



education review // reseñas educativas

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

editors: gene v glass gustavo e. fischman melissa cast-brede

reseñas educativas (Spanish)
resenhas educativas (Portuguese)

Brief reviews for April 2007

American Youth Policy Forum (2006). *Helping Youth Succeed Through Out-of-School Time Programs*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.

Available online at <http://www.aypf.org/publications/HelpingYouthOST2006.pdf>

Pages: 55 Price: \$5.00 ISBN: 887031-94-4

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a non-profit, non-partisan professional development organization, offers a comprehensive over-view of Out-of-School Time Programs (OST) described as slated events designed to provide activities to youth. The booklet contains well-written, thoroughly documented and researched information beginning with an Executive Summary which details the significance of OST programs as worthwhile, effective, and essential in the positive development of youth; filling the potentially vulnerable times of evenings, weekends, and after-school hours.

Part one of this booklet is a review of the literature. AYPF offers a summary of pertinent research on the benefits of OST programs, funding, participation by older youth, and the significance of a well-trained staff. AYPF claims funding is the largest hurdle for programs, the typical cost being \$10-\$32 per day per youth. Creative program directors rely on funding from several federal programs. These funding sources are listed. In particular, the 21st Century Community Learning Center, which falls under the umbrella of the No Child Left Behind program, is noted as having been created specifically to support OST programs with Congress allocating \$991.07 million in fiscal year 2005 for operations.

According to AYPF, positive results of OST programs rely on good quality staffing. Intentional recruitment of facilitators who are committed and engaged with the program's goals and purpose is necessary, as is maintaining an adequate infrastructure to support the work of facilitators and avoid burnout. AYPF references several resources related to workplace and staffing issues discussing problems of stress and overwork.

Part two offers emerging themes in OST programming developed from site visits and actual forums, identifying leadership as the most essential to promote, grow, support, and preserve OST programs. It includes detailed descriptions of effective leadership.

In part three, AYPF offers recommendations for practitioners who operate OST programs and policy makers who provide funding. Among the areas of focus suggested for policy makers are: to consider how OST programs can provide support for youth by expanding, complementing, and extending learning opportunities, acknowledge the need for youth to develop skills beyond academics, and see OST programs as an excellent venue to provide the additional services. With regard to practitioners, AYPF suggests OST programs should have a different look than traditional schools at the middle and high school level, and programming should involve the youth in decision making. It also suggests that to retain participation of older youth a menu of high-interest activities should be included.

The end of the publication lists a number of program contacts (Pp. 42-44), project advisors (p. 45), and references (Pp 49-55). Overall, AYPF has clearly and passionately demonstrated the importance and significance of OST programs while offering sound recommendations to sustain, build, develop, and grow towards positive progress.

Reviewed by Shirley Denson, currently enrolled at the University of Oklahoma (Norman Oklahoma), as a Ph.D. student in Educational Studies (History, Philosophy, and Social Foundation of Education), with an emphasis on the Social/Historical perspective. Ms. Denson also has an Associates of Science

degree in Alcohol and Substance Abuse counseling (AS); both Bachelor (BA) and Masters Degrees in Criminal Justice (MA); and a Master degree in Human Relations (MHR).

Buhrow, Brad & Upczak Garcia, Anne (2005). *Ladybugs, Tornadoes, and Swirling Galaxies: English Language Learners Discover their World Through Inquiry*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 187 Price: \$22.50 ISBN: 9781571104007

This hopeful, energetic, and fun book illustrates the use of non-fiction inquiry for English language instruction in the primary grades with English Language Learners (ELL) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students. As readers we tour classrooms arranged in a non-traditional learner centered style, read about learning activities, view pictures of results, and read teacher reflections and teacher learner dialogs while learning about the research supporting the instructional practices. The teaching learning processes and outcomes are illustrated with classroom photos of students and their inquiry artwork.

Some districts use immersion or mostly English instruction with students who are learning English. Others approach literacy development with instruction and supports in the learners' native language and in English while developing English skill. The teaching and learning described in this book is based on the praxis of using native language and culture as part of English literacy development. The political and curricular debates about philosophies and instructional methods are not the topics of the book. Advocates of traditionally formatted classrooms and instructional methods might disagree with the methods described. Those interested in understanding more about the potential value of learner centered, multilingual approaches will find the book helpful.

A rich variety of non-fiction inquiry methods and processes are used in these classrooms in addition to reading non-fiction books. And, the learning objectives extend beyond learning to read and write to include critical thinking and questioning. Methods include creating and publishing personal narratives, doing content based inquiries, reading books, gathering and organizing information for example with note taking charts, and sharing and giving feedback. Educators will likely find value in these methods regardless of the type of curriculum used in a specific district and school.

I recommend this book for educators and those wanting to understand a model of what can work to help ELL and CLD students become more successful in English literacy. The curriculum described was implemented at Columbine Elementary School as part of a restructuring process in a school with many diverse English as a second language learners (From Our Principal, 2006). But, reading it also raised questions about longer term success and achievement rates and questions about what type of students do or don't fit well into this type of curriculum. Long term research and discussion may lead to answers to these complex and political questions.

References

From Our Principal. Columbine Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District CO. Retrieved January 2007 from: <http://www.bvsd.org/schools/Columbine/Lists/Pages/Principal's%20Message.aspx>

Reviewed by Laurel Haycock, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis MN.

Cataldo, Jude (2006). *Hands-on Art Activities for the Elementary Classroom: Seasonal, Holiday, and Design Activities for Grades K-5*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 225 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-471-56339-6

Hands-On Art Activities for the Elementary Classroom is an excellent and thorough resource made with the true role of the educator in mind. Cataldo addresses outright the fact that not every elementary art teacher will be working in the same room all day or have access to a wide range of readily-available supplies. This book addresses that fact and accounts for it, laying out easy to follow directions for 80 different activities.

The activities are grouped into categories according to the season they're best suited to and further categorized into more specific groupings: general seasonal activities like marshmallow snowmen or leaf frames; holiday activities covering a wide range of holidays for different cultures ñ Hanukkah, Cinco de Mayo, Kwanzaa, flag day, etc., and design activities. The design category focuses on specific styles and skills like drawing, painting, weaving, puppets, block printing, etc. The activities are cute and simple and require few materials, all of which are already commonly found in the elementary classroom.

The best part of this book, however is how Cataldo has thoughtfully set up the directions for teachers to follow. Each activity is designated with a grade level range that it's best suited to and given a description in addition to an illustration of the finished product. Cataldo then outlines exactly what materials are needed, what needs to be done to prepare in advance, and step-by-step teacher directions and student directions. She's also provided each lesson with possible connections to other disciplines in the form of resources (books, poems, etc. to connect to the activity) and essential questions for the teacher to address with the student and explore through the activity. This adaptable and flexible resource would certainly make any elementary teacher's job easier and a lot more fun.

Reviewed by Roxanne Bielskis, University of Toronto

Dietel, Ronald J. (2006). *Get Smart! Nine Sure Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in School*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 288 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-7879-8334-5

To appreciate the sizable contribution of this book, you have to start with its primary premise. Dietel's book lives or dies on the assumption that parents can directly enhance the learning and development of their children. If parents are willing and ready, they can have a direct and substantive effect on the success of their children, not just in school, but in lifelong learning.

If you buy his thesis, the rest of the book becomes a fertile ground of insights on how to best achieve the fruit of a well-educated child. The nine ways for enhancing a child's learning are a series of unfolding areas in which to pursue your parental art as an enabler. Dietel is honest. This is not a book for the inconsistent. If we genuinely desire a maximized education for our children, we must commit ourselves to modeling the behavior before them, working in tandem with those who formally train them, always finding ways to push them to their upper limits of potential, and celebrating their milestones of achievement as they take the journey upward.

This book's title captures the heart; its content captures the mind. Laid out as it is in mentally manageable insights, the book can be paged through backward or forward in search of a practicable idea for moving the mind of your child forward. In 250 pages of ideas with handles, the author persuades you that not only is it possible for you as the adult to guide your child's learning, but further convinces that a cluster of specific behaviors can actually guarantee greater success.

The realism of the book is one of its most conspicuous features. The author knows that children do not always move from point A to point B in a straight line, but declares that detours on the way are the norm. Armed with that knowledge, the parent does not need to despair, but by hundreds of small strategies can help his or her child reach a worthy education level in the end. In fact, the author notes that perhaps the detours on the way might bring a better destination than the parent even envisioned in the beginning. Useful as both a reference tool and as a straight-through read, this book ought to be read, then glanced at a dozen times a year just to keep the learning insights fresh.

Reviewed by Dr. Mary Seaborn, Indiana Wesleyan University.

Dozier, Cheryl (2006) *Responsive Literacy Coaching: Tools for Creating and Sustaining Purposeful Change*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 192 Price: \$18.00 ISBN: 978-157110-463-2

This book is a wonderful addition to the growing literature that offers literacy coaches advice and examples on how best to introduce, implement, and sustain collaborative efforts among literacy coaches and teachers. The title alone indicates not only the intention, but also the style of the book. Logically organized, clear and concise, this book provides brief scenarios that illustrate key points that occur during coaching in classrooms, in coaching groups, or in individual sessions. Brief theoretical references ground the information coupled with specific tools for implementation. Frequently asked questions about the relationships among coaches and teachers and students are offered and accompanied by clear and informative answers.

The emphasis on collaborative inquiry, productive conversations, and celebrations of strengths demonstrates the purposeful problem-generation and problem-solving that engages literacy coaches and teachers. Dozier differentiates among the possibilities inherent in 1) immediate changes that can follow from initial discussions; 2) the necessity for the time to allow more complex and substantial changes to occur, and 3) the importance of addressing the specific needs of individual teachers and classes throughout the process. She describes how coaches must model what they espouse ñ thoughtful inquiry, exchange of ideas, and joint

efforts to brainstorm options. Literacy coaches need to reflect upon interactions with others and seek evidence of transfer of ideas, language, and practices into the classroom, as teachers do when they collaborate with the coaches and each other, as well as with students, in the process of effecting change.

Dozier distinguishes among the practicalities, logistical considerations and conceptual understandings that define the literacy coaching efforts. She suggests that teachers use an agenda, as she does in the sessions she conducts, as an instructional tool that not only facilitates learning, but also serves as a reference point and reflective space. This example of a tool enables teachers and students to make instructional decisions. She addresses logistical considerations such as timing and transitions to illustrate the structuring of classroom activities so as to capitalize on available instructional time. In terms of conceptual understanding, Dozier notes that teachers and students work best within their zones of proximal development. Literacy coaches do not script approaches, but assist teachers in examining and reexamining literacy, teaching, and learning.

Literacy coaches are co-learners, advocates, knowledgeable partners, not trainers or experts. They create and promote spaces for inquiry that encourage and stimulate a community of learners to explore pedagogy in the interest of increasing student engagement. Dozier's book should prove to be an excellent text for coaches to develop skills and insights in how best to function and inspire others to take on the seemingly risky, but especially rewarding, business of reflecting on one's practice and collaborating with others to participate in continuous improvement and refinement of teaching.

Reviewed by Patricia A. Gross, Ed.D. Associate Professor of Education, The University of Scranton.

Glazek, Stanislaw D. & Sarason, Seymour B. (2007) *Productive Learning: Science, Art and Einstein's Relativity in Educational Reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Pages: 269 Price: \$79.95(Hardcover); \$39.95(Paperback) ISBN: 9781412940597 (Hardcover); 9781412940603(Paperback)

Sarason says in the second chapter "in the context of productive learning, both teacher and student are learning...Teacher and student have different frames of reference, which can vary from no overlap in mutual understanding to a productive mutual understanding" (p. 13). His point, made before in previous work, is that this mutual understanding is a necessary part of the educational process. This book came about from Glazek's dissatisfaction with science education. His investigations led him to Sarason's work and that led to a suggestion of writing this book.

The concept is intriguing: A physicist would teach a psychologist about Einstein's Theory of Relativity and together they would learn about how learning takes place from their relative frames of reference. And then attempting to repeat that experience with the readers of this book. Einstein's Relativity requires an understanding that there are different physical frames of reference in order to understand Relativity, so there is an interesting parallel between the two subjects of the book.

The authors' intent is to create within the book an experience similar to the one undergone by Glazek and Sarason; the former teaching the latter a basic understanding of Relativity, as expressed by Einstein's famous equation $E = mc^2$. They begin with a discussion of how the book came to be, a bit about Sarason's thought on the process of learning and a discussion of the film "Mr. Holland's Opus" as an example of what Sarason calls productive learning. Then the book quickly switches to Relativity, its concepts and consequences.

In just about 100 pages of text, remarkably devoid of mathematical formulas, is one of the most cogent and well written explanation of Einsteinian Relativity I have come across. Easily within the grasp of their intended audience of advanced high school or college level students regardless of their major interest. The book succeeds marvelously at this goal and is worth the price for this explication alone.

The discussion of productive learning is much subtler and more difficult to understand. The authors admit that it is difficult to reproduce the interactive experiences of teacher and student in a book and they haven't succeeded here as well as with the discussion of Relativity. But then, that's sort of the point. Science is specific and repeatable. Its concepts are concrete, even if difficult. The process of learning as defined by Sarason and Glazek is anything but. "...the word learning [refers] to a process that takes place in an interpersonal context (student and teacher) and, in the case of the student, comprises internal features to which we conventionally apply such labels as 'motivation,' 'cognitive,' 'affective,' 'emotional' and 'attitudinal'" (p. 13). And this takes place "...within a larger context called 'a school,' which in turn is part of 'a school system,' which in turn is not comprehensible apart from its relationship to other external 'groups and agencies'..." (p.10).

The authors have given much to think about of this educational context, but it might be harder slogging than the Relativity. You won't find any ready solutions; that was not their intent.

This book is highly recommended if you've always wanted to peek under the hood of $E = mc^2$. It's also recommended to those who want to spend some considerable time pondering the social environment of education and its effect, good or bad, on learning. If you're looking for things to implement in the classroom tomorrow or next week you can safely pass on this one.

Reviewed by Arie Koelewyn, East Lansing, Michigan.

Rectanus, Cheryl (2006). *So You Have to Teach Math? Sound Advice for Grades 6-8 Teachers*. Sausalito, CA: Math Solutions.

Pages: 191 Price: \$21.50 ISBN: 10 0-941355-73-X

Cheryl Rectanus's *So You Have to Teach Math? Sound Advice for Grades 6-8 Teachers* has a causal, chatty feel to it and offers a friendly and comprehensive set of comments addressing issues of concern to teachers. The book is formatted as a Q&A, listing 145 separate questions, each addressed in a short essay. The answers range in length from a single paragraph to several pages and are grouped into chapters addressing broad areas of concern such as "Creating a Productive Classroom Environment" (chapter 3), "Assessing and Grading" (chapter 9) and "Handling Homework" (chapter 11). This grouping of material makes the book equally user-friendly to the reader browsing for a specific question or to one with general concerns such as "The First Week of School" (chapter 4). It also means that a quick scan of the table of contents will let the reader know with a fair degree of accuracy whether or not this book will address her questions.

The likely audience for this text is new teachers and most of the advice is highly practical, although there are also philosophical discussions addressing why certain teaching practices are considered better than others. Rectanus's voice comes from her own extensive teaching experience and also draws on the experience of other teachers. Her advice tends to ring true. She does not hesitate to address every level of question, from "Should I let my students sit where they want?" (question #31) to "Why is it important to have students communicate in writing in math class?" (question #62). This willingness to comment on a wide range of practical and philosophical issues contributes to the personal tone of the book, which leaves the reader feeling as if she'd just spend a couple of hours in the teacher's lounge chatting with a more experienced colleague.

Just as the level of attention to any one issue might vary during that conversation in the teacher's lounge, the attention given to particular questions varies dramatically and may in some cases leave the reader frustrated by a lack of specificity. Question 13, for example, "How do I determine what my incoming students know? What kinds of assessments should I give and when?" receives an honest and accurate but vague response which points out that assessment by testing alone is difficult and that it is best to assess throughout instruction. This is true and sound advice but may not be what the first year teacher who is required to put together a pre-test is looking for in practical terms. The answer to question 37, "What might the first week of school look like?" is, in contrast, quite detailed, giving some general thoughts about what should be considered but also providing a day by day example plan (with student worksheets and activities), full discussion of the purpose of each piece of the plan and alternative activities for a more writing-based approach. Chapter 10, "Communicating with Parents" is similarly strong, including detailed suggestions for dealing with various types of conversations and examples of useful handouts that can be sent home.

Overall the author succeeds in giving quick and relevant suggestions with respect to a broad range of issues. The questions are well chosen and do a good job of covering the breadth of concerns that new teachers do and should have. The answers are generally well informed by experience and Rectanus supplies detailed examples of assignments and student work throughout. She often refers to the NCTM standards and her suggestions clearly support a cooperative learning based approach including writing, student presentation, class discussion and the use of meaningful context to support learning. Overall I would recommend this book to new teachers, especially those who do not have a strong group of colleagues within the school to whom they can turn for tips, tricks and support. I would warn them not to expect detailed practical answers to every question listed and to expect an emphasis on NCTM supported teaching practices (which may make the text less palatable for those who do not favor such approaches.) The breadth of practical tips, however, partnered with the ease of locating precise topics means that most will find something useful to take away from the book.

Reviewed by Heather Howell, Doctoral student, NYU Steinhardt School of Education.

Schmidt, Patricia Ruggiano & Finkbeiner, Claudia, Editors (2006). *ABC's of Cultural Understanding and Communication: National and International Adaptations*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Pages: 283 Price: \$39.99 (papercover) \$73.25 (hardcover)
ISBN: 978-1-59311-463-3 (papercover) 978-1-59311-464-0 (hardcover)

Patricia Ruggiano Schmidt and Claudia Finkbeiner collaborate in this text to compile descriptions of a number of variations of the ABC's model which have been successfully implemented in the United States and Europe. The editors begin by defining Schmidt's ABC's model and explanations of Finkbeiner and colleagues' adaptation of this model in Europe. Schmidt's model includes "(a) autobiography, (b) biography, (c) cross-cultural analysis (d) cultural self-analysis of differences, and (e) communication plans for connecting home, school and community for literacy learning" (p.1). Finkbeiner and her colleagues modified the model based on Europe's sociocultural differences: geographically and economically linked countries with different linguistic and cultural realities. This introductory chapter also provides a solid theoretical foundation for the ABC's model.

With an understanding of the ABC's model presented in the introductory chapter, readers will find subsequent chapters useful for teachers, teacher educators and teacher training programs in the United States and Europe. Since many of the contributors are from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds themselves, their varied viewpoints and experiences add to the reader's understanding of the importance of cultural communication in the educational setting. The contributors range from teachers themselves to teacher trainers to researchers and each shows the value of the ABC's model, or an adaptation, in multiple settings.

"Know thyself, understand others" is the key principle to the ABC's model and each chapter illustrates this concept in one way or another. Osetek's chapter poignantly describes her own journey through the ABC's model in a TESOL certification program. Other chapters show the use of the ABC's model in pre-service teacher education and in in-service programs to raise awareness of cultural literacy and competency for teachers in the field. Higgins' chapter shows the use of the ABC's model in business education, proving its adaptability across the curriculum. Two chapters explore the potential for intercultural communication using on-line opportunities. Finally, the last chapter both acknowledges the challenges inherent in implementing the ABC's model while it also recognizes its flexibility and its potential use in other areas. "Development of self-knowledge, learning more about one another, and exercising flexible thinking should hardly be limited to academic settings" (p.270). This highly readable and engaging text is a must for those who teach or work in the increasingly multicultural environment of the 21st century.

Reviewed by Pat Mytkowicz, Ed.D, an associate professor and coordinator of a program for multilingual students with learning disabilities at Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts

Willis, Judy (2006). *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning: Insights from a Neurologist and Classroom Teacher*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Pages: 125 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 1-4166-0370-0

Reading a book on pedagogy written by a neurologist sounds like as much fun as reading a standardized test manual, but Judy Willis's *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning* truly surprised me. Willis has written an excellent book for helping teachers understand how to teach in ways that engage students' brains and lead to deeper learning. The short text is easy to understand, yet filled with valuable information for teachers.

Teachers must constantly make decisions about which teaching method to use at any given point. Complicating the decision-making, however, is the plethora of methods from which teachers may choose, and the fact that proponents of so many different methods claim to have scientific research to support their ideas. Nevertheless, the task of choosing might be a little easier after reading Willis's book. While many texts focus on advising teachers how to implement a specific teaching strategy, Willis focuses on helping teachers understand how the human brain works and how teachers can use that knowledge to choose strategies that tap into the brain's normal processes.

In just over 100 pages, Willis deals with a wide range of educational issues. For example, she describes how the brain stores information and develops networking connections between related data. This, she writes, can help teachers understand why students sometimes have difficulty learning vocabulary. Unless a student is shown the relationships between existing knowledge and the new vocabulary, the student's brain stores the new information in isolation. Storing information in isolation then makes it more difficult for the brain to

retrieve the information later. Conversely, if the student understands the connections between previous knowledge and new knowledge, the brain literally networks the information, which makes it easier for the brain to retrieve the information in the future. Willis describes how teachers can use graphic organizers, visualization, and role-play to help students make those cognitive connections.

An entire chapter is dedicated to understand how stress affects the brain and how schools and families can work together to reduce stress on students and help students handle the stress they do feel. Another chapter is dedicated to discussing many good assessment techniques. In this context, rather than merely describing how to write rubrics, Willis describes how rubrics help students' brains develop.

Of course, in describing so many neurological functions, it is necessary for Willis to use intimidating terms, such as dendrites, occipital lobes, and prefrontal cortex. Willis does a remarkable job, however, explaining such terms. And in case the reader forgets what a term means mid-book, the book includes a handy glossary.

I found *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning* to be a surprisingly understandable, yet treasure-packed resource. And its readability and short length mean one can easily read it over a weekend. Best of all, the book could meet the needs of a wide audience. Willis has explained her ideas well enough that preservice teachers could easily understand the material; in fact, I can see this book becoming popular in teacher education programs. At the same time, the book offers such a unique perspective and valuable information that even veteran teachers are likely to benefit from investing their time in reading it.

Reviewed by Bruce M Sabin, EdD, who is the 6th grade science teacher at Fort Meade Middle-Senior High School, in Fort Meade, FL.



~ ER home | *Reseñas Educativas* | *Resenhas Educativas* ~

~ overview | reviews | editors | submit | guidelines | announcements | search ~