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### Brief reviews for November 2006

**Beck, Isabel L. & McKeown, Margaret G. (2006) *Improving Comprehension with Questioning the Author: A Fresh and Expanded View of a Powerful Approach*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 296    Price: \$31.99    ISBN: 0-439-81730-7**

*Improving Comprehension with Questioning the Author: A Fresh and Expanded View of a Powerful Approach* is a well-titled text. Beck and McKeown offer a refreshing alternative to the literal comprehension questions currently inundating basal reader anthologies and classroom reading instruction and assessment. Drawing on nearly 15 years of collaboration and research to support their assertions, the authors supply readers with a framework for engaging students with text in meaningful ways.

The authors define the focus of QtA (Questioning the Author) as, "the importance of students' active efforts to build meaning from what they read and the need for students to grapple with ideas in a text" (p.8). In order to construct meaning from text, students are reminded to ask questions of the author, to see the author as fallible. Carefully crafted lessons support these needs. Whereas most classroom instruction focuses on questioning before and after reading, Beck and McKeown contend that with QtA students are learning from the text during reading. This model is based on three features that have a positive influence on comprehension: coherent texts, relevant background knowledge, and a logical sequence of questions.

As previously stated, QtA is a framework, as opposed to a script. It is based upon several components. The first of these is *building understanding*, which is the overarching goal of QtA. When building understanding, it is necessary for an experienced reader to apprentice a less- experienced reader to recognize what information is pertinent to making meaning from the *text*. QtA has been successfully used with both fiction and non-fiction text. The key to using specific texts is that the students are engaged in *discussion*, which "takes place in the course of reading the text for the first time so students can share in the experience of learning how to build meaning from a text" (p.29). Throughout these discussions, the teacher is an active participant, but the responsibility for building meaning from the text is placed on the students.

Teachers carefully craft lessons to probe students thinking using *queries*. Students often assume that authors know their subject without fail, and that the text should make complete sense. Therefore, according to Beck and McKeown, when the text does not make sense students feel the problem is within the reader. However, the authors contend that teachers must guide students to the realization that authors are *fallible*. For example, when a text is not making sense to students, the teacher may ask, "what might the author have meant to say here?" This query provides students with the opportunity to piece together missing components of the text to build understanding. In order to check for understanding, *interspersed reading* must become part of the classroom routine. In other words, teachers can model for students how to think through a text as they are reading. This way, students recognize that meaning is built during reading, rather than after the reading is complete.

The book is organized in an extremely user-friendly manner. The first section is composed of five chapters that deal specifically with the nuts and bolts of QtA:

- Chapter 1 – Texts and the Way Students Understand Them
- Chapter 2 – Queries

- Chapter 3 – Planning
- Chapter 4 – Discussion
- Chapter 5 – Implementation

Throughout each of the chapters, the authors provide readers with examples from real classrooms to complement the discussion in the text. The second section illustrates the specific components of QtA with 25 cases designed to demonstrate the experiences and decisions of teachers implementing QtA. However, the authors highlight situations that are commonly questioned by teachers as they put QtA into practice, rather than only highlighting successful QtA classrooms. Case 7, for example, is "How do you get students to turn back to text?" The case walks the reader through the problem, how to deal with it, different examples of methods for working through the problem, and suggestions for correction in future work; real teachers, real problems, real engagement with the author in the text.

In this era of testing and accountability, it is refreshing to explore a text written for teachers that does not sell itself on what it can do for test scores, but instead on what it can do for students. What do you think the authors mean by what they aren't saying?

**Reviewed by Danielle Mathson, a doctoral candidate in literacy education at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. She may be contacted at [dmathson@utk.edu](mailto:dmathson@utk.edu)**

**Block, Cathy Collins & Mangieri, John N. (2006) *The Vocabulary Enriched Classroom: Practices for Improving the Reading Performance of All Students in Grades 3 and up*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 224    Price: \$24.99    ISBN: 0-439-73093-7**

In *The Vocabulary Enriched Classroom*, Cathy Collins Block and John Mangieri bring together a number of prominent researchers and authors to "examine vocabulary development from in-depth and wide-ranging perspectives" (p. 6). The authors explain the dual purposes of the book as providing classroom teachers with a resource for both learning about current research-based best practices for developing vocabulary, as well as for learning more about the challenges children face in acquiring and retaining vocabulary.

As a foundation for the strategies presented in this book, Block and Mangieri begin with a brief overview of current research on vocabulary development and discuss what their own research has found to be effective vocabulary instructional practices in the classrooms of exemplary teachers. This research is summarized into five "Word-Learning Beliefs" (pp. 16-17) about vocabulary instruction that form the basis for the classroom practices and lessons highlighted in the book.

- Belief 1 - all words are not of equal importance - alerts teachers to the fact that words selected for instruction should be those students will encounter most often in their reading.
- Belief 2 - students retain words they truly understand and can use when they speak, listen, read, and write - challenges teachers to provide rich instruction through a series of structured learning opportunities rather than the more common superficial instruction centered on pronouncing words and writing definitions.
- Belief 3 - students increase their vocabulary more rapidly when they learn how to use one word-meaning clue with one vocabulary-building strategy each week – reminds teachers that student need to learn to use multiple strategies to unlock the meanings of unknown words when they are reading silently.
- Belief 4 – when students understand words frequently used in texts, they develop a positive attitude toward reading – makes clear the connection between comprehension and vocabulary and the ever increasing motivation students feel when they are successful at reading tasks.
- Belief 5 – expert readers know a large number of important words that encompass all parts of speech – sums up the critical importance of a strong vocabulary:

As our research demonstrates, students taught by teachers who hold this belief were able to determine significantly greater numbers of words in a text with a readability ranking that was one grade level above their own (Block & Mangieri, 2005, as quoted on p. 17).

In the remaining chapters contributors present specific instructional practices and guides for planning and assessing vocabulary instruction. Each chapter begins with a brief classroom vignette and a discussion of how the strategies support the 5 Word Learning Beliefs, followed by clear examples of how to teach the strategy including the teacher's role in the lesson, models for worksheets to support the lesson, and some examples of student work. Many chapters include print and web-based resources that teachers will find valuable.

Discussion Questions, Teaching Activities, and the You Try It sections at the end of each chapter are thought provoking and challenge teachers to work with their colleagues to think about vocabulary instruction and implement strategies in their classrooms. This book is highly readable and a valuable resource for classroom teachers interested in strengthening the vocabulary instruction and assessment practices typically found in current basal reading programs.

## References

Block, C. C., & Mangieri, J. N. (2005). *A research study to investigate the effect of the powerful vocabulary for reading success program on student vocabulary and comprehension achievement* (Research Report 2963-005). Charlotte, NC: Institute for Literacy Enhancement.

**Reviewed by Whitney B. Donnelly, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, California State University, Stanislaus. Whitney Donnelly teaches reading methods courses, MA level courses in reading, and qualitative research classes. Her interests include the nature of collaboration between university-based educators and school-based practitioners in Professional Development Schools and preparing pre-service teachers to teach in urban schools. [wdonnelly@csustan.edu](mailto:wdonnelly@csustan.edu)**

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**Browder, Diane M. & Spooner, Fred, Editors (2006) *Teaching Language Arts, Math, & Science to Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

**Pages: 324    Price: \$49.95    ISBN: 1-55766-798-5**

The editors of this book tackle the controversial subject of what and how to teach students with significant cognitive disabilities. They appeal to the audience by opening with a story of how one young man was taught to read by his parents despite the school system's placement of him on a functional curriculum track. Although this opening story pulls at heartstrings, skepticism came immediately to mind. Teaching students with significant disabilities is an up-hill battle at best and quality of life outcomes should be the goal. For the past 20 years this has been providing functional curriculum that imparts the necessary skills for a high level of independence and community involvement. The book mentions but does not fully address how to combine the time spent teaching general curriculum and providing the tools needed for successful transition into adult living.

At first this book seems to be just another theory promoting inclusion. On the contrary, the editors' are not necessarily promoting inclusion of these students into the general education classroom. In fact, they state that inclusion, "will not likely, by itself, facilitate the necessary instruction in academic content that is now required by NCLB" and later that "inclusion is not a prerequisite to general curriculum access" (p. 7). They do advocate that all students, even those in self-contained settings, need access to the general curriculum. They go on to analyze current access and to suggest ways schools can obtain a level of access to the general curriculum for students with significant disabilities.

On a scholarly level, the text examines an in-depth review of IDEA 97 and the importance of immersing students with cognitive disabilities into the general curriculum. It also emphasizes the expectation set by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requiring students with severe disabilities to make progress on state academic content standards in language arts, math, and science. It is the editors' feeling that "the primary reason to teach academic content to students with severe disabilities is to promote equal access to the educational content all students receive" (p. 5). The book utilizes a large base of research to guide the theory behind general curriculum use, presenting expert data from both the qualitative and quantitative research fields.

Once the editors substantiate general curriculum use as sound in theory, the rest of the book is devoted to practical practices for instructing students with significant cognitive disabilities in the general curriculum areas of language arts, math, and science. There are five main themes around this access:

1. How to identify meaningful instructional content;
2. How to effectively adapt lessons for students with severe cognitive impairments;
3. How to create equitable learning environments through various methods of teaching;
4. How to evaluate and set expectations for these students;
5. How to align curriculum with state standards.

The editors challenge teachers by outlining researched methods, giving real-life teaching and real-life student/family experiences, providing step-by-step formulas, and illustrations of charts and tables. It reads like a how-to book on teaching students with significant disabilities. The lesson plans provided are unique and encourage students to be creatively engaged. The materials needed are easy to gather and inexpensive

enough to be manageable for even the tightest school budget.

The chapters related to accessing the language arts curriculum include four articles written by eleven experts exploring teaching methods that range from early childhood learning to high school teaching methods. Although explicit instructions are given for building literacy, the book covers so many reading theories over such an age/grade span that it seems too vast to be practical. With that said, a person reading the book can hardly miss gleaming new ideas that will help in the classroom.

The chapters exploring math and science are broken into four chapters with twelve authors contributing. A valuable comprehensive chart is furnished which concisely outlines instructional procedures to use for particular math skills from counting and identification to whole number addition, subtraction, and multiplication. The method provided of how to build math aptitude on previously learned knowledge is constructive for anyone teaching math to students who struggle.

The book concludes with vital information on how to align curriculum with the general education standards. It presents founding procedures used by Norman Webb, Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC), and Alternate Assessments. The editors admonish that alignment is critical if students are to succeed in accessing the general curriculum. The following is an excerpt describing the editors' conclusion:

If we cannot align the instruction that students with significant cognitive disabilities receive with state content standards and appropriate means of alternative assessment, we have not completed the total portrait of a quality education for students with disabilities (p. 309).

The editors have raised the level of academic expectation for students with significant cognitive disabilities and have also provided needed guidance to achieve this goal. This book is recommended for instruction of university students who are on track for teaching certification in special education and would be highly enlightening for those on track for a general education certificate as well. This text would also be helpful for current teachers of students with cognitive impairments who are working to meet the demands of NCLB.

**Reviewed by June E. Gothberg, doctoral student in Evaluation, Measurement, and Research at Western Michigan University. Her expertise and research interests are in the areas of teaching people with disabilities, transition, assessment, and evaluation. Email [jgothberg@yahoo.com](mailto:jgothberg@yahoo.com).**

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**Claggett, Mary Frances (2005). *Teaching Writing: Craft, Art, Genre*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.**

**Pages: 182    Price: \$33.95    ISBN: 0-8141-5250-3**

"Each writer finds a new entrance into the mystery, and it is difficult to explain. Nonetheless, I have set down my thinking as clearly as I can." (Claggett quoting Lu Chi's *Wen Fu* on p. 1) *Teaching Writing* incorporates poetry as a useful tool in teaching writing and is a practical resource book designed for English teachers who are looking for new ideas to involve students in experiential learning using practical methods. ESL students, students with special needs, as well as advanced students will benefit from activities that include practical incorporation of the computer and the internet as well. While Claggett is listed as the primary author of the book, she credits chapters on Persuasion and Evaluation to Joan Brown, on Grammar to Louann Reid, and integrating electronic resources into writing instruction to Nancy Patterson. The authors' credibility is attested by the research and resources listed, as well as their academic backgrounds which are described at the conclusion of the book.

As a former high school English teacher, I wish I had read this book before teaching. It would have led me to provide my students with more activities that promote deep thinking and internalization of knowledge.

Claggett has experience as a facilitator for the development of the California Assessment Program in addition to the California Learning Assessment System tests and acknowledges the importance of preparing students to take standardized tests, as well as preparing them for college and the workplace. Accordingly, the exercises she describes seem to address all three purposes, while giving students an appreciation for writing as an art and craft and an understanding of genre.

Claggett uses an integrated approach and guided instruction supported by metacognitive research to address writing as a craft and an art. She gives specific examples of lessons, many of which are conveniently designed to take place in one class period, with rationale and research cited to support the methods. Additionally the detailed Table of Contents is helpful in quickly locating information about teaching different genres of writing.

The author suggests some practical ideas to incorporate poetry into all areas of the English classroom,

several of which I intend to implement since they are brief and can provide a holistic experience for children with special needs, as well as average or above average students. The suggestions include designing rubrics and portfolios for assessment of poetry. Modeling is well explained and Claggett suggests its use to provide opportunities for students to improve their reading, to study sentence structure, and gain knowledge about authors as well as providing opportunities for internalization of "options that they can ...use in their writing" (p.135).

"Wherever English teachers gather, conversations about writing repeatedly include some variation of 'What am I supposed to do about grammar?'" (p. 136) Reid's ideas for Teaching Grammar in Contexts for Writing incorporate student-centered exercises involving reading, writing, and focused instruction. From my perspective they are very doable in a traditional classroom setting.

The final chapter has numerous ideas for incorporating computers into the writing classroom. Patterson incorporates the computer, not only as a word processor, but as a tool for peer response, e-mail discussions, and many other creative assignments. She addresses the use of computers in classes with one computer, as well as those with classrooms full of computers. Additionally she suggests ways for students to interact with computers and other students for writing exercises in classrooms where e-mail is not allowed.

Throughout the book one senses the progressive attitude of the authors and the presence of best practices leading to experiential learning, internalization of information, and application of new knowledge. Its practical suggestions and explanations should be a good addition to any English teacher's library.

**Reviewed by Marla Houck, a doctoral graduate student in the College of Education and supervisor for student teachers at the University of Oklahoma. She was a secondary classroom teacher for twenty-two years in the Oklahoma City area; eight of those years as a principal/teacher.**

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**Coots, Jennifer J. & Stout Kristin (2007) *Critical Reflections about Students with Special Needs: Stories From the Classroom*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.**

**Pages: 147    Price: \$24.00    ISBN: 0-205-49606-7**

*Critical Reflections about Students with Special Needs* is a book for any teacher who daily encounters complex situations in the field, especially working with students with special needs. This case study book provides a variety of real classroom situations that alleviate the surprises and better prepare special and general education teachers for the many challenging situations they confront in the classroom. The book hopes to guide teachers to the understanding that there can be no single recommendation for instructional strategies for students with special needs. Each individual student with disability has different needs. These needs should be discussed from the perspective of individuality rather than from the notion that there is one answer that is equally suited to all.

This book is divided into eleven chapters. The first chapter contains a brief introduction and the remaining structure of the book devotes a chapter to each of the Council for Exceptional Children's 10 professional knowledge and skill standards for special education. These standards include Foundations, Development and Characteristics of Learners, Individual Learning Differences, Instructional Strategies, Learning Environments and Social Interactions, Language, Instructional Planning, Assessment, Professional and Ethical Practices, and Collaboration.

The standards are a set of competencies that all beginning special educators are expected to demonstrate. The case studies in this book provide a how-to approach for each standard appropriately based upon real stories from real teachers. The stories are practical examples for novice special education teachers showing how to develop effective practices in their own classrooms. The book also shows many good examples of how teachers can make mistakes and then try new strategies to improve.

Appendix A (pp. 113-118) addresses the CEC knowledge and skill base for all beginning special education teachers: Common Core Standards. In addition to the Common Core, there are CEC Standards for beginning teachers of students with various categories of exceptional educational needs. Coots and Stout guide the review of CEC standards for specific credentialing areas for the beginning special education teachers. These specific areas include mild/moderate disabilities, severe/profound disabilities, deafness and hearing impairments, emotional and behavioral disorders, gifts and talents, learning disabilities, mental retardation/developmental disabilities, physical and health impairments, visual impairments, early childhood, administration, technology, and transition services. Appendices B (pp. 119-129) and C (pp. 130-146) categorize the case studies by the 10 CEC standards providing references and summaries, and serving as a picture of the book to the readers. Each case study is assigned to specific categories and reflection questions are derived from those categories, but the case studies provide a variety of special education issues in many different situations.

Each case study provides a variety of reflection questions to discuss current special education issues in the classroom. These reflection questions are aligned with CEC standards. For example, one question is "What is your personal philosophy of education?(CC1K8)" (p. 6). CC1K8 represents Common Core area 1, Knowledge Standard 8. Many states require PRAXIS II tests for licensure or certification as a special education teacher. These tests assess preservice teachers' knowledge of basic concepts and issues related to instruction and curriculum for children with special needs. Topics covered by the PRAXIS II tests are also aligned by CEC standards, so this case study book is an excellent resource for preparing for the test. It is very clear that each reflection question in the book relates to CEC common core standards.

Overall, I strongly recommend this case study book to all beginning special education teachers and preservice teachers who are willing to work with students with special needs. It provides open discussion and higher-level thinking skills to solve classroom problems in diverse classroom situations. Coats and Stout do an excellent job of including CEC standards; I haven't seen any other case study books that include CEC standards. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest professional organization of special educators dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted.. All special education teachers should be able to demonstrate CEC's performance-based standards to support each individual student with special needs. The book also focuses on problem solving from a collaborative perspective and inclusion issues. It attempts to encourage novice and preservice teachers to explore issues, problems, and specific situations in classroom settings. This book also will be a valuable resource guide for school district administrators who are willing to provide teacher training related to special education issues.

**Reviewed by Woo Jung, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education, California State University in Fullerton.**

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**Davidson, Kay (2004). *Writing: The Simple 6 — A Writing Rubric for Kids: Getting into the Passing Zone*. Marion, IL: Pieces of Learning.**

**Pages: 200    Price: \$28.95    ISBN: 1-931334-38-2**

The need for good communication skills is growing in our "information age." In fact, writing skills are increasingly emphasized through standardized tests for both elementary and secondary students. Unfortunately, despite the curricular focus on writing, the abbreviated communications style common in modern media, such as e-mail, MySpace and instant messaging, frustrates students' ability to learn more complex writing. Good teachers must help students understand that writing well is a function of using interesting descriptions, proper technique, and logical order

*Writing: The Simple 6*, by Kay Davidson, takes the educator through the process of teaching students how to improve their writing over a nine-week period. Instead of offering a quick and easy fix to a perfect writing project, Davidson provides comprehensive instructions for teaching students how to increase their writing results by teaching what is most important in the writing process. Davidson reviewed writing rubrics from twenty states and distilled the rubrics into six "simple" elements: topic, logical order, interesting words, sentence patterns, descriptions, and audience. According to Davidson's experience and research, the mastery of these six elements should result in marked improvement for students.

The beginning instruction in Chapter Two on rubrics may seem unnecessary to many educators. Davidson makes a good case for evaluating the purpose of rubrics however, and does a fine job explaining how to use them properly.

Chapter Three, "A Nine-Week Implementation Plan," provides the details for the Simple 6. Each week begins with a narrative description of the lesson and is followed by two days worth of specific plans. The lesson plan design for each week is laid out in an easy to review manner. The behavioral objectives, academic standards, materials, and lesson are easy to spot, although I believe that Davidson should have placed the objective for each lesson at the beginning of the lesson narrative rather than after.

Davidson's intent is for the educator to have a "mini-lesson" on Wednesdays that might include mechanics, grammar, or types of writing. This mini-lesson is followed up with two days of writing instruction on one of the six steps. While the lessons for Thursday and Friday are very thorough, it would have been advantageous for Davidson to include a lesson plan for Wednesdays since she relies on that instruction for an effective lesson on Thursday and Friday.

Davidson recommends keeping a single writing folder on each student and color-coding the assignments. Some may find the use of folders and colored paper a bit tedious, especially in the upper grades where educators have more students. This text was written primarily with elementary educators as the target audience; however, any of her lesson plans seem easily adaptable to secondary education goals. Chapter

Five, "Expanding Success for Secondary Students," is an excellent add-on for lessons targeting higher-level thinking. Davidson points out though, that for students with different abilities, it might be best to start with the "Simple 6 for Kids" plans that she has created.

One of the best features in this text is the numerous examples of various writing levels. Educators are encouraged to copy and share these with students as a way to model the Simple 6. Another feature that adds value, is the charts and examples that may help an educator track the progress of students. There are charts to track individual students and to track the progress of entire classes. This will effectively show the results-driven educator which areas need more focus. Armed with that information, educators can lead their students to the elusive 6.

**Reviewed by Jennifer April Sabin, Eighth Grade Language Arts Educator. Frostproof Middle-Senior High School, Frostproof, FL.; She also serves as the Advisor for *The Warrior*, the student newspaper of Webber International University in Babson Park, FL.**

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**Diffily, Deborah & Sassman, Charlotte (2006). *Positive Teacher Talk for Better Classroom Management, Grades K-2*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 160    Price: \$18.99    ISBN: 0-439-69496-5**

Deborah Diffily and Charlotte Sassman are a prolific writing team, with previous projects ranging from a collection of literacy activities to a manual on classroom routine. In *Positive Teacher Talk for Better Classroom Management* they continue their partnership by offering an insightful guide to a topic that deserves every bit of attention it can get – effective communication between teachers and students.

Language is a crucial part of any classroom, touching everything from peer interactions to academic content. In a profession where little can seem to be truly under a teacher's control, positive teacher talk provides a realistic means of influencing student behavior.

The writers have created a pleasing, easy to follow guide. Based on the principle that teacher interactions set the tone for the entire classroom, the book includes chapters on class-wide and group interactions, the role of language in creating and maintaining behavioral expectations, the importance of fostering interactions that support learning, and ways to tailor communication strategies to fit specific student needs. While it does focus primarily on speech, the book also incorporates the use of non-verbal signals such as finger spelling, hand signals, and the use of music.

While an excellent how-to book, *Positive Teacher Talk* may be less satisfying to those who favor research-based decision-making in their classrooms. It offers little in the way of formal justification for its precepts, relying instead on the accumulated teaching experience of the authors. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing. Education has a well-established history of transmitting effective practice through master teachers, and this the book does well. Engaging examples are offered throughout the text, strengthened by the perspectives of both students and teachers, and the reader is provided with pragmatic classroom strategies that can be put into immediate practice.

The book focuses on the teachers of young children, but the concepts it presents are relevant to students of any age. It will have special appeal to educators exploring the use of classroom culture in promoting student success.

**Reviewed by Naomi A. Schoenfeld, M.A., an special education teacher and doctoral student at Arizona State University. Email: Naomi.schoenfeld@asu.edu**

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**Gonzalez, Virginia; Yawkey, Thomas & Minaya-Rowe, Liliana (2006) *English-As-A-Second-Language (ESL) Teaching and Learning: Pre-K-12 Classroom Applications for Students' Academic Achievement and Development*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.**

**Pages: 376    Price: \$73.95    ISBN: 0-205-39251-2**

What conditions are needed for ESL students to succeed in schools? In *English-As-A-Second-Language (ESL) Teaching and Learning*, Virginia Gonzalez, Thomas Yawkey and Liliana Minaya-Rowe effectively answer this question by providing teachers, especially those in ESL sites, with theoretical and practical knowledge of ESL instruction to improve classroom performance. A significant feature of this book is its ability to develop multiple teaching and assessment strategies that positively enhance the academic achievement of at-risk English language learners. By introducing social, affective and moral components in

teacher preparation, this text broadens a sense of advocacy, commitment and empathy in teachers as they work with their ESL students.

This book provides two original contributions to the field. First, it encourages teachers to connect to the socio-historical presence of ESL immigrant students in their schools. Second, it guides teachers to become committed advocates to serve ESL students. The authors implement their thesis successfully by having readers reflect on their own personal family history and professional experience through concrete examples that show the significant ways in which ESL immigrant students and their families have contributed to the social history of the United States. This application uses a cognitive, humanistic, constructivist model of learning theory to help readers make a conceptual connection to the socio-historical, political, economic, cultural and linguistic issues related to the standard of educational programs offered to ESL students. Innovative features of this book include chapters on US immigration history for ESL populations, policy and professional organization standards, connections in assessment and instruction, educational applications of technology, and professional development issues. Numerous case studies, critical thinking questions, activities, and instructional goals are woven throughout the chapters.

Perhaps the authors could have invited other voices to join into their dialogue across book themes. Expanding the conversation to include a diversity of perspectives would have deepened the reader's understanding of issues. For example, in a discussion that affirms the need to nurture the "whole" learner, the authors could have invited an author such as Wigg (1993), who examines the social and cultural backgrounds of people with language and learning disabilities, to enrich their discussion.

On the whole, *English-As-A-Second-Language (ESL) Teaching and Learning*, is an excellent book for teachers and administrators that seek innovative approaches to teach ESL students. Gonzalez, Yawkey, and Minaya-Rowe successfully impart best practices for teachers to apply in a variety of different learning environments enabling them to implement educational programs that positively impact the academic achievement of ESL students.

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**Reviewed by Sandria P. Officer, a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, of the University of Toronto. Her research interests include disability, employment, teacher efficacy, and educational reform. She can be reached at [SOfficer@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:SOfficer@oise.utoronto.ca).**

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**Hargis, Charles H. (2006). *Teaching Low Achieving and Disadvantaged Students*. Third Edition. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.**

**Pages: 174    Price: \$34.95    ISBN: 0398076464(paper)**

What are the barriers to student achievement? Charles Hargis, a professor at the University of Tennessee, addresses this question in the third edition of this book first published in 1989. He believe "most of the problem is with the schools" (p. 6), in particular the placement of students with wide ranging abilities into lock-step sequences of curriculum and rigid standards. While many students perform well within the curriculum others don't and would do better with a more flexible structure that allows for individual differences in ability and readiness. Matching curriculum to students instead of linking it to grade levels would reduce failure and increase the likelihood of student success.

Hargis cites factors contributing to the perpetuation of rigid curriculum structures including historical precedent, perceptions about student effort, lack of tolerance for variance in student ability, requirements of the school calendar, and wide-spread trust in commercial curricular publishers. He does not address the role of cultural based differences and their impact on student learning nor systemic and political themes contributing to the nature and content of curriculum.

Contrasting with a traditional rigid curriculum structure, he advocates for a student centered approach in which the teacher assesses students and matches instructional activities to their learning needs. Cooperative classroom learning structures can efficiently increase student achievement. Hargis builds the case that student centered approaches can increase student success and engagement, and reduce drop-out and failure rates.

The book aims to be readable and accessible but this approach may appear simplistic to some. For example, drop-out rates vary according to ethnicity (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) and method of calculation.



Citing and discussing data reflecting this complexity would have been a stronger presentation than quoting data from a newspaper column. Drawing on a broader and deeper base of the research literature would have bolstered the content and increased its attractiveness for the advanced academic audience. Topics of culturally relevant instruction, the impact of school organizational culture, and the role of teacher beliefs about teaching and learning are examples of current research areas in student-centered learning.

As supplementary reading, this book might present a new perspective to pre-service education students who perhaps have not considered alternative approaches to traditional curriculum structures. It may also be of interest to general academic readers wanting to understand some of the issues related to school reform. Improved and sustained student achievement is critical for all students and the ways to accomplish that remain a complicated research area.

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**Reviewed by Laurel Haycock, Education Librarian, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis MN**

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**Herrera, Socorro Guadalupe & Murry, Kevin G. (2005). *Mastering ESL and Bilingual Methods: Differentiated Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.**

**Pages: 432    Price: \$47.80    ISBN: 0-205-41060-X**

Socorro Herrera and Kevin Murry's first edition of *Mastering ESL and Bilingual Methods: Differentiated Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students* is a modern text on theory and research-based methods specifically designed to promote the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The demographic diversity in schools today is indication that the makeup of the typical classroom in North America is changing and is anticipated to continue to do so in the future. Therefore, teachers who are accountable to educate all students must comprehend what cultural and linguistic differences will signify for curriculum, teaching, pedagogy, and the profession of teaching. Significant features of the book include: standards of best practice in each chapter; theoretical and practical pedagogical plans throughout the text; a case study on individual instruction for a CLD student; fallacies and fact vignettes on instructional issues; self-assessment rubrics; and assessment tips and strategies.

The major strength of this text is the range of mutually accommodating instructional methods used to improve the professional preparation of teachers in accommodating CLD students within various classroom settings. This application promotes the use of socio-cultural, cognitive, academic, and linguistic aspects of the CLD student biography and school experience. Three methodologies are examined for application in professional practice: the integrated content-based method, the sheltered instruction method, and the cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA) method.

- Integrated content-based methodology is communicative and includes synchronized teaching of educational issues with the acquisition of second language abilities. It is common for this approach to develop units based on themes and construct content and language based on goals throughout subjects.
- The sheltered instruction method is used at the grade-level or in second language classrooms. This method builds a lesson with language and content objectives, which are often obtained from curriculum that supports local or national standards. Language objectives rely on the performance standards of CLD students, such as the "Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages" (TESOL) principles (TESOL, 1997). These language objectives are meaningful and are connected to the CLD student's rank of L2 (English) proficiency. Students obtain grade-level subject matter; however, teachers structure instruction to provide clear language input and a customized grade-level curriculum.
- And last, the cognitive academic language learning approach is founded on cognition. It is concentrated on direct learning strategy instruction and the growth of critical thinking to gain reflective stages of language ability.

A minor weakness of this text was found in the lack of case studies on the individual instructional needs of CLD students. The one and only case study in this book appears in Chapter two and effectively illustrates the unique cognitive challenges and processes facing a CLD student. Additional case studies woven throughout the book would have provided the reader with a deeper understanding of the implications involved in classroom and school practice.

Overall, *Mastering ESL and Bilingual Methods*, is an excellent book that provides teachers and administrators with essential methods of instruction for CLD students. The final chapter provides best practices for the instruction of CLD students and explores: critical elements to aid self- assessment comparisons of practice with national standards, critical reflection on practice, and suggestions for the improvement of professional practice with CLD students.

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**Reviewed by Sandria Officer, doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Her research interests include disability, employment, teacher efficacy, and educational reform. She can be reached at [SOffer@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:SOffer@oise.utoronto.ca).**

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**King, Edith W. (2006). *Meeting the Challenges of Teaching in an Era of Terrorism*. Mason, Ohio: Thompson Custom Publishers. (Available only from the author's web page at [www.du.edu/~eking](http://www.du.edu/~eking))**

**Pages: 197    Price: Not Available    ISBN: 0-759-38894-6**

In this world of uncertainty beset by terrorism, *Meeting the Challenges of Teaching in an Era of Terrorism* by Edith King is a timely and needed publication. Framed by the fields of educational sociology and qualitative research, the book presents accounts, studies, and information about children in diverse settings. To combat the anxieties induced by global terrorism, King presents creative strategies that acknowledge our human diversity within an overall context of equality and peacefulness. Vignettes from the lives of children at school and in their families and communities in locations all over the world, are the most enticing aspects of this book. Each chapter opens by bringing a sociological focus to the experiences and education of children. The interactions of ethnicity, social class, gender and disability are viewed as intricately intertwined and inseparable. The book is for experienced teachers, teachers in pre-service training, administrators, counselors and social workers. King's volume features photos of children in schools in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as Japan, where the photos depict children engaged in the practice of cleaning their schools and neighborhoods (Gakko Soji). There is a special section at the end of the book on accessing the WorldWideWeb for further resources.

The book opens with the problem of teaching in an age of terrorism and emphasizes a worldwide scope. Whereas most accounts of peace negotiations feature masculine ideas, this account features a feminist explanation of teaching peacemaking. King provides descriptions of the writings of two preeminent women peace advocates, Elise Boulding and Margaret Mead and discusses the relevance of their work to the current era of terrorism. Boulding and Mead posit that women are more creative and freer to develop different ways of peacemaking; whereas men are usually the warriors. King explains how the terrorist era collides with ethnicity and self-identity. Terrorism is defined as the political performance or threat of violence, namely bombing, kidnapping, cyberterrorism. King also discusses the latest form of hate, Islamophobia.

King's reports of studies and research are well written and updated. Even though King does not offer first-hand experiences of her own on peace-making abroad, the strength of the book is her practical teaching strategies, gathered from her experienced, international, graduate students. A favorite solution is the establishment of a classroom peace table with the peace solution that includes P (pause and breathe), E (express feelings), A (activate your brain), C (choose and do), and E (evaluate and celebrate). She reminds us not to forget the children's accounts of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

I personally am attracted to the marvelous education "stories" in the book. One example is the account of the struggles of a biracial girl, whose Chinese cultural identity provided roots, but not financial help since grandparents frowned on mixed marriages (even with Americans). King does not offer candy-coated resolutions, but emphasizes the hard work behind success stories and teaching programs.

The potent forces of social class, social status, and classism impose threats in childhood. King draws references from the popular Harry Potter books, as well as examples from the research of educational sociologists. The book moves on to the universal conditions of inequality, the role of human rights and child rights. This material is followed by vignettes describing some worldwide examples of social class inequalities born by young children and their families: exploitive child labor such as trafficking in young boys for camel jockeying; the plight of street children in Brazil and India; children in homeless conditions in the United States and abroad. Moreover, inequality in childhood is intensified by global terrorism that puts children in the midst of warfare and toxic environments such as landmines.

The book interprets the themes of bullying and homophobia, as forms of terrorism. Erving Goffman's sociological approach is employed to investigate the dynamics of stigmatizing children, labeling and disparaging them. King then discusses strategies and materials for overcoming bullying and homophobia in the classrooms of younger children. King's book emphasizes that sociological theory has useful insights and perspectives for teachers and educators. Examining schools and families in these times of terror with the lens of sociologists such as David Riesman and his conceptions of three types of societies, enhances our understandings of the current societal scene. The next section begins with an explanation of Riesman's theory and its application to teaching and education in America. Riesman's three types of societies are applied to schools and to education in contemporary China and Japan through the use of personal accounts and experiences. King discusses the implications from these accounts of schooling for teaching in an era of terrorism, including the dilemmas of **high stakes testing** now sweeping our nation and other nations around the world

The popular phrase "unintended, unanticipated consequences" of actions, happenings and events has crept into the vocabulary of everyday life in recent years. King takes this sociological concept originating in functionalist theory, including the terms manifest and latent functions and dysfunctions, and applies these ideas to schooling in the United States, in Saudi Arabia and in Kuwait. Education, the curriculum and schools for younger children in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are featured. She highlights the importance of gaining knowledge and understanding of these Muslim societies where the Islamic religion holds primacy. The growing concerns over "Islamaphobia" and ways to counter this debilitating movement through education are greatly needed today.

In the final chapter "Peace Education: An Antidote for Terrorism," King sets forth strategies for peace education and conflict resolution. Here she offers a participatory learning process that promotes peace building and nonviolence through such themes as ecology, citizenship, human rights, and feminism. Guidelines include building a classroom climate of openness and acceptance where children can ask difficult questions about terrorism.

In my opinion, special features of this book are the reports of studies, research, and accounts about children from across the globe – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, India, Brazil, China, Japan, and the inclusion of the special section, "Using The World Wide Web to Access Resources for Teaching in an Era of Terrorism." This Internet section is extensive, arranged alphabetically, according to related book chapters, and each citation contains a brief synopsis of information offered. Examples are The International Tolerance Network, UNICEF, Partners Against Hate, and the Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution. Dr. King does warn readers about the questionable nature of some online materials. A few examples of misleading information would have been helpful. Some of the Internet sites offer practical information such as recipes for making humus or a henna painting (mehdhi), for a special occasion. Such examples integrate the sacred and everyday aspects in a variety of cultures of people living in the United States.

**Reviewed by Mary Stokrocki, Arizona State University**

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**Magner, Laura (2004). *Creativity Calendar: Weekly Practice Activities to Encourage Creativity: Using 4 Principles of Creative Thinking : Fluency, Flexibility, Originality and Elaboration*. Marion, IL: Pieces of Learning.**

**Pages: 96 Price: \$14.95 ISBN: 1-931334-31-5**

As the title suggests, this practitioner's book offers practical activities and ready-to-use materials to encourage students' creativity. It does so by focusing on the four principles of Creative Thinking, stated in Frank E. Williams' model: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.

*Fluent thinking* activities help students categorize and be specific. They are asked to write an exhaustive list, for instance "List as many things as you can that are white." or a more emotional list such as "How could you show your family that you love them? List as many ways as you can think of."

*Flexible thinking* activities encourage students to imagine other uses for everyday objects. "What other uses can you think of for a paper clip?" is an example of these activities, whereas "What can you do with used greetings cards?" has practical uses beyond the cognitive aim of the task.

*Original thinking* activities use the SCAMPER technique, which helps students come up with something new and be creative. "How would you change your desk at school to make it a more useful and fun place to learn? Describe the changes below and draw a picture of the new desk."

*Elaborate thinking* activities offer students opportunities to draw and/or complete unfinished pictures and write creative titles for their creations. "Turn the egg shape below into a person or animal. Use 'egg' in one or more

of the words of a title."

The book, which is actually more of a *teaching creatively* pack, opens with a brief, yet very informative, introduction on the main points of creativity, creative thinking and how the teacher can apply these techniques in the classroom. It is followed by the ingenious Creativity Calendar where the various activities above are suggested for the twelve months of the year. After that are eight worksheets per month, two emphasizing each one of the principles of creative thinking; these supplement the activities proposed in the Calendar.

The pack also includes: a few more pages with teacher suggestions for monthly activities, where extra ideas are added, also emphasizing the four principles above; mini-lesson opportunities with ideas for teaching students to categorize their thinking and develop creative writing skills; suggestions and pictures for writing creative titles; a bonus activity teaching students to get rid of the superfluous; and quite a few pages of sample activities.

Written for the American market, *Creativity Calendar* features Valentine's Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and other culture-specific topics, such as the changing of seasons. Although this could be seen as a drawback, it should be added that most of the other activities are ready for use in various contexts across the world.

The bibliography provides a short but good list of books on creativity and creative thinking, though the most recent references are dated 1997. The inclusion of free online articles and resources, completely absent from this publication, would also provide readers with ways to explore some of the topics further and faster.

All in all, *Creativity Calendar* offers classroom teachers of all subjects practical, useful and innovative ideas to "SCAMPER" their teaching and help 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders develop their creative thinking.

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Reviewed by Ana Falcao, Cultura Inglesa, Educational Co-ordinator, Aracaju, NE Brazil

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## **Masingila, Joanna O., Editor (2006). *Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 6 – 8.* Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.**

**Pages: 280 Price: \$73.25(hardcover); \$39.95(paper) ISBN: 1-59311-500-8(hardcover); 1-59311-499-0(paper)**

While one can argue that teachers are engaged in action research every time they enter a classroom, most would agree that it is much less common to find them actively involved in formal research, especially that which includes publishing their findings. This middle school volume of the series *Teachers Engaged in Research* delves into the power of inquiry as a lens that teachers can leverage to both view and transform their practice.

This compilation of chapters written by a variety of practitioners and researchers is intended to reflect disciplined inquiry and research that is "much messier" than that which is traditionally reported in journal articles. As such, most of the chapters center on several common themes that I consider to be the highlights of this volume:

- Many of the chapters are co-authored by teams of practitioners (classroom teachers) and theorists/scholars (university researchers) – in several cases, the authors take turns expressing themselves in sections that alternate throughout the chapter, so that the unique voice of each author is clearly expressed and heard;
- The authors, while clearly representing a plethora of different priorities, perspectives, and "voices", unfailingly express their interest in refining their ability to teach for understanding and their belief in the power of reflective practice to achieve that goal;
- Either implicitly or explicitly, just about every author or team of authors expresses the realization that what they originally intended to be research into the teaching of mathematics and how students learn ultimately turned into a relational learning experience wherein they themselves became an object of study;
- Many of the chapters are curricular resources for teachers of mathematics, given the number of authors who outline the specifics of the unit they used for their research, and include student work to

illustrate their findings. For example, in chapter 6, Eric Gutstein offers up his unit entitled *Driving While Black or Brown: A Mathematics Project about Racial Profiling* in the appendix so that other mathematics teachers can use it in their middle school classes.

Overall, *Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 6 – 8* is a wonderful resource for practitioners and researchers alike. The authors are passionate about research yet pragmatic about the messiness of conducting it in real classrooms. The classroom teachers reveal their insecurities about being an object of study and share how they overcame their fear and sense of vulnerability as they became more reflective and saw their practice improving. The scholars/theorists unflinchingly emphasize their belief in the phenomenal talent and dedication of their research partners (the classroom teachers), and the students emerge as the overall winners because they benefit from the passion their teachers display for the teaching of mathematics and reflective practice. This book is an uplifting collection of success stories about how teachers can engender passion for learning among their students by placing mathematical concepts in meaningful contexts, listening carefully to students' thought processes, and assisting them in taking their next steps in conceptual understanding.

**Reviewed by Harriet R. MacLean, Ed. D., Oakland Unified School District, California. Dr. MacLean is a Network Executive Officer supervising middle school principals in Oakland, California, where her research interests include student motivation and issues of leadership as they affect the success of young adolescents in middle schools.**

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**McNally, John (2006). *America's Report Card: A Novel*. New York: Simon & Schuster—Free Press.**

**Pages: 266    Price: \$24.00    ISBN: 978-0-7432-5626-1**

While weaving together a funny and sometimes frightening picture of post- 9/11 America, John McNally serves up an interesting and lively farce in *America's Report Card*. Set in an Iowa college town and a Chicago suburb, the story begins with a broad attack on our current obsession with the testing and retesting of our children in primary and secondary schools, and anyone who has ever taken, administered or been assessed by such a test will find this book sad and a little scary. Testing to make sure no one is left behind may come dressed in the best of intentions, but in McNally's hands there is a putrid corruption in the process that no slick propaganda can wash away. Here the reader will find a crazy, often wacky, satire that reaches far into the contemporary American psyche. Some might be put off by the heavy hand that McNally sometimes uses to clobber his targets, but a careful reading of the book will lead most to think again about the issues he raises.

The protagonist here is a likeable, but vulnerable and failed academic named Charlie Wolf who takes a temporary job with the National Testing Center. Planning to stay only for a few months after graduating from film school, Wolf grades written essays from a test called "America's Report Card" – described as "the government's most important assessment of primary and secondary education" – upon which federal aid to education is based. Paid barely over the minimum wage, and with no benefits or job security, the graders at the Center are themselves drawn from the weird stragglers one often sees lingering on the margins of large universities, perhaps having failed some all-important test of their own. The grading is mind-numbing work and demands only that they reach an invisible and difficult level of high-speed consistency without regard to accuracy of the responses. Wolf declares that the work is "most surreal."

While Wolf is grading the anonymous and often angry essays, the story moves to a small suburb of Chicago where the reader is treated to delightful descriptions of Jainey O'Sullivan, a formerly very promising student now lost in near despair, not unlike that suffered by others at her age. O'Sullivan avoids school for several days, hoping to miss yet another battery of standardized tests, only to discover that she has missed the mark. Stuck with an essay assignment that asked her to imagine having been cheated out of a school election for class president – a not very subtle reminder of Bush v. Gore – she refuses to take the bait and instead sends a different kind of message. In a personal communication to the unseen grader of the essays, she writes a plea that begins, "I don't know who reads these things and I can't imagine what kind of sad life you must have but let me tell you a bit about myself..." In that single sentence she fails the essay assignment, but manages to reach out to another human being – the one thing that such exams can not allow, if only because such responses would undermine the all-important objective of essay consistency.

Of course, O'Sullivan's essay ends up in the pile waiting to be graded by Wolf who is very much in the midst of a sad life and, after reading her plea, quickly leaves for Chicago to serve as her protector. The story gets stranger by the page, and a detailed description here would spoil the effect. But there is a discovery that reveals not only the results of all the national tests, but the government's forecast of future personality and proclivities of American citizens that is based on the tests, as well as a description of television celebrity

Larry King described here as a "corpse that had been exhumed from a long-forgotten cemetery." And, of course, there is a sexy, former girlfriend who is stalked by Wolf (stalked by a wolf), a psychologically disturbed older brother living in the attic and listening to heavy metal while reading the Bible, a father who has been in prison for years for attacking a school gym teacher with an aluminum bat, and a scarecrow hidden in a closet that looks a little like Osama bin Laden and, at times, a lot like George Bush.

Eventually all the characters and subplots collide in a way that is both unrealistic and very entertaining, and McNally brings the story to a satisfying conclusion. This is an impressive feat in a novel that attempts to express the ennui that many feel in the United States following September 11, 2001, and the author does this with an absurd humor, tightly-drawn characters, superb pacing, and a clear compassion for those living through these times. Read this highly entertaining and thought-provoking satire. Even if you are angry when reaching the last page, your effort will be rewarded.

**Reviewed by Bart Dredge, Austin College, Sherman, TX**

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**Muschla, Judith A. & Muschla, Gary Robert (2006). *Hands-On Math Projects with Real-Life Applications*. Second edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 441    Price: \$29.95    ISBN: 07879-8179-6**

*Hands-On Math Projects with Real-Life Applications*, 2nd edition, consists of 60 classroom-tested activities, organized into 6 sections: Math and Science; Math and Social Science; Math and Language; Math and Art and Music; Math and Sports and Recreation; Math and Life Skills. Each activity consists of teacher notes; goals; mathematical skills; materials/equipment needed; lesson development; closure; and student extensions. Further, each activity contains well-written worksheets, with detailed instructions and chart templates. Suggestions to collaborate with other subject teachers or to invite guest speakers are made. Sensitive issues (e.g., student weight) are highlighted to the teacher.

Although the authors state that the activities are suitable for grades 6 to 12, I expected some of them to focus specifically on mathematical concepts in grades 10 to 12. Rather, the concepts are at the middle grades, which include budgeting for number sense; calculating mean and conducting surveys for statistics; identifying symmetry and two and three dimensional shapes for geometry; and creating scale diagrams for measurement. Hence, I would recommend this book to mathematics teachers in grades 6 to 9 and senior courses emphasizing everyday mathematics. The resource book would also be applicable for education students.

In addition to the 60 activities (which take up 90% of the book), three chapters are devoted to rationales of mathematics projects; how to incorporate projects in the classroom; and assessment and evaluation issues. These chapters help teachers facilitate student learning as well as effectively incorporate group work. A chart identifying content standards (number and operations; algebra; geometry; measurement; data analysis and probability) and process standards (problem solving; reasoning and proof; communication; connections; and representation) of the National Council and Teachers of Mathematics (2000) is included.

I recommend this book, especially to middle school classroom teachers and teacher candidates, since it does an excellent job conveying the relevance of mathematics, taught through a problems-based approach. The hands-on and engaging activities provide students with numerous instances to apply and consolidate their learning through real-life situations as well as opportunities to reason, communicate (both oral and written), and problem solve. Often times, students' mathematical attitudes decrease in the middle school years, and this resource plays a role to help alleviate that.

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**Reviewed by Louis Lim, BScH, BEd, MEd, department head of mathematics at Richmond Hill High School, located slightly north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Louis is the recipient of the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education's "Exceptional and Creative Teaching in Secondary Mathematics" (2005); York University Faculty of Education Alumni Association's "Excellence in Teaching Award" (2003); and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' "Future Leaders Award" (2000).**

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**Noguera, Pedro A. & Wing, Jean Yonemura, Editors (2006). *Unfinished Business: Closing***

**Pages: 318 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-7879-7275-4**

*Unfinished Business* is an important book dealing with a perplexing and continuing problem in American schools – the racial achievement gap. Pedro Noguera and Jean Yonemura Wing have put together a book that is heavily researched yet easily read. It contains data from *official* sources and the experiences of the stakeholders comprising the institution they examined – Berkeley (California) High School. It is a report on the Diversity Project, a collaborative effort of the school, community, and university to discover and correct issues of equity, as they exist in the school today. The project was designed to research and recommend as well as to connect stakeholders in implementing solutions.

The title describes the problem as "... unfinished business ... the nation's as yet unfulfilled commitment to equality and justice for all" (p. ix). It praises the goal of public schools as the only institutions with an obligation to serve all regardless of race, creed, national origin, or economic status. Yet even in the enlightened communities such as Berkeley, California an institutionalized racism remains in desegregated and egalitarian-based schools. Following a half-century of improvement in access to quality education, they described as "equity in opportunity," the authors challenge us to focus "on the need for equity in results."

The book is an excellent history of an era, focusing on a major social and educational problem of the times. It documents and describes the desegregation movement as seen in the Berkeley of the past and the development of the conditions that have led to the current issue of the achievement gap for Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged people. Finally, it describes the theoretical and pragmatic variables, conditions, and institutions that demand change, while suggesting solutions in the form of policy and programmatic recommendations.

The problem is known to be universal across the United States. Research has shown it is found in all the large cities and in many smaller communities where an oppressed and/or marginalized group lives. We in Boston see a system of elite public and private schools that have served the middle class (and above) community, while the majority of the working class and minority populations attend "district" high schools with little chance at post-secondary education. In these schools, whether Berkeley or Boston, students of color are underrepresented in measures of positive educational outcomes and over represented in those with negative outcomes.

Noguera and Wing (et al.) show that race and class are highly correlated with this gap even in a system where egalitarianism is a firm belief. The racism is subtle and institutionalized "... through seemingly neutral policies and procedures .... [where] the causes of the achievement gap [are attributed] to the effects of poverty and the unfortunate influences of family background..." (p. 6). Blaming the larger social and economic conditions allows the school to avoid confronting the problem within.

The Diversity Project, that is the subject of this book, approached the gap as a school problem instead of excusing the school and blaming community problems. The racial achievement gap is one that the researchers work to illuminate as a part of the operational structure of the school. The gap is not necessarily conscious, but successful all the same. Race and class continue as sources of the achievement gap. It is suggested, and clear to me as a reader, that these issues, conditions, and structures are pervasive across the country, not limited to Berkeley.

Their research details the effect of policies that place some students in advanced math, AP classes, and language strands that are complicit as causes of the achievement gap. Social and economic conditions that allow middle class students to hire private tutors and college placement counselors give a significant, statistically evidenced advantage to those able to make use of them. As a parallel, the regular students – mainstream, non-AP or honors – are restricted to an oversubscribed guidance staff and college counselors. At the same time, parents of the middle class (and above) students advocate for them with a significant body of knowledge and life experience. This knowledge is not available to the parents of working class and minority students. Noguera and Wing (et al) show that these factors are supported in the research and the experience of stakeholders.

They emphasize that the issue is an educational one that cannot be ignored or simply shifted to blame economic and social problems in the community. Instead, the authors show that the school can and should provide educational material to all parents and students in order to support the opportunity appropriate to these students' scholastic ability, athletic ability, and aesthetic interests. It is, they note, what the public schools were created to do!

Among the most significant points emerging from the research presented in *Unfinished Business* is the impact of research in the process of change. It is clear in this presentation that research itself does not cause change. Rather, the implications of research must lead to policy shifts and practices that then lead to change through their implementation. The active involvement of stakeholders in the process at all levels was

critical to the success of this project as an agent of change. Administrative top-down changes did not alter student, faculty, or community attitudes or behavior. Noguera and Wing show that it is parents that drive change in schools. Students feel disenfranchised in their position as "children," and faculty tend to protect their turf, but parents can serve as unbending advocates.

The information in this work is supported by other reform projects that have shown that research succeeds when all stakeholder groups share in the collection of data, the policy discussion and development, and the programs that lead to desired changes. My own research on reform in El Salvador and Central America parallels their findings regarding this integral quality of education reform. The Diversity Project followed these rules. It involved parents and faculty and created agencies that would continue when the project ended. Committed individuals in organized groups remained when the experts left. The connections between actors in the university and school remained. In many ways the project was a success and continues today.

The major weakness [not identified in the book] was the lack of a powerful sponsor. It seemed obvious that the upper administration and school board lacked enthusiasm for the project. Teachers sought to preserve the rigor of AP courses versus wider inclusion. Parents of the students who had enjoyed privilege and success were anxious about losing their advantage. Clearly the goal of solving the achievement gap at the school level needs the support of all stakeholders to achieve real success. The weight of research proves that the involvement of all groups at all stages of the project is necessary to gain their commitment. In the meantime, the Diversity Project accomplished a great deal "to move the high school beyond the denial that made it possible for long-standing inequities to be accepted" (p. 17).

*Unfinished Business* is an excellent source for school leaders and community activists. It also provides critical information and insight for academics interested in school reform and the dynamics of organization, change, and education reform. It should be on the bookshelf of every university library and every school leader.

**Reviewed by James J. Harrington, principal of Nativity Prep, a full scholarship middle school in Boston. An experienced educator, he researches and writes on education reform and education history, particularly the process of reform and urban schools.**

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**Overmeyer, Mark (2005). *When Writing Workshop Isn't Working: Answers to Ten Tough Questions Grades 2-5*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

**Pages: 152   Price: \$16.00   ISBN: 1-57110-404-6**

*When Writing Workshop Isn't Working* is a guide to writing instruction intended for educators of Grades 2 through 5. Overmeyer's book provides detailed and utilitarian answers to ten questions that regularly stymie teachers regarding the development of a successful writing program. Throughout this book, the author focuses on implementing writing instruction at the beginning of the school year; helping students develop ideas, word choice, sentence fluency, and organization in their writing; teaching students to revise their written work; conferencing with students; assessing writing; preparing students for standardized tests; and long-range planning of writing instruction. Overmeyer makes it clear that this book merely contains a series of suggestions for improving writing instruction, and that there are no definitive answers to the complex task of teaching writing (p. 3).

Although the intended audience of this book is elementary school teachers, the suggestions provided by the author could be modified and applied in middle school and secondary school language classrooms. Overmeyer also provides modifications to be used with English language learners (ELL) at the end of each chapter.

Throughout the text, the author presents specific examples and first-person modeling of writing lessons that coincide with each of the ten questions in the book. Overmeyer also provides examples of student work in many of the chapters, demonstrating the results of these writing lessons.

It is clear throughout this text that the author firmly believes in using dramatic play, visual arts activities, and verbal rehearsal in the classroom, in order to assist students in developing ideas and including detail in their writing. Overmeyer also supplies the reader with several examples of picture books that can be used to model specific writing concepts to students. These picture books may be presented as read-alouds, to demonstrate a particular writing concept (e.g., *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen; *Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe) or as wordless narratives, to provide students with writing prompts (e.g., *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg; *Tuesday* by David Wiesner).

The final chapter of this book features three brief case studies from a second grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade teacher. Based on the author's opinion, these case studies provide illustrations of how effective writing



programs and instruction should look.

The appendices contain two writing rubrics, to be used for the assessment and evaluation of student writing, as well as a template for a yearlong plan for writing instruction, to be used in a fifth grade classroom.

Overall, the author provides several engaging and useful suggestions for elementary writing teachers. Many of Overmeyer's recommendations are reflective of sound pedagogy, and are generally inclusive of most educators' teaching practice. This book would be of particular benefit to beginning teachers, who require a starting point for the development of a basic classroom writing program.

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**Reviewed by Alison Engemann, Elementary Teacher, Beamsville, Ontario, Canada. She is currently pursuing a Masters of Education with an emphasis on curriculum studies and writing development in primary students, at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.**

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## **Richardson, Will (2006). *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

**Pages: 168 Price: \$61.95(hardcover); \$27.95(paper) ISBN: 1412927668(hardcover); 1412927676(paper)**

Will Richardson, teacher, blogger and writer, has presented numerous workshops about read/write technologies. In *Blogs, Wikis and Podcasts* he sets out to accomplish three goals:

1. to help teachers understand the impact of these technologies in the classroom and in society;
2. to challenge teachers to think about how these technologies will impact what and how they teach;
3. to provide teachers with information about how to get started using these tools.

The first chapter defines weblogs, wikis, RSS, aggregators, social bookmarking, online photo galleries, podcasting and video-casting. There is an important section about keeping students safe, a subject that is reiterated in subsequent chapters. The Internet and the technologies describes in the book are a part of young people's everyday life – today's students are what Richardson calls "digital natives" (p. 6). Teachers however are "digital immigrants" who "carry accents" (p. 7). In chapters two through eight, Richardson explains each technology in depth, and concludes with ten big shifts that are happening in education as a result of these technologies.

Richardson states that blogs invite interaction, reflective thinking and online conversations. Blogs can be used in a variety of ways: a cheaper alternative to course management software; a class portal where the syllabus and assignments are posted and can be accessed by students and their parents; and as an online portfolio and place to store and organize homework. Blogs are an important element of the "new literacies they will need to function in an ever expanding information society" (p. 28). Richardson discusses how blogging can improve reading and writing skills and can be used across the curriculum. Pages 40-42 provide a long list of ideas for implementing classroom blogs. While chapter two focuses on why, chapter three focuses on how to set up a blog. He suggests Blogger.com as a starting point, describing how to set up a blog, post entries, and add links and photos. He also briefly discusses other blogging software teachers may wish to consider.

The book describes wikis as easy to create and update web pages that allow many authors and editors to update the content while maintaining a history of the changes. Richardson suggests one potential use of wikis in the classrooms: "create an online text for your curriculum that you and your students can both contribute to" (p. 65). He suggests that teachers and students make use of existing open source textbooks (pp. 66-67) and provides a number of examples from actual classrooms. He provides links to several free wiki software tools and describes how to create a wiki for classroom use.

Next Richardson describes how RSS allows users to read many blogs through one client, such as Bloglines.com, helping one read more in less time. He suggests ways RSS feeds can be used in the classroom from daily news updates on topics being covered in class to setting up alerts on specific search

terms from Googlealerts.com.

Blogs and wikis focus on creating content, RSS allows students to read what others have written, and tools such as online bookmarking allow students to “read and connect with what others read” (p. 91). Richardson describes how to set up del.icio.us and furl.net accounts and how to use them. The text highlights Flickr.com as a way to encourage online discussion about photos posted online. Richardson describes how to set up a Flickr account and provides many examples of teachers using this technology in their classrooms.

Richardson describes how to create and post audio and video files online. He refers to podcasting as the “creation and distribution of amateur radio” (p. 112). Once again this chapter is full of ideas and examples from actual classrooms, such as online radio shows, oral histories, campus tours and orientations. He also describes how to find free server space for homemade podcasts and how to post podcasts in one’s blog. Screen-casting is similar to podcasting, however these files contain computer screen captures with audio. He provides some instruction on creating and editing files.

The final chapter suggests that two trends will continue to impact the read/write web: continued growth of online content, and increased collaboration in creating that content. Pages 127-133 describe ten big shifts that will and are happening in education, including: learning will occur 24/7 and there will be many, many teachers; teaching will become conversation rather than lecture; readers will be more actively engaged; writers will discover new genres; and contribution not completion is the ultimate goal. This section is one of the most critical in the book as it helps teachers begin to understand the speed and depth of the changes occurring in society right now. Richardson suggests that teachers will redefine teaching to view their role as that of connector, content creator, collaborator and coach (pp. 132-133).

Richardson achieves his three goals in this easy to understand book. The only limit to the ideas presented is that of access to computers and the Internet. Some schools still do not have computers in every classroom and some students do not have access at home. Many students are more familiar with these technologies than are their teachers, so while students may be able to teach their teachers about the technologies, teachers need to be able to quickly turn these technologies into appropriate learning tools.

The book is full of examples including web sites and screenshots that provide readers with a deeper understanding of the concepts he presents. The four page bibliography is comprised almost exclusively of online references, and the seven page index provides easy access to the content of this handbook. The epilogue provides a glimpse of what a not too future teacher prep period might look like. To read more by Richardson, visit his blog at [www.weblogg-ed.com/](http://www.weblogg-ed.com/).

**Reviewed by Kathy Irwin, University of Michigan, Dearborn.**

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**Sprick, Randall S. (2006). *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 286    Price: \$29.95    ISBN: 0-7879-7795-0**

I've never been too keen on those cute sayings that many people seem to feel obliged to append to their email signatures. But one of my more technically- minded colleagues uses one that I really like: *Several weeks spent on testing and development can easily replace an afternoon wasted in the library.*

I was reminded of this when reading Randy Sprick's latest book, *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management*. There is no doubt in my mind that this should be required reading for all secondary teachers. Why? Because, very simply, a few days put aside in reading this book before the start of the academic year (or at least, at the beginning of term) will most likely save not only a lot of stress later on, but also a huge amount of time in dealing with the after-effects of ill- discipline — time which could otherwise be devoted to teaching the curriculum.

Pre-planning is everything. When reading *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom*, this message springs out from almost every page. If you want to positively impact student behavior, the best time to start — by far — is on the very first day. Sprick talks about grading (“...more than an evaluation tool: it is an instructional and motivational tool as well”), organization (“...may make the difference between success and failure”), motivation (“...inspire them, and you may just find they return the favor”), rules and consequences (“...should be specific, observable, and stated positively”), and a number of other topics, but perhaps the centerpiece of the book is on how to communicate expectations to students. Here Sprick reiterates an acronym that he has used in earlier books, CHAMP (for Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, and Participation), and introduces a slightly more sophisticated version, ACHIEVE (for Activity, Conversation, Help, Integrity, Effort, Value, and Efficiency).

Anyone who has read any of Sprick's earlier books will not be disappointed. This is a clearly-written, easy-to-read text, well-structured, full of good ideas, and grounded in practice.

Many teachers know what to teach, but have trouble teaching it, because of problems of student discipline. If this includes you, then this book will be a valuable acquisition. As Sprick so correctly says, an effective teacher can indeed be the defining difference in a child's life

**Reviewed by Tim S. Roberts, a Senior Lecturer with the Faculty of Business and Informatics at Central Queensland University in Australia. He has edited three books and published over 30 articles on various aspects of online learning, and runs the Online Collaborative Learning in Higher Education web site at <http://clp.cqu.edu.au>, and the Assessment in Higher Education web site at <http://ahe.cqu.edu.au>.**

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**Stead, Tony (2006). *Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K-5*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

**Pages: 260    Price: \$22.00    ISBN: 1-57110-364-3**

*Overview*

The field of education is in desperate need of more books such as *Reality Checks: Teaching Reading Comprehension with Nonfiction K-5*, foreward by Nell Duke. It is crucial that students in elementary school are taught the skills that are necessary to understand nonfiction text. The ability to comprehend nonfiction texts is critical to student success in middle school, high school, and beyond.

Those educators not yet familiar with Tony Stead's passion and commitment to sharing the joys of reading and understanding nonfiction texts are in for a treat. Those who are familiar with this author's teacher workshops, keynote presentations, other books on teaching nonfiction, *Is That a Fact?: Teaching Nonfiction Writing K-3* (Stenhouse, 2002), *Should There Be Zoos?*, and his video series, *Time for Nonfiction* (Stenhouse 2004), will not be disappointed.

*Author's Intent*

Stead's intent in writing this book, in addition to sharing his obvious personal love of nonfiction texts with students and educators alike, is to provide a greatly accessible, powerful collection of authentic reading and writing comprehension strategies, already shown effective by many classroom teachers, that he hopes teachers will use to help their elementary school students learn how to comprehend nonfiction texts.

Stead recognizes that well-intentioned attempts to prepare elementary school students for the nonfiction texts of middle school, and beyond, by simply teaching students how to decode lengthy words, understand the meaning of technical vocabulary, or use a few new strategies are simply not enough. Nor is being content with using *summative* evaluations that measure only literal understanding, and not comprehension that is inferential, predictive, and evaluative

*Strengths of the Text*

Not only does Stead provide comprehension strategies for nonfiction that really work, he also provides generous lists of nonfiction books greatly enjoyed by both children and educators, alike. He also includes transcripts of teacher-student dialogue, illustrations and photographs of students, and their unaltered work, and a veritable Appendices toolkit of graphic organizers, charts, lists, and rubrics for teaching nonfiction to elementary school students

Stead's recommendation that teachers first model nonfiction comprehension strategies for their students before asking them to practice in pairs or on their own, should be no surprise. Delightfully, he takes his own advice, and models for us, his reader, the instructional strategies he recommends. He accomplishes this by including actual teacher-student instructional dialogue. Indeed, these transcripts provide authentic examples of instruction, yet they also lead the reader into an enjoyable foray of humorous anecdotes – anecdotes that can only have resulted from "kids who say the darndest things."

He emphasizes that we teachers often attempt to determine students' comprehension of a text by asking questions that students can easily answer or retell from memory, or by asking for answers directly stated in the text. Stead encourages teachers to use his instructional strategies to teach students to think critically about the nonfiction materials they read, to ask themselves questions about the author's intentions, as well as the veracity of certain information that may be presented by out of date or otherwise incomplete texts – strategies that are unique, and may well be new to children who have, until then, read primarily fictional text.

Perhaps the most fascinating nonfiction comprehension instructional strategy presented is RAN (reading and understanding). Stead has pilot tested the RAN strategy in first grade classes in Manhattan New School. The RAN instructional strategy consists of teaching students, through classroom demonstrations, discussions with partners, and eventually independent work, five categories of questions, statements, or ideas:

1. What I Think I Know,
2. Information I Was Able to Confirm,
3. Misconceptions – differences between the facts in the text and what the student thought was correct,
4. New Information, and
5. Wonderings – questions that children think about during and after reading.

The teacher points out that the mere fact that some students' ideas and comments could not be confirmed by this particular text does not imply anything other than the fact that they were unable to confirm them from the material presented in that text. Students may be interested in finding other nonfiction sources that will confirm the information they have provided.

Stead cautions that teachers may wish to reserve the third category – Misconceptions –for students in the later grades who are better able to accept that their contributions to column one may not have been correct. Students are helped to read critically so they understand that only information actually stated in the text may be placed in the New Information category. Lastly, the entries under Wonderings provide the connections and inferences that students need to learn to make to other texts, background knowledge, and other knowledge about the world.

### *Suggestions for Improvement*

While *Reality Checks* is a good resource for teaching nonfiction reading comprehension, it would be further strengthened by the inclusion of a chapter on teaching nonfiction reading comprehension strategies to students for whom English is not their first language. These students sometimes have unique, specific learning needs that can greatly affect their responses to intervention or instruction. Even advanced English Language Learners may not completely understand the rules of morphology and other uses of semantics that typify the English language, as prepositions and idioms may simply not exist, or be used in the same way, in their first language.

Inclusion of a CD of all the many forms in the appendices would allow teachers to customize the numerous graphic organizers, charts, and rubrics that Stead offers to fit the unique needs of their school and their learners.

### *Summary*

With the help of many fine teachers who tendered their classrooms, as well as their young students -- eager to learn about snowflakes, fireflies, and elephants, Stead has produced an outstanding book of reading comprehension instructional strategies that will help elementary school children both enjoy and understand nonfiction text.

Just as important, however, this book is it is a treasure trove of great ideas for teaching nonfiction understanding, which may very well lessen what is often referred to as the "fourth grade slump" in reading skills that is observed for both capable and developing readers, alike. In addition to helping children and teachers enjoy reading many types of nonfiction texts, this book will help teachers impress upon their struggling students that they have the ability to become good readers, and that they are developing what it takes to succeed in middle and high school in ways they cannot even imagine.

A definite thumbs up for *Reality Checks* – All elementary school teachers and administrators should gain access to this book; not only is it a solid reference for nonfiction reading comprehension instruction, it is a book I predict will rarely remain on the shelf.

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Stead, T. & Ballester, J. (2000) *Should there be zoos?: A persuasive text*. New York: Mondo Pub.

Stead, T. (2004). *Is Time for nonfiction*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

**Reviewed by Jennifer Jones, M.Ed., J.D., of Eugene Oregon. Ms. Jones passionately believes that if we can teach nonfiction/expository text comprehension skills to children while they are still in elementary school, over time, we will significantly lower the high school dropout rate of America's at risk children. She is particularly interested in the extent to which expository text comprehension**

instruction may exist or may be developed, that is significantly more effective for students for whom English is not their first language. She has recently completed a random, controlled instructional intervention with English Language Learners and English First Language Learners, grades 3-5, for reading comprehension of expository text. Ms. Jones has forthcoming publications in special education and special education law.

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**Tolman, Marvin N. (2006). *Hands-On Earth Science Activities for Grades K-6. Second Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.***

**Pages: 464 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 0-7879-7866-3**

This book starts out with inspiring quotes from teachers. One says that the lessons are very "teacher and student friendly" and I agree. They are very easy to read and use. Another teacher states that not only are the lessons great for helping with teaching science but also that she is using them "to come up with an activity for my National Board Certification Program." Given that teachers need not only to teach the materials for the standards, but also need to pass such reviews, this book should be on every K-6 grade teacher's desk.

A "How to Use This Book" section is not only informative for teachers, but connects the materials of the book to National Standards by grade level. Within this section is a subsection titled "Grabbers,"—those activities that literally grab a student's attention. The subsection then explains how using Grabbers is beneficial to teaching. For example, one benefit is "to introduce teachers and students to the discovery/inquiry approach." Using a Grabber gets the teacher and students into the mindset necessary for learning and doing science.

An example of a grabber (or demonstration) is in a section of the book on Air, Activity 1.25, "What Happens When Air Gets Warmer?" (p. 50). In this activity the teacher puts 3 cm of water into a bowl with a drop of food coloring (which helps the students see what occurs easier). A candle is placed in clay and lit. When a cup (glass) is put over the burning candle the air inside will be heated and forced out which then causes there to be less air pressure inside the cup than outside and water is forced up into the cup. This activity is exciting. I have done it before using tea light candles instead of a birthday candle and clay. It grabs the attention of students, they get very excited and want to see it over and over again. I have used this activity with students from the 2nd grade through 5th grade and it has always been very successful.

This is a great lead-in to activities the students can then do on their own, such as, Activity 1.27, "How Can Bubbles Show Us That Air Expands and Contracts?" (p. 54). In this activity students explore with bubble solution, warm water, ice water, and an empty soup can with one end removed. By dipping the open end of the can into the bubble solution students will notice a film. Then they are to predict what might happen if they place the closed end of the can in warm water, they are to perform the experiment, record what happened and explain why, as well as describe if their prediction was accurate or not. They then do the same but use ice water. They can then further experiment using different sized cans, a can with both ends removed, and they can place a balloon across one end of a can that has both ends removed, the activity also asks them to find other ways to make bubbles with a can. Again the idea behind the activity is inquiry and experimental design, but also the expansion and contraction of air inside the can as the can is either heated or cooled.

The grabber gets their attention and gets them interested in the subject of expansion and contraction of air. The next activity allows them to experiment, identify variables, and also use skills of observation, prediction, communication, comparing and contrasting. grabbers and activities are given for each topic throughout the book.

The entire "How to Use This Book" section is extremely helpful and gives teachers background information on "The Tentative Nature of Scientific Knowledge" and how to use the materials for assessment in "Assessment and Evaluation." Near the end of the section the author has correlated the National Standards with sections and page numbers by grade. There is also a "Listing of Activities by Topic" that not only lists the topic but also what is taught within that topic. For example, under "The Earth" a teacher can find a lesson on the age of the earth or on erosion by using this list.

The lessons cover the topics of Air, Water, Weather, The Earth, Ecology, Above the Earth (flying, gravity, inertia), and Beyond the Earth (topics such as rotation, revolution, telling time, satellites and the solar system). Within each section there is background information, a subsection on using the lesson for early grades, the correlation with the National Standards, the lessons, reproducibles such as word searches, and the assessment piece, "Do You Recall?" On a separate page is the answer key.

The lessons are set up with a clear listing of materials, all of which are easily obtained, a procedure section, background information, a listing of other subject matter that is integrated into the lesson, Science Process Skills that are used for the lesson, and for most lessons a section titled, "For Problem Solvers." This part

asks students to make predictions and then do comparisons based on the lesson.

This book is a complete guide to earth science activities for Grades K-6 that utilizes hands-on learning and inquiry skills. Through this presentation, students and teachers will enjoy learning science while they also gain other valuable skills such as communication, collaboration and critical thinking. The lay-flat binding makes photocopying easy and the whole text is very user- friendly.

**Reviewed by Natalie Zayas, MS, Faculty, California State University, Monterey Bay, Seaside, California. Natalie is a lecturer at California State University, Monterey Bay in the Department of Science and Environmental Policy, she is also a doctoral student at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, California, where she is pursuing an Ed.D. in Educational Change and Leadership. She also teaches science classes for children in the summers.**

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**Worthy, Jo (2005). *Readers Theater for Building Fluency: Strategies and Scripts for Making the Most of This Highly Effective, Motivating, and Research-Based Approach to Oral Reading*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 112 Price: \$17.99 U.S./\$23.99 CAN ISBN: 0-439-52223-4**

Jo Worthy has extended her engaging work with Readers Theater from a series of journal articles into a book length teaching resource with multiple creative possibilities offered to teachers and students. The Worthy and Prater (2002) article has been a perennial favourite for my pre-service language and literacy classes and so the opportunity to review the Worthy book publication was an invocation for more inspired engagement with her work. In my third year of teaching primary/junior pre-service teachers in language arts and literacy, the lived experience of Readers Theater is always the most exciting and popular session of our curriculum discourse.

Worthy provides her readers with a fine introduction to the generative possibilities of Readers Theater. She offers step-by-step instructions and a convincing theoretical back-up for why it works. The text is presented in a highly accessible format to pre-service teachers who often resist difficult "reads" particularly those involving theory. I am delighted that Worthy has provided a text that is easily accessible to pre-service and beginning teachers as well as to experienced teachers. The introduction gives a sampling of success stories of transformative experiences easily confirmed and reinforced by anyone who has worked with Readers Theater. The chapters that follow provide details for the why and how it works. Throughout the book, there are photos of Readers Theater in action to support the excitement generated through the classroom narratives.

Chapter One demonstrates the multidimensional approach to using Readers Theater. One of the most engaging arguments for Readers Theater is that it encourages grouping by interest rather than ability level. Readers Theater can be woven into the language arts program, connected with literature and can be used across the curriculum in subject areas such as science and math. Worthy demonstrates how Readers Theater can be beneficial for students learning English and also for maintaining heritage languages. For resistant and struggling readers, Readers Theater has been shown to be highly motivating. Worthy contends that "Readers Theater reaches resistant readers in a way that few other approaches can" (p.75). In Chapter Two, we are provided with a review of the research on reading fluency and a discussion of the relationship between fluency, repeated readings and Readers Theater. That repeated readings build fluency is backed by research. Activities involving Readers Theater engage students in pleasurable re-reading experiences. Repeated readings become purposeful as students prepare for an audience. Readers Theater also draws on comprehension and interpretation in relationship to expression and intonation. Following the establishment of the benefits backed by theory and research, Worthy continues in Chapter Three to set the stage by addressing the introduction period for Readers Theater with a very prescriptive design for supplies and scripts, costumes and props, procedures, practice and performance. Lesson plans are included. I find this chapter somewhat overly prescriptive; however, I must confess to receiving countless e-mails from students on practicum placements with the questions for further detailed guidance of the kind that Worthy provides. Perhaps prescriptions are needed to support those edgy beginning experiences.

Multiple sources for locating scripts are offered in Chapter Four, including many scripts that can be freely downloaded from websites. This chapter is an amazing site for locating a variety of scripts: poetry and other lyrical texts including Paul Fleischman's poems for multiple voices, fairy tales and other children's books with transformations and variants that contribute to a wide variety of possibilities. Worthy provides samples of adapting short stories and novels to scripts. Teachers and students can work together creating scripts from novels and chapter books. The chapter ends with a script writing lesson which is just a beginning for generating endless possibilities of the yet-to- come. Chapter Five offers suggestions that work toward preparing for an audience: invitations, programs and responsibilities. Readers Theater begs an audience. Worthy provides suggestions for reviewing both performer and audience skills and the interactions in-

between. Especially enticing is the opportunity for the audience to join in. The audience can include parents as well as school-mates.

Another draw for the book is the highly relevant list of supplementary professional references. The richness and the rigor of Readers Theater come to life through the intertexts of Worthy with Fleischman—of Worthy with Silverman—of Worthy in dialogue with so many other voices. I would like to contribute another reference to the resource list with Carolyn Graham's (1988) *Jazz Chant Fairy Tales*. I always open the space of Readers Theater with these jazz chants and then move on to intertextual spaces with other authors. Worthy provides multiple lists of richly textured resources from which to draw materials. An appendix offers a selection of Worthy's "greatest hits" as she refers to them—a virtual potpourri of possibilities that must be experienced to appreciate the amazing versatility. The "hits" include two scripts based on Christopher Maynard's (1999) *Micro Monsters: Life Under the Microscope* bringing science into theater and theatricality into science. The story of Bobbi Salinas's (1998) *Los Tres Cerdos/The Three Little Pigs: Nacho, Tito, and Miguel* delights readers with bilingual features and encourages the languages of the classroom to enter into conversations. Jo Worthy alerts the reader to Aaron Shepard's amazing website for script resources. A further addition to the reference list could be Ada and Campoy (2004) who provide rich prompts for scripting that could easily be transformed into Readers Theater working toward intertextual choreographies of the live(d) stories of students across cultures and languages. Enter into Worthy's work with Graham, Fleischman, Ada and Campoy together with Aaron Shepard and a touch of Seuss and ... *oh! the places you'll go!* ...

If there is anything lacking for me in this text it would be the rich theoretical interpretive possibilities with notions of intertextuality and performativity. The Worthy text is easily accessible and highly prescriptive, which is what many pre-service teachers want, but I believe we need to stretch the discursive possibilities of language. As one works with Readers Theater there is an invocation for a transformation of language. Readers Theater evokes rich language play—encourages multiplicities of interpretive possibilities—opens spaces for multilingual co-habitations. Having experienced these generative interpretive possibilities with both primary and junior level students in school settings, pre-service teacher candidates in teacher education and adult learners of English as a Second Language, I am encouraged by the endless possibilities. Since my own theoretical leanings draw from post-structuralism, I find myself re-reading—re-writing. The book provides for each stage and for each staging. As one engages with Readers Theater, the work shifts and dislocates from prescriptions to re-scriptings.

This book is for reading but the scripts must be experienced—enacted—embodied—re-scripted—in multiple lines of flight—to be appreciated. Kudos to Jo Worthy for this exemplary introduction to the amazing possibilities evoked through Readers Theater. Try out [for] her greatest hits—work the intertext with multiple combinations of her rich references. And for those teachers and students with empirical inclinations, rest assured that your students will be overheard in the corridors articulating: "And research says ...." Readers Theater is backed by theorists as well as by the lived experiences of teachers doing action research. The linear sequences of chapters can easily be dismantled with gigs- on-the-go—a beginning script and a troupe of readers will be eager to perform for classmates in neighbouring classrooms on a moment's notice.

As my students have repeatedly informed me: Readers Theater has a life of its own.

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**Reviewed by Pat Palulis, Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa.**

