socio-emotional growth.

A chapter entitled "The Role of Recess in Children's Cognitive Performance in Classrooms" provides additional, valuable grist to Pellegrini's mill. Using longitudinal and experimental evidence, it shows how recess benefits learning by maximizing students' attention to classroom tasks. In providing a break from sustained periods of work, recess periods help restore children's cognitive efficiency and readiness to learn in class. I am sure that middle-years and high-school teacher-leaders would welcome further empirical work to find out if this holds true in their schooling contexts.

Overall, Pellegrini's slim book builds a compelling, evidence-based case for how and why play and recess shape children's social competence and academic performance. The book's salutary message of the benefits of play/recess on student learning and development aims to re-balance educational priorities. Though *Recess* belongs on the bookshelf of all who wish to engage matters that go to the heart of educating the "whole child", I look forward to reading its sequel – with more of Pellegrini's discerning, readable prose... but using longitudinal data to trace the role of recess throughout the elementary, middle, and high school years.

References

Blatchford, P. (1998). *Social life in school: Pupils' experience of breaktime and recess from 6 to 16 Years*. Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Pages: **202** Price: **\$22.50** ISBN: **0805855440**

Reviewed by Eric Jabal, PhD candidate, OISE-University of Toronto, Canada

Shaw, Darla (2005). *Retelling Strategies to Improve Comprehension: Effective Hands-On Strategies for Fiction and Nonfiction That Help Students Remember and Understand What They Read*. New York: Scholastic.

This book immediately states the purpose of retelling: comprehension. The introduction defines retelling for fiction and nonfiction. Shaw then devotes a chapter each to structured retelling activities for fiction, non-fiction, and vocabulary development. Shaw states that retelling for comprehension leads the student to absorb, retain, and utilize information that is read.

Having the benefits of retelling on the first page helped this book make an early good impression. Shaw describes many benefits to retelling with research to support her assertions. Retelling transforms text into the student's own words. It enables students to "own" the material they have read. It can be a "fix-it" strategy for comprehension. The interactive process helps students better process information and leads to enriched comprehension. It gives students practice listening and speaking in front of the class and boosts self confidence. Sometimes a retelling can be the bridge to the next phase of study. Retelling can also be used as an assessment for comprehension.

Shaw explains the comprehension process in a side box using a flow chart. This extra information provides teachers with a guide to understand where retelling appears in the comprehension process. Shaw links retelling to comprehension using Benson's (2001) critical thinking skill list which includes:

- Process thinking
- Problem Solving and Analytical Thinking Skills
- Language and Communication Skills
- Independent Learner Skills

These skills are used in ten different applications described by Shaw. The application exercises can be taught whole group then practiced in a small groups or as an individual activity. If an activity is too difficult for some students, the application can be modified to include a role for a reflective listener. The reflective listener provides feedback on the presentation. The following are examples of retelling:

- Finger Retelling for Story Grammar
- Retelling Charades
- Retelling With Illustrative Props
- Retelling with Items on a Rope
- Retelling Through a Mural
- Retelling Mini Books
- Retelling Chains

This practitioner's book, *Retelling Strategies to Improve Comprehension*, could enhance a student's comprehension process because of the variety of activities and the explicit direction for each activity. The format is easy to follow and is researched based.

References

Benson, V. (2001). *The Power of Retelling*. Desoto, Texas: The Wright Group.

Pages: **96** Price: **\$15.99** ISBN: **0-439-56035-7**

Reviewed by Dr. Sandy Thomas, Reading Specialist, Center Point School, Birmingham, Alabama

Snow, Catherine; Griffin, Peg & Burns, M. Susan (Editors). (2005). *Knowledge to Support*

the Teaching of Reading: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

A companion book to *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), this volume presents the work done by a subcommittee of the National Academy of Education's Committee on Teacher Education. Led by Catherine Snow of Harvard University, the subcommittee's task was to delineate the essential knowledge about the development, acquisition, and teaching of language and literacy that all teachers need to possess.

The opening chapter addresses the question of why another book about reading is necessary. The contention is that a rejection of the "status-shift view of teacher preparation allows an escape from artificial and unrealistic limits on definitions of the knowledge base for teaching reading." Once this is accomplished "a quite elaborate, specific, and detailed knowledge base can become useable knowledge when teacher preparation is seen as a developmental process of progressive differentiation emerging from recurring cycles of learning, enactment, assessment, and reflection" (p. x).

The second chapter's focus is on what teachers need to know about reading development. This is followed by how to address individual student needs and a chapter on the specialized knowledge necessary to deal with the developmental difficulties of students with special needs. A discussion of utilizing reading assessments wisely and an overview of a model of professional growth in reading education conclude the book.

Although a sentence in the preface states that this book is intended for those who oversee teacher preparation in either the academic or governmental sectors, there's much to recommend it to the man or woman in the trenches. Discussing with peers the five levels of a teacher's progression (preservice, apprentice, novice, experienced, and master) and how the five kinds of knowledge discussed vary in importance on each level will make for some lively conversations in the faculty room.

Looking at what knowledge is considered essential to foster student growth from one grade level to another is certainly a worthwhile endeavor for any teacher. A listing of what effective teachers know and do offers a check list individuals can use to assess their own pedagogical approach. The debunking of some of the myths associated with second-language learners/speakers and the impact of poverty on literacy will also be an eye opener for many educators.

Granted, this book offers no reproducible worksheets, lesson plans, or tips on how to control an unruly class or inspire a youngster to write coherently. But, there are ideas that teachers on all grade levels will find interesting and worth mulling over.

Sometimes the practicalities of surviving another day have to give way to a little "pie in the sky" musing . Why not devote a little time at a staff meeting discussing some of the ideas found in *Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading?* Talking about how to improve the preparation for the teaching profession may generate an interesting dialogue with some surprising positive "on site" benefits.

References

Darling-Hammond, L. & Bransford, J. (Eds.) (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: **304** Price: **\$30.00** ISBN: **0-7879-7465-X**

Reviewed by Robert F. Walch, Retired educator, Monterey, California

Spandel, Vicki (2005). *The 9 Rights of Every Writer: A Guide for Teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Spandel's *The 9 Rights of Every Writer: A Guide for Teachers* is a handy reminder for K-12 teachers who promote authentic writing experiences in their classrooms. The intent of the author is not to educate the reader regarding the basic principles of establishing an effective program; rather, she reinforces the elements that should be inherent to the environment that teachers and students have collaboratively created.

Each student "right" merits its own chapter in the text. Easy to read, Spandel's book follows a similar format in discussion of each of the rights. A chapter typically begins with a narrative recounting an experience in which the author has been reminded of the importance of the chapter's right. Next, Spandel clearly states the rationale behind why the student deserves that particular right. Through the use of student examples, Spandel

explores the right as it looks when teachers and students understand its authentic implementation. Finally, each chapter ends with a prominent author's brief input as to why the chapter's right should be cherished.

1. The first "right" explores permitting students to reflect upon their writing. "It takes...the courage to dive below the surface, the willingness to live with a topic for a long period of time, turn it over in your mind, and decide for yourself what questions to ask about it" (p. 5). In this chapter, Spandel reminds teachers that writing is a process rather than just a means to a product.
2. Secondly, the author discusses the students' right to choose a topic that is important to them. She states, "...because writing with voice is worth reading, we should do everything possible to encourage students to create such writing, and everything we can think of to eliminate time wasted on creating writing no one—writer or reader—cares about" (p. 18). The text illustrates the difficulties students face even when they are permitted to select their topics.
3. Spandel highlights the students' right to veer from teacher-assigned topics. Although she acknowledges that writing from prompts is important, it should not be the only type of writing in which the students are engaged. She notes, "When we shackle writing with rigid prompts, we take over the ownership" (p.37). The author indicates that teachers who want students to engage in authentic writing experiences should permit some leeway with the choices that students make.
4. Spandel discusses the students' right to personalize the steps of the writing process for themselves. She states, "Though these steps overlap, though they are recurring, and though they look different in the hands of every writer, they show up in some way, in some form, in each writer's work" (p. 43). In effect, she warns teachers against rigidly enforcing each step of the writing process; rather, teachers should permit their students to have the time and the opportunity to engage in each of them.
5. The author encourages teachers to permit students to experiment with their writing. She explains, "If we trust the power of [student] thinking, we will give our student writers the freedom to explore, to write badly in order to work their way through to the point where they are writing well" (p. 69). Clearly, Spandel reinforces the notion that students need some time for "practice" in composing precisely what they wish to say.
6. In addition to the writing opportunities that students deserve, students need to observe the ways in which their teachers write. This section states, "We...need to model drafting, partly so that students can see how one idea leads into the next—at least in the writer's mind" (p. 83). Through modeling each step of the process, teachers can demonstrate the thinking that is an essential part of their own craft.
7. Spandel's seventh chapter is devoted to a discussion of the students' right to receive critical yet thoughtful assessment from their teachers. She reminds educators that this "does not come about by accident. It is the result of clear vision and thoughtful planning" (p. 97). She then discusses the ways in which national writing assessments do not permit this type of authentic assessment to occur.
8. The next right is the students' freedom from following a particular structure. It emphasizes, "Formula writing takes away both the pain and the reward of thinking like a reader" (p. 123). Instead a writer should work to anticipate what potential readers might either want or need from the author.
9. The final chapter indicates the necessity of "voice" in student writing. Spandel writes that "[students] need to read aloud, to compare, to try a single sentence three, four, or even five different ways, and to make choices" (p. 137). Only through experimentation will students maximize the effectiveness in their writing.

As briefly stated, this book is not intended for the reader who wants suggestions for establishing the basic elements of a language arts classroom. It seems designed for the teacher who has facilitated such an atmosphere but who needs a refresher for the important principles that are an integral part of an effective writing program. This book should be a part of every writing teacher's professional library.

Pages: **156** Price: **\$18.50** ISBN: **0-325-00736-5**

Reviewed by Christopher Palmi. Palmi teaches English methods courses at National-Louis University. He is also a high school English teacher. He is native to the Chicagoland area.

Wassermann, Selma (2004). *This Teaching Life: How I Taught Myself to Teach*. New York: Teachers College Press.

How does a teacher progress through a career from an inexperienced student teacher to become a competent professional educator? Dr. Selma Wassermann uses this question to reflect upon her professional life in her memoir titled, *This Teaching Life: How I Taught Myself to Teach*. As expected of a professional memoir, *This Teaching Life* intimately portrays a variety of aspects of the author's career in an attempt to demonstrate the range of influences and experiences that have formed her as a teacher. Honestly told, Wassermann's inspiring career story offers the reader insights into the development of an important career spanning five

decades of teaching, learning and reflection.

Drawing on her research on highly competent teachers (Wassermann and Eggert, 1976), Wassermann frames the recollection of her career around the concepts developed in her research. These concepts serve as a launching pad to explore Wassermann's original question of how one becomes a competent educator. In examining significant events in her teaching life, Wassermann continually searches for the links between experience, reflection, and development. Her story highlights the significant events and people that have influenced her as she collects teaching methods and techniques in her efforts to refine her teaching skills. Throughout the memoir, Wassermann draws on her extensive research and touches on her important contributions to and research in education in areas such as case study use in teacher education, key work methodology, and the role of thinking in education.

One of the greatest strengths of this memoir is its honest, at times gritty portrayal of the development of a teaching career. Wassermann became a teacher by "default" and clearly recounts the struggles and mistakes of an inexperienced teacher. She makes no attempt to sugarcoat the often messy process of teaching and learning, even when she is not portrayed in the most positive light. Emphasizing that there is no magic formula to make a competent teacher, Wassermann argues that competent teachers are formed through continual practice gained by years of determined experience. As someone who is never content to rest on her laurels, Wassermann serves as an example of an educator who "walks the walks" by continually following her curiosity and pushing herself beyond safe confines.

If there is one shortcoming of this book, it would be the writing style. The first impressions of the book lead the reader to believe that it will follow more of a personal approach with an emphasis on narrative voice. When the style becomes academic and detached, the cohesion of the story is interrupted as the author's voice shifts from that of a practitioner to an academic. The recursive transitioning from personal narrative to the theory behind each of the principles of an experienced teacher is at times unwieldy and serves as a distraction that ultimately diverts the reader from the heart of the story – Wassermann's teaching life.

In *This Teaching Life*, Wassermann sets out to write memoir that is personal and touching, rich with both her own, and her students' voices. Despite any distractions that may be caused by style, the book is recommended, especially for those experienced teachers who can bridge the two worlds of academia and classroom practice. Non-educators and beginning teachers might be turned off when Wassermann waxes academic, but those who look past the incongruity in styles will be rewarded with an inspiring memoir that sheds light on how a great education career can be built.

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Wassermann, S., & Eggert, W. (1976) Profiles of teaching competency. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 1(1), 67-93.

Pages: **176** Price: **\$19.95** ISBN: **0-8077-4500-6**

Reviewed by Matthew Magnuson, Education Librarian, Miami University

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Pages: **216** Price: **\$22.50** ISBN: **0-325-00808-6**

Reviewed by Dr. David E. Lee, Educational Leadership and Research, University of Southern Mississippi



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