



## education review // reseñas educativas

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

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

reseñas educativas (Spanish)  
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### Brief reviews for February 2007

**Barone, Diane M. (2006). *Narrowing the Literacy Gap: What Works in High Poverty Schools*. New York: Guilford.**

**Pages: 195    Price: \$45.00 (hardcover)    \$25.00(paperback)    ISBN: 1-59385-277-0(hardcover)    1-59385-276-2(paperback)**

The phenomenon of children from low socioeconomic families having difficulties with literacy development is the issue taken up in this book. Barone conducted research to study the root of the question and provides solutions and strategies. She has previously published many works related to elementary education, literacy learning, instruction and research on English language learning. Her solid background and experience with literacy development have made an extremely important contribution to our understanding of English Language Learners' (ELLs) literacy learning. The viewpoints, experiences, and perspectives in this 7-year-long study provide educators and parents with many practical ideas and actual demonstrations that can be applied to individual learning for classroom or home practices.

Barone observed literacy development from the first day of kindergarten to the last day of the sixth grade in a high-poverty school. She states that these students are more dependent on schools and teacher's instruction to gain knowledge than middle-class or academically mainstream children, because most are come from families where parents have low-levels of English proficiency. She argues that schools and teachers should take greater responsibility to assist these children to succeed with literacy development and mastering academic English, rather than blame their failure on a low-socioeconomic background. Barone found that teachers in her study were adjusting their instruction to meet the learning needs of the children.

Barone asserts that literacy success is not only based on the students themselves or their families. Teachers play an extremely influential role. She reviews the literature describing how teachers are more willing to work at financially resourceful schools with students whose parents support them instructionally. While it may be easier to teach in middle-class schools, she challenges readers to think about the purpose and commitment for becoming a teacher. Even though teachers know the difficulties that high-poverty schools present, they should face the problems courageously and teach children from low socioeconomic backgrounds rather than escape from the difficulties. Barone argues that we have to think from another perspective to ensure children's educational rights: these families also strongly believe that education can make their children's lives better and help them escape from poverty. The author also points out how important the connection between schools and families is for literacy development. Although many limitations exist that create frustrations for schools, teachers, and students, still we must have strong expectations and believe in student success.

Barone's data collection and analysis included the observation of students literacy achievement through multiple activities. Her notions about the teacher's role in the high- poverty school is also worthy of consideration and discussion. Barone quotes several writers to show that teachers are the single most important component to student success (Barone, 2003; Block & Mangieri, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Waxman, Padron, & Gray, 2004). She uses positioning theory and resilience theory to elaborate and analyze the improvement of literacy learning. She believes that "classrooms in successful schools were rich in conversation, with space for student choice to influence the teacher's plans" (p.116). Her discussion of the social constructivism perspective emphasizes its advantages for students who can generate and develop more ideas when working together. She provides evidence that students succeed with language learning when they really can experience the holistic and functional use of language.

In this balanced discussion of the issues, Barone also describes classrooms that cannot maintain interaction among students and teachers. Some schools demand that students be quiet in the classroom because the schools want students to behave. This is especially true if the teacher believes she will be evaluated positively because the classroom atmosphere is quiet. A collaborative learning environment takes time to engage and it makes controlling student behavior more complicated. Eventually, there is pressure for each classroom to catch up with the academic schedule; so many teachers feel they must adopt one-way direct teaching. In spite of these realistic constraints, the researcher was able to conduct and to observe many experimental activities, such as read aloud, writing workshop, club reading at different levels that engaged students in literacy learning. She found many advantages for students' literacy improvement from these activities. Findings showed that students are more willing to discuss spontaneously when the teacher let the pupils explore what else they knew. Through dialogue sharing, and exploring, students were not only learning from teachers and peers, but they were also building the connection between reading and writing by interpreting their reading in their world through the rich discussion. The teacher's role as the guardian, encourager, supporter, demonstrator, facilitator or coach that helps assist student's learning is usually described.

The second perspective that Barone uses is positioning theory, which means "the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting" (p.126). When applying this theory in the classroom, it is beneficial to learn about each student's identity and attitude toward the class, the teacher and others' identities. The rich descriptions include how children position themselves and how identity relates to literacy learning. For instance, Anthony is observed from kindergarten to sixth grade as he interacts with different teachers. When he is positioned in a role with high attention or high expectations from the teacher, then he perceives this as a positive attitude from the teacher. He is more willing to listening to and interact with the teacher. Conversely, when the personal interaction was not developed by the teacher or worse was negatively reinforced, Anthony started creating rebellion and disrupted the teachers. Therefore, Barone posits a strong connection between position, identity, and classroom learning. This theory may offer many educators a way to think about their classroom behavior. Some teachers show a preference for certain students in the classroom and ignore other children who also need attention.

The third theory that Barone uses is resilience theory, which explains why some students from low socioeconomic families can succeed in the school. Some students struggle with learning when their parents are divorced or they are living with a single parent, whereas, other students will not give up when confronting the same situation. The theory suggests how important the teacher's role is here. In moments of crisis, teachers should establish mutual trust and a caring relationship because students seek security and belonging in the school. At the same time teachers should keep high expectations believing everyone can have outstanding achievement in the future.

From my perspective, Barone provides solutions that can improve literacy learning for high-poverty schools and families. She suggests many activities that can be used at schools and reminds teachers of their role with students especially with regard to the connection between home and school. From exemplary classrooms, she describes how students learn when they are supported by a variety of activities. This research makes a definite, constructive contribution to how we assist children from high-poverty homes and schools; the purpose of schools and the public policy concern for universal education should be taken into consideration when teaching literacy or designing curriculum for these children. Sometimes, the minority students' rights to education are sacrificed because decisions are made with the majority students in mind. The most important idea in Barone's research study was her documentation that high expectation and building relationships with students leads to better academic performance.

Her arguments are very logical, well supported and convincing from her own data, and supported by other researchers. Important terms have been clearly defined and supported with many different examples. The text is appropriate for the intended audience and it is highly recommended for teachers. It demonstrates activities for the classroom, for teachers to use with parents to establish the connection between home and school. It also suggests how we could help children and schools by balancing school policy concerns with the teacher's stance in the classroom. The book is not only well laid out, and organized in readable paragraphs and chapters, but the content also provides the reader with abundant thoughts for reflection, especially for teachers, parents or individuals going into teaching. Finally, the book contributed to my understanding of how teaching literacy does not merely focus on teacher-centered classroom instruction; instead literacy is achieved by multiple activities of dialogue, interaction, and cooperation. School policies, parents' involvement, and most importantly the teachers' role all determine the children's future success. Every facet of home, school, and community should invest effort to narrow the literacy gap, especially in high-poverty families and schools.

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**Reviewed by Hsiao-ping, Wu, Division of Bilingual-Bicultural Studies, Culture, Literacy and Language, University of Texas at San Antonio**

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**Bresser, Rusty & Holtzman, Caren (2006). *Minilessons for Math Practice: Grades 3-5*. Sausalito, CA: Math Solutions.**

**Pages: 153    Price: \$24.00    ISBN: 978-0-941355-75-9**

*Minilessons for Math Practice: Grades 3-5* is a teacher resource book for presenting interesting math activities in a minilesson format. There are twenty-seven minilesson activities covering topics in Numbers and Operations, Algebra, Geometry, Measurement and Data Analysis and Probability. Many of the activities address more than one topic. While the activities were designed for whole class settings, they could also be implemented with small groups.

Each activity provides a brief overview, materials needed, estimate of time required, directions, and key questions for the teachers to ask students. Following each activity is a vignette that illustrates what the mathematical conversation might sound like. It is these conversations that help a teacher move a simple game or activity into meaningful learning. The authors paint a picture of what rich mathematical discussions might occur from carefully selected questions the teacher asks. These instructional moves are what make the book helpful for teachers, especially those uncomfortable with math. Each activity also has suggestions for extending the learning or adapting it so that it can be used again and again. The activities can be used as introductions to new units, as a review or to keep content fresh throughout the year.

The minilessons provide students with experiences to practice math concepts and apply their newly acquired skills in various problem situations. The intent of the authors is for teachers to utilize the activities as a supplemental program that can be partnered with any existing math program.

I tried out a few of the activities with a small group of students that I see for remediation purposes. These students usually do not enjoy math and are below average for their grade level. Students interpreted these as "games" and asked to play them again, which is reflective of the high interest of the activities. The activities can be played over and over again, with simple teacher modifications making the twenty seven activities last through an entire school year.

While the authors suggest that the first time through they may take longer, subsequent presentations can generally be done in twenty minutes or less, making them a perfect transitional time activity. Some can be adapted so that they require no materials at all making them easily played in the hallway or other areas where teachers must wait with a class. Although it states that little or no teacher preparation is required, I'd recommend teachers take the time to thoroughly read the vignettes and think through how to use the time with the class to engage in meaningful conversations centered around the math. Once initially presented to the class however, they can be repeated by substitutes or others.

My only criticism is that the authors do not provide more specific information on the skills that are taught in each minilesson. While there is a chart in the beginning that categorizes each lesson into the five content areas (number and operations, algebra, geometry, measurement, and data analysis and probability), there is no easy way for teachers to pick activities based on objectives or skills. Furthermore, some activities require some previous knowledge that is not stated. Teachers utilizing this book must read through the entire activity and use their own judgment to determine if it is a skill that their students can do mathematically

This book would be an excellent resource for teachers looking for high interest supplemental activities for extending math. It is easy to read and follow, allowing the teacher to replicate the discussions suggested in

the vignettes. It is especially helpful for those still grappling with how to lead instructional conversations with students in mathematics.

**Reviewed by Kristen Wilder, Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Hartford. Kristen is also the Teaching Specialist at Breakthrough Magnet a PK-Grade 8 inter-district school in Hartford, CT.**

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**Chapin, Suzanne H. & Johnson, Art (2006) *Math Matters: Understanding the Math You Teach, Grades K-8*. Second edition. Sausalito, CA: Math Solutions.**

**Pages: 358 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 0-941355-71-3**

This is the second edition of Chapin and Johnson's book. It has been extended two additional grade levels and now covers topics spanning grades K-8. There are fourteen chapters ranging from basic numerical skills (computation, fractions, decimals, percentages and ratios), algebra, geometry and spatial sense to measurement and statistics including probability. The text begins with chapters on Number Sense and Computation, providing an in-depth analysis of the classification of the types of word problems associated with typical addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems. Chapter 3 presents examples of join, separate, part-part-whole and compare problems followed by illustrations of the typical counting or modeling strategies used by younger children in completing these addition/subtraction calculations. Each chapter addresses all ability levels and gives consideration to the use of integers in numerical calculations. The use of the red and black chip model to explain the addition and subtraction of signed numbers is a particularly useful and interesting approach used by the authors to provide a logical and understandable explanation of a potentially confusing area of computation namely positive and negative numbers. Teachers frequently use rote learning of rules to assist pupils in determining the "sign" of their solutions to these problems; however, the explanation linked to the use of red/black chips and adding to zero should assist pupils in conceptualizing the relationship between positive and negative numbers and therefore understand the calculation at an earlier stage in their mathematical development. The authors clearly articulate progression to the use of a number line and the direction of movement along this number line when adding and subtracting signed numbers and they encourage these as strategies in preparation for more advanced level calculations.

In a similar way, multiplication and division problems are classified according to their semantic structure: asymmetrical and symmetrical problems. These categories are further subdivided into equal grouping, rate and multiplicative compare (for asymmetrical problems) and rectangular array and Cartesian product (for the symmetrical group). The authors use examples to illustrate these problem types and to discuss the typical pedagogical strategies needed to explain the mathematical processes to pupils. They frequently draw upon their own experience of teaching and that of the research literature to highlight common misunderstandings or approaches used by pupils in solving these types of problems. In addition to providing teachers with a variety of strategies for simple numerical calculations using place value, the authors are effective in illustrating the reasons why particular approaches work mathematically, thereby ensuring that teachers fully understand the math behind the strategies so that clear explanations and justification of the techniques can be offered to the pupils as needed. The classification of problems according to type based on existing math research is very effective in highlighting the range of calculations which need to be considered in the classroom context.

Embedding Activities at key points in the chapters is an excellent mechanism for reinforcing the essential learning points in each section of the text. They provide teachers with an opportunity for self-assessment through applying this knowledge in a typical classroom context. The inclusion of worked answers explaining the math processes is an ideal way of scaffolding the teachers' knowledge construction and confidence as necessary. The final section in each chapter is entitled Questions for Discussion and would be a valuable starting point for departmental discussions or continued professional development courses for math teachers. Both the Activities section of the chapters and the summary Questions for Discussion section raise key issues such as the dominant types of questions in pupils' textbooks. Some of the questions can be quite challenging!

Within the chapters, the authors highlight typical mathematical misconceptions drawing teachers' attention to pedagogical techniques designed to challenge pupils' naive models or the unwritten rules pupils create. For example, many pupils think that "multiplication makes bigger, division makes smaller" (p. 85); however, the authors immediately discuss the use of fractions and decimals in calculations to challenge this commonly held misconception.

At the upper end of the grades, the chapters on Algebra and Geometry also introduce some background information on the history of these areas of math including the role of key mathematicians of the time and

interesting anecdotes such as the reason why  $x$  is used to denote a variable. The authors focus on number patterns and the use of algebra to generalize and formalize mathematical ideas. They encourage pupils to draw up tables to compare cases for  $n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$  when looking for patterns in the solutions. There are real life examples of Fibonacci numbers for discussion and also an interesting activity based on the golden ratio in the human body.

The Geometry chapter illustrates the importance of learning-by-doing. Although practical activities and hands-on work with counters and objects prevailed in the earlier chapters in the book, there is a noticeable return to modeling and visualization of the math in the Geometry and Spatial Sense chapters. The Geometry chapter guides the teacher by introducing the van Hiele levels and highlighting how teachers can ensure progression and an incline of difficulty in their lesson planning and sequencing using these levels. This chapter offers plenty of ideas for simple hands-on practical activities which are easy to implement using everyday objects such as tooth picks, coffee stirrers or bendy straws. Ideas for all age groups and levels of ability are available which will encourage pupils to "discover" the properties of 2D and 3D shapes and to start thinking about proofs and reasoning. The Spatial Sense chapter focuses on transformational geometry and guides the reader easily through the process of assisting pupils with visualizing the connection between 2D drawings and 3D objects using orthogonal views.

Although the use of technology is not embedded in each chapter, at the end of the textbook there is a list of recommended websites which support the teaching strategies discussed in the chapters. In some cases the websites are automating a practical process such as coin tossing for probability, while others support investigations such as using a geoboard or offer drill and practice of a basic skill via the use of a game.

Overall this is an excellent book for teachers, instructors, math coordinators, in-service providers and college lecturers or those involved in teacher education programs. It offers a sophisticated and detailed consideration of the mathematical content across K-8, using existing research to describe and explain the variety of strategies used to teach math and to challenge teachers to understand and explain the math they are teaching on the K-8 curriculum. The book links math by topics and not by grade level to allow teachers to engage in the continuity within a topic. For example, there are numerical computations focusing on place value and counting strategies in addition/subtraction problems through to calculations using signed numbers. This book is a rich and coherent resource illuminating good practice in math education and revises all the terminology associated with mathematics at K-8. This is a book worthy of a place on any math educator's shelf and one I definitely will be recommending to my student teachers!

**Reviewed by Pamela Cowan, Queen's University Belfast, UK.**

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**Constantine, Madonna G. & Sue, Derald Wing, Editors (2006). *Addressing Racism: Facilitating Cultural Competence in Mental Health and Educational Settings*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.**

**Pages: 320 Price: \$49.95 ISBN: 978-0-471-77997-1**

This collection of articles provides a fascinating insight into front-edge concerns about racism and transcultural issues in both health and education settings in the USA. While offering very limited insight into the international literature on race and racism outside the USA, the collection has stimulating ideas and explorations to offer to an international audience. After reading it closely, one can see that this volume will become essential reading within its own country for its powerful, incisive insights into racism and racialised issues. It contains bold, insightful analysis into progressive and innovative approaches. The editors and authors of this book have courage and use that courage to explore how power operates in institutions and systems in educational and health settings in the USA.

Like all good, solid work on injustice, it is not a comforting or easy read. Readers should be prepared to be confronted and challenged by every author in the collection. That discomfort and unease are the tools to break new ground in the struggle for social justice. It is to the credit of the authors and editors that they disrupt and discomfort the reader as they confront us with issues of injustice and equity and inspire us to read on to consider, reflect—and take anti-oppressive action in our professional practice.

The book is readable and approachable, but readers should be prepared to consider complex ideas, models and theories and be ready to do the emotional labour necessary. Likewise there is some impact on readers within the professions who are called upon passionately to continue to advocate for social change and social justice in already busy and demanding careers. This is what Sachs has called "transformative professionalism" (Sachs, 2003) and others have positioned as anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive

professional practice (Papadopoulos, 2006)

A strength of the collection is its diversity and wealth of insight from many viewpoints. For example, most of the authors attempt to define racism and most of them come up with intriguing differences in their definitions and understanding of the core organising principle of racism; the role and focus of the individual, culture, institution and/or system; the impacts of racism on individuals, cultures and systems; and the historical and socio-political contexts.

Most of the chapters are oriented to exploration of issues, strategies and theories, thus building conceptual frameworks, but a few report on research into racism and community responses to racism. The introductory chapters do an excellent job of succinctly scoping the complex landscape of race studies, making brief but essential reference to key issues such as trans-generational trauma, critical whiteness studies, overt and subtle manifestations of racism and its impact on both perpetrators and targets. Other chapters address a wide range of issues such as whiteness and white privilege; institutional racism in health and in education; links between poverty and racism and between hetero-sexism and race; community healing; developing cultural competence in the education of professionals; specific ethnic groups such as whites and minorities such as African-, Hispanic- and Latino-Americans.

A glaring gap in the collection though is the absence of insight into and position and voice for Indigenous peoples—Native Americans. This is the one failure of an otherwise integrated and full-ranging coverage of the north American experience of race, racism, ethnicity and multiculturalism. It is always difficult for an international audience to understand two things of academic literature from the USA—why the infrequent attention to its own indigenous peoples concerns when discussing culture and race and why American academics and practitioners pay so little attention to international literature and global perspectives. Unfortunately, this collection is as guilty of those two omissions as other work out of the USA. Readers in countries which are experiencing authentic reconciliation efforts with their indigenous peoples—e.g. South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Canada—are often puzzled by the absence of such a popular movement in the USA but that lack may explain why indigenous perspectives are often absent or under-represented in USA collections and anthologies about race, racism and culture.

We need future researchers and writers to examine racism within the professions and society in a broader economic, socio-political and global context—as has been started by other North American authors (e.g. Anyon, 2005). And as Ponterotto and Pederson (1993) have argued, we need interdisciplinary perspectives to understand the nature of racism and appropriate, effective interventions for the professions.

Constantine and Sue have done an impressive, inspiring job of addressing the issues for the professions and drawing in thoughtful and incisive articles from authors who courageously take on racism. A commonality of each of the many authors and the two editors is the inspiration we can draw from their determination and commitment to address difficult, complex and highly contemporary issues in race relations. This book deserves not just a domestic, but also an international audience and to be recognised for its contribution to a global dialogue and the global solidarity we find in anti-racist efforts. It deserves a readership which encompasses all the professions, but also all people with a passion for radical transformation towards social justice.

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**Reviewed by Ann Lawless, University of South Australia.**

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**Dallmann-Jones, Anthony P. (2006). *Shadow Children: Understanding Education's #1 Problem*. Lancaster, PA: RLD Publications.**

**Pages: 186 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 0-9787610-0-6**

**Editor's note:** The exact relationship of this title to the 2004 publication of the same name, isbn 1881952134 published at Fond du Lac, WI by National At Risk Education Network is unclear. A preview of this earlier title is available at <http://books.google.com/books?id=fSozOwAc9csC&prints ec=frontcover&dq=book+shadow+children&psp=1>

*Shadow Children* focuses on America's at-risk youth, a topic that is of great importance to the future of this country. The purpose of the book is to help readers understand and address the issue of at-risk students in the United States. Dallman-Jones first describes the problem by explaining the term "Shadow Children" and estimating the financial costs being incurred as a result of this phenomenon. Next, he explains how Shadow Children come into being. He then goes on to talk about the problems Shadow Children experience and how these are manifested in school environments. Lastly, Dr. Dallman-Jones discusses prevention and intervention approaches.

Dallman-Jones defines Shadow Children as children who are "at-risk of dropping out of school" or "at-risk of not succeeding in life because of being raised in unfavorable circumstances" (p. 2). Throughout the book, this definition is explicated by detailing examples of "unfavorable circumstances" such as family dysfunction and forms of abuse and neglect. However, I don't feel the author ever answers the question, "Who are the Shadow Children?" The classifications of dysfunction, abuse, and neglect provided are so broad that the author indicates all families exhibit some degree of dysfunction and all adults have inflicted some degree of abuse or neglect on others. For example, failure to provide structure or set limits and sarcasm are listed as instances of emotional neglect. Responding inconsistently or arbitrarily, breaking promises, and not taking a child's thoughts seriously are listed as examples of mental abuse. In addition, several statistics are presented in the book and some of them further obscure the image of Shadow Children. For example, Dallman-Jones states that "only 30 percent of families have a biological parent working at home and the other in a career outside the home" (p. 56). He never explains how this statistic helps to frame the Shadow Children Syndrome. Dallman-Jones also states that the percentage of non-Hispanic White school children is declining while the percentages of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander school children are increasing. He does not explain how these trends relate to Shadow Children. By the end of the book, I no longer had a clear definition of Shadow Children.

In this book, Dallman-Jones emphasizes the importance of the Shadow Children phenomenon by examining its reach and the impact of this population on society. However, for practitioners in the field—educators, psychologists, social workers, etc.—there are very few recommendations on how to deal with the issue. The cases and statistics in this book paint a bleak picture and then they stop. In fact, it gets to the point that the reader may become overwhelmed and begin to think the issue is insurmountable. The prevention and intervention "strategies" are too numerous and too general to be actionable. Dallman-Jones provides several bulleted lists of at-risk program guidelines. He presents a list of general considerations, two lists of what not to do, "nine facets of quality at-risk programs" (p. 106) developed by his organization, and a list and definitions of "15 characteristics of effective programming for youth" (p. 109). Dallman-Jones expresses little faith in educational systems, stating that "nothing is ever resolved" (p. 75) in schools. Yet, he suggests that existing institutions can use the lists of guidelines in this book to create effective programs for at-risk youth. I believe more explicit recommendations or exemplars for dealing with the Shadow Children Syndrome are needed.

The major contribution of this book is that it brings awareness to people who have no experience with at-risk children. Towards the beginning of the book, Dallman-Jones writes three brief vignettes of children who were victimized by abuse and/or neglect. Each story paints a vivid and heart-wrenching story of a real life Shadow Child. They all have tragic ends; the stories almost scream, "This is what happens when you sit idly by!" It may motivate people to work with at-risk populations. In the appendices are lists of organizations that work with at-risk youth and institutions of higher education that have courses of study in at-risk education.

If you don't know some of the social issues faced by America's youth, you should read this book. However, if you are in the midst of the struggle, you probably won't learn anything new. I'm not sure whether Dallman-Jones' intended audience is policymakers, educators, social service providers, or the general public and at times I think it is all of these. *Shadow Children* is not clearly focused on what needs to be done or examples of what is being done. It presents lots of checklists, guidelines, and statistics, but no hard evidence that any of the author's suggestions can address or are addressing "education's #1 problem."

**Reviewed by Jana L Parker, George Mason University.**

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**Doerksen, David P. (2006). *Evaluating Teachers of Music Performance Groups*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.**

**Pages: 80 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 1-57886-441-0**

*Evaluating Teachers of Music Performance Groups* is the expanded and updated edition of a small volume first published in 1990. In this new edition, author David Doerksen includes mention of the most recent research and makes reference to the National Music Education Standards established in 1994. Doerksen is well-equipped to provide assistance to music supervisors. He is a retired chair of music education at the University of Oregon School of Music, he has taught instrumental and vocal music at all levels, and he was a school district supervisor of music for nine years.

In this handbook for evaluators, David Doerksen provides a framework for analyzing the abilities of music teachers. Supervisors, according to Doerksen, should accept nothing less than satisfactory teaching, "as anything short of this is a disservice to the students" (p. 60). Doerksen does not mention audiences, but since "performance" implies an audience, unsatisfactory teaching is also a disservice to the audience. If music supervisors were to follow the recommendations outlined in Doerksen's useful guide, audiences would never again have to sit through band, choir, or orchestra performances that were anything less than music to our ears.

As part of his instructions for supervisors, Doerksen provides a review of the existing literature that deals with the evaluation of music performance teachers. Surprisingly, this literature does not contain a clear emphasis on the importance of evaluating music teachers according to the quality of their students' musical performances. Apparently, some evaluators pay scant attention to the quality of music performances; rather, they are satisfied if the performance teacher has classroom control and the students are enjoying themselves. These evaluators need Doerksen's analytical framework in order to focus their attention on the most important gauge of the abilities of a teacher of music performance: the quality of the performance itself.

In the vitally important section on "Analyzing Instruction" (p. 45), Doerksen points out that a good first step for the supervisor is to "assess the performance level of the band, choir, or orchestra" (p. 45). Thus, the supervisor must have a strong musical background (p. 37) and must also "keep in mind that . . . anything short of excellence indicates a need for improvement" (p. 51).

The finest groups will be those that are not only technically competent, but add to their performance "an artistic or expressive dimension" (p. 46). Groups that demonstrate technical competence, Doerksen points out, are directed by teachers who provide effective instructional feedback. These successful teachers persist in solving problems and "take responsibility for getting results" (p. 51). By contrast, unsuccessful teachers might seek to pass the responsibility to the students, saying "I don't know why they still do it that way—I told them" (p. 51). Such teachers probably spend the rehearsal time "just plow[ing] through the pieces with little or no instructional feedback of substance" (p. 45). Unfortunately, as Doerksen himself acknowledges, "this is the case with many instrumental and choral groups" (p. 45).

While monitoring and supervising a struggling teacher is certainly a supervisory challenge, Doerksen reminds supervisors what is at stake when teacher deficiencies are left uncorrected:

The lowest performing teacher in a school district is the standard-bearer for that program. This is because the level of performance of the teacher is what the supervisor is willing to accept (p. 62).

Doerksen indicates that poor teacher performance "can often be traced back to an inadequate sound concept" (p. 49). Teachers with a good sound concept have "a clear concept of how an excellent band, choir, or orchestra sounds" (p. 49). Teachers with inadequate sound concepts, on the other hand, will be unable to provide "appropriate and effective instructional feedback" (p. 49). The job of the supervisor in such cases is to "help the teacher acquire a good concept," though Doerksen acknowledges that "how a sound concept of high quality is acquired is not easy to say" (p. 49).

Doerksen does, however, provide many specific suggestions for supervisors engaged in the evaluation process. As an experienced supervisor himself, he is sensitive to the nervousness that the evaluation process generates in teachers, and he provides workable suggestions for decreasing teacher anxiety. For example, if the supervisor makes a videotape during the observation process, the supervisor should let the teacher "view or hear the tape alone and keep it in [his or her] possession" (p. 40). As Doerksen wisely remarks, after viewing the tape in private, "teachers usually become aware of things needing improvement and are willing to discuss these with the supervisor" (p. 40).

Any supervisor who follows all Doerksen's suggestions, particularly those for dealing with teacher deficiencies, will need to make a substantial commitment of time and energy. For such a committed supervisor, Doerksen's handbook provides a detailed road map for raising the district's standard of music performance.



**Reviewed by Nicky Hardenbergh, M. A. T. Nicky Hardenbergh is an independent scholar with a personal interest in the teaching of music. To write this review, she drew on her own multifaceted experiences as a school band member, as a parent of students in school ensembles (one of whom is now in a graduate program in violin performance), as a frequent audience member, and as a junior high social studies teacher who has been on the receiving end of teacher evaluations.**

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**Fayden, Terese (2005). *How Children Learn: Getting Beyond the Deficit Myth*. Boulder, Co: Paradigm Publishers.**

**Pages: 256 Price: \$78.00(Hardcover); \$29.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 1-59451-104-7 (Hardcover); 1-59451-105-5 (Paperback)**

With the passage of the "No Child Left Behind Act" (2001), teachers must face accountability in the form of high stakes testing. Opponents of this law argue that the curricula in our nation's public schools will become monolithic and will ultimately fail to provide an equitable education for all students. In this politicized context, it is students of color who are most often taught in schools with the poorest curricula (Nieto, 2004). When these students fail, schools and teachers often blame parents and students for their poor performance in school. In her book, *How Children Learn: Getting Beyond the Deficit Myth*, Terese Fayden provides her readers with a study that challenges deficit perspectives about children of color and their families. She describes the process of learning through social constructivism and how it is relevant for all students in public education. While Fayden's book concentrates primarily on the Pueblo children in her kindergarten classroom, her findings demonstrate that every student can benefit from the teaching techniques she recommends.

In this ethnography, Fayden describes the various methods she used to collect data, such as video-recordings, documents, pictures, and classroom observations. Her work is enriched by her consultation with a cultural insider, an American Indian from the Pueblo reservation. Fayden consulted this insider to gain an understanding of the tacit nature of this particular culture, so that she could move beyond a surface or pseudo understanding to examine the lived culture of the students and families in her study. With thirteen years of experience, Fayden takes the reader into her kindergarten classroom and into the lives of her students. The longitudinal nature of her study is perhaps its greatest strength. Fayden's research makes an important contribution to the field.

Fayden's study while not intended to be a one-size fits all model for successful teaching of minority children, aims to examine and richly describe the emergent literacy practices of her students. Her description is both enlightening and interesting. She especially focuses her discussion on how culturally relevant materials can create a pedagogy that fosters and incorporates all students' cultural and historical backgrounds.

Fayden's book is composed of seven chapters. In the first chapter, she critiques various theoretical frameworks that perpetuate deficit perspectives in education. The second chapter is a concise historical discussion of the Pueblo community. Chapters 3-6 examine the emergent literacy practices, both reading and writing, of Fayden's students. The last chapter provides the reader with a thought provoking discussion of multicultural education and includes recommendations for a multicultural pedagogy that takes a stance of inquiry in the classroom (Ladson-Billings 1994; Valdes 1996; Perez 1998). This book is intended for multiple audiences—teachers, students, and researchers. Each will appreciate and learn from Fayden's thoughtful story of students who have been silenced through colonization, oppression, and institutional discrimination.

Fayden begins by discussing how testing in kindergarten can have detrimental effects for students of color and how this testing can be used to maintain dominant ideologies in the classroom that insinuate cultural deprivation. Fayden states that she was forewarned by other teachers about the skills that Pueblo children lacked when they entered school. These teachers' assumptions were maintained and supported primarily by testing. Kindergartners took two tests, the Early Prevention of School Failure test and the Goodenough-Harris Draw-a-Person test. Both were used to assess students' intellectual and cognitive skills. Fayden concludes that these instruments are not valid in assessing the Pueblo children's capabilities because the tests' underlying assumptions of knowledge did not match the knowledge of Pueblo children stemming from their cultural background. Pueblo social construction differs from its white, middle-class counterparts. Both tests are normed on white, middle-class children and families. However, based on the testing program, Fayden's school felt justified in providing Pueblo children with a watered-down curriculum.

While, Fayden's discussion of testing is limited to chapter one, it is important because it addresses the detrimental consequences that testing can have for students of color. Additionally, it addresses the need for a multicultural curriculum that is not centered on and tailored to white, middle-class families. Fayden provides the reader with arguments to counter the forewarnings she received which were biased and untrue. The children in her classroom were intelligent children and their families cared tremendously about their education.

The rest of this review will focus on chapters 3-6 because they best illustrate these findings.

Fayden discusses how to use the students' social construction of learning in the classroom. Their primary learning is explained in terms of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development or Zoped. In this context, Pueblo children learned from one another in groups. Fayden found that students learned best from peer observation, copying, and collaborating. For example, Fayden describes how she promoted "group writing time" in class. The activity initially began as a 20 minute time in which children were given pencils, markers, crayons, and paper. They were also given staplers, tape, glue, construction paper, and craft material. Fayden allowed the students to use these materials to creatively explore literacy. She found that group writing activities were successful because they were congruent with the students' cultural background. For example, the Pueblo tribe is communal and they engage in activities that facilitate group assistance. Thus, taking a stance of inquiry, Fayden used students' cultural background to facilitate an understanding of print and writing. Yet, this activity is not merely for children of color. Fayden discusses how group activities that hone in on children's Zoped can be successful for all children.

Fayden advocates educators use a combination of phonics and whole language for literacy learning in the classroom. An example of this in Fayden's classroom was the school's post office activity. Fayden received a grant to establish a K-6 school wide post office. Play post boxes were placed in every classroom. Students began to write letters to one another in the various classrooms. Fayden modeled and taught students about the "formalities" of letters such as dates, salutation, the body, and the closing. In this activity, Fayden's students began to build their vocabulary and asked how to spell additional words such as mom, dad, sister, etc. Students began to explore words by trying to spell them out in their own way. Fayden assisted using both phonics and whole language. Literacy learning continued at home as parents reported that children wanted to write letters to relatives. Fayden argues that as students' writing emerged, their abilities challenged deficit perspectives.

Fayden describes three aims she wishes to accomplish in chapter 6: to address the pitfalls of the traditional model of education; to examine institutional discriminatory practices used against American Indians; and to interrogate "pseudo multiculturalism" (p. 131). A traditional model of education is an authoritative stance that sees students as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Teachers are the primary instruments of knowledge. Learning is not collaborative. Yet, Fayden found that drawing on student's lived reality and their cultural background and history was important in fostering what Freire (1974) calls a critical pedagogy. Fayden cites Freire (1974) in advocating for critical pedagogy because "students will have an increased awareness of their political, economic, and social circumstance, and thus, will ultimately effect social change" (p. 138). This is similar to Ladson-Billings' (1994) findings on culturally-relevant teaching as opposed to an assimilationist model of learning in the classroom. Thus, Fayden argues against pseudo-multiculturalism in schools. She critiques her school for employing multiculturalism that merely represents culture at the surface, in the form of food and clothing. The school stayed away from the dangerous topics of racism by ignoring the issue. Fayden discusses the book, *The Courage of Sarah Noble* as an example of the schools' omission of difficult issues. This Newbery Honor book was banned by the fifth grade teacher because of its racist content. Fayden argues that to truly examine the racist content, the school should have kept the book and allowed students to discuss their understanding of the book, using their cultural and historical background.

Fayden's recommendations at the end of the book are intended to assist her audience with understanding culturally relevant teaching. She calls for a multicultural pedagogy that examines critical learning in literacy. She also challenges her audience to rethink their own biases and instead take a stance of inquiry. Finally, the findings within the Pueblo community, and more importantly the process of examination and adaptation, can be broadly applied to other communities because Fayden models in rich and powerful ways how to promote student learning through social constructivism.

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**Reviewed by Carmen Guzman-Martinez, M.A., University of Texas at San Antonio**

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**Felix, Carolyn & Snowdy, Paula, editors (2006). *The Math Coach Field Guide: Charting Your Course*. Sausalito, CA: Math Solutions.**

**Pages: 144 Price: \$16.50 ISBN: 0-941355-72-1**

*The Math Coach Field Guide: Charting Your Course* consists of 11 chapters written by elementary mathematics coaches and specialists, responsible for supporting their colleagues in enhancing the teaching and learning of mathematics. The contributors, reflective and visionary, passionately share their successes and challenges.

Chapters focus on guiding principles to being a successful math coach; creating a collaborative learning community; supporting reluctant teachers; co-teaching; using math bulletin boards and lesson observation forms to structure teacher growth; and empowering teachers to take ownership. Key messages include listening to and respecting teachers (both intellectually and emotionally); developing safe and trusting environments; supporting, facilitating, modeling, and being a co-learner; and inviting teachers to professionally grow through reflecting and sharing of experiences (e.g., through inservice meetings, conferences).

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and highly recommend it to elementary math coaches and specialists. The editors have done a wonderful job in their efforts to convey the complexity of teaching and to ensure the chapters are interesting and accessible for "in the trench" educators. I also appreciate the tone of the book, with the contributors talking with (rather than to or at) me. Even though the focus is on elementary mathematics, I found the advice and strategies resonated with my own responsibilities as a secondary school mathematics department head. Where was such a book when I was appointed to this leadership position? The publication is timely since there is a push to increase retention of new and experienced teachers, or as Patricia Smith says in the last chapter, "to enable new and energetic young teachers to take wings and soar...rekindle the fires in burned-out teachers" (p. 123).

**Reviewed by Louis Lim, BScHons, BEd, MEd, department head of mathematics at Richmond Hill High School, located slightly north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He has hosted 15 teacher candidates and is a part-time Additional Qualifications instructor with Queen's University. He 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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**James, Amy (2006). *Kindergarten Success: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Child Learn*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 228 Price: \$14.95 ISBN: 978-0-471-74813-7**

As teachers and administrators focus attention on standards, assessments, and the No Child Left Behind Act, parents search for the meaning of such initiatives and how their children's schools measure up. More importantly, parents want to know how they can support their children's learning to be successful. James has written a Knowledge Essential series for parents; this particular text focuses on the kindergarten age child.

James and her company, Six Things, Inc. have aligned all fifty state standards to the National Subject Area Association learning standards, as well as to "many [school districts'] core curriculum and supplemental educational materials" (p. 3). James writes that there are few discrepancies in curricula from region to region. This text offers experiences that are meaningful and supportive to children and parents in a variety of subjects and content areas. This book is offered as a tool to support—even enhance—a kindergarten curriculum in public, private and/or home schooling settings.

At first blush, the title suggests this is another in the "bullet-pointed, ten easy steps to success" genre of

books with an appealing title that resonates well, from a marketing perspective, with those parents pondering and grappling with their child's entry into kindergarten. We can all acknowledge that children's learning and skill development are seldom smooth or particularly easy journeys.

Some of the several strengths of this book lie in (1.) the Quick Tips activities intended to foster a natural and playful interaction between parent and child for subjects including reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science, and (2.) easy-to-read charts that identify and explain potential (anticipated) child behaviors along with beginning and ending knowledge and skills for kindergarteners.

The book's premise is relevant and worthy, i.e., "a tool to help solve the mystery behind creating a supportive, learning-rich environment" in the home while fostering child development and enhancing curriculum (p.2).

As an experienced educator and advocate of early childhood education, I respect this premise, but suspect parents would find it helpful to understand *other* information processing preferences or profiles their children will likely experience beyond the three James has identified, i.e., auditory, physical (kinesthetic), and verbal. That said, focusing on these three "learning styles" does present parents with opportunities to recognize variations in their children's interests and understanding.

Another area that I suspect parents would find helpful is related to the chapters on foundational child development. While James' writing is very ambitious, as a teacher educator I have found Bloom's taxonomy is often difficult for pre-service teachers to fully grasp even though they may have taken a child development course. James offers this information to parents to prompt their questions while implementing activities with their children to determine/assess "the level at which a child understands new information" (p.25). This section could benefit from more examples of Bloom's theory.

Teacher educators, teachers, and administrators all recognize how time, resources, social, psychological, biological and familial variables can influence learning. James book is very appealing and worthy in that regard and will likely work well for parents of "means," but perhaps less so for parents in lower socio-economic arenas and parents with children having special needs (including at-risk, ESL) or parents who themselves have limited reading abilities.

These comments then beg the question of how this book might be adapted for a broader use. Again, as a teacher educator I envision this text being purchased by teachers who would then adapt their experiences for families, perhaps in "activity bags" or for individual families especially as teacher/family partnerships develop.

James' book offers a starting point for teachers, administrators and families in working together to foster children's learning and skill development in this age of accountability and assessment.

**Reviewed by Deborah A. Moberly, University of Memphis.**

**Johnson, W. Brad (2006). *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.**

**Pages: 260 Price: \$69.95 (hardcover); \$29.95 (paperback) ISBN: 0-8058-4896-7 (hardcover); 0-8058-4897-5 (paperback)**

As the benchmark for tenure and promotion is raised at almost every institution regardless of type, and the phrase "publish or perish" takes on greater meaning for faculty members everywhere, working closely with students in an effort to develop their intellectual curiosity and to help plan their careers is a task that receives all too little attention. For the most part, faculty members are neither recognized nor rewarded by their deans and department heads for such activities. Indeed, as institutional presidents and provosts play the "prestige game" by focusing on the number of international collaborations established and the number of sponsored contracts secured, student learning and the quality of the student-faculty relationship can become low priorities.

Despite recent trends in higher education that decrease the opportunity for deep and purposeful student-faculty relationships, such as the increased use of part-time faculty, the development of executive or professionally-oriented graduate programs, distance learning, and the commercialization of curriculum content, Johnson, in his book entitled, *On being a mentor: A guide for higher education faculty* argues that mentoring is crucial to the academy's survival and I agree. This volume is easy to read and is filled with sound advice, supported by an integrated review of the available research on what a mentoring relationship is

and how it can be developed, nurtured, and evaluated. It is a comprehensive examination of mentoring and should be required reading in all faculty development programs.

The book is divided into sixteen chapters and four sections. In part 1, Johnson focuses on the importance of mentoring, what mentoring is, and gives examples of exemplary mentoring through a series of short vignettes that cover a variety of mentoring relationships: mentoring an undergraduate student, mentoring a graduate student, and mentoring a new faculty member. Johnson's use of the research on mentoring in the first chapter entitled, Why Mentoring Matters is particularly effective. The benefits to the student, faculty member, the institution, and the profession are clearly stated and are compelling.

Part 2, On Being a Mentor, focuses on the requisite behaviors and skills of effective mentors. In chapter 4, Johnson identifies, through the use of the literature, psychosocial support, career development support, and role modeling as the three major categories of mentor behavior. He then goes on to define and illustrate 18 behaviors that help create outstanding mentoring relationships. These are: being accessible, being selective, providing encouragement, teaching and training, clarifying expectations, initiating sponsorship, demystifying the system, encouraging risk taking, nurturing the dream, providing exposure, being a model, protecting when necessary, fostering networks, providing professional socialization, delivering feedback, self-disclosing when appropriate, counseling, and allowing increased mutuality and collegiality. This is an important list and is perhaps the most helpful chapter in the book for those who plan to mentor.

Chapters 5, 7, & 8 include discussions of mentorship qualities, the common phases of mentoring relationships and the ethical consideration connected with the mentoring process, respectively. These concepts are well grounded in the literature. The references made to the separation and redefinition phases of the mentoring relationship found in Chapter 7 are particularly helpful. As with life, most of us focus our attention on the "doing" and neglect to plan for the eventual end to important chapters in our lives. The last chapter in this part of the book speaks to the complexity of the mentoring relationship that involves multiple and overlapping roles (e.g., instructor, evaluator, supervisor, advisor, friend, and colleague). Johnson covers the fiduciary nature of this relationship and the ethical issues connected with it with great care.

Chapter 6 addresses how to design a mentorship. Johnson encourages the use of a contract and provides a well-defined structure as a way to construct a transparent and purposeful mentor relationship. I found these suggestions to be somewhat at odds with the notions previously offered. Earlier in the book, Johnson discusses the informal and evolutionary way that protégés and mentors find one another. The recommended structures found in this chapter seem to contradict the tone in previous chapters. Perhaps it is all about timing. Certainly, as the mentoring relationship is established and as it matures, using such tools to ensure the potency and productivity of this relationship would be positive.

Part 3 of the book deals with the issues connected with mentoring specific groups. Undergraduates, graduate students, and new faculty members receive special attention in separate chapters. Consideration is also given to faculty members who mentor across sexual and racial lines. Developmental and lifespan theories are discussed and individual and organizational perspectives are reviewed. As college student populations become more diverse, the content in these chapters becomes even more important. The developmental theory and life position of each group are discussed in detail. Obstacles to mentoring each group are also identified.

Managing mentorships is the focus of the last part of the book. While these chapters might be most useful for department heads and deans, those who mentor will find Chapter 14, on the diagnosis and treatment of mentorship dysfunction, very helpful. The reminders and tips on how to recognize a mentorship gone wrong are particularly noteworthy. Johnson uses several vignettes to illustrate common problems and integrates these with topics covered in previous chapters.

Chapter 15 summarizes a variety of strategies that can be used to evaluate mentoring outcomes. An array of evaluation forms is found in this chapter and the use of each is discussed in detail. I am reminded of a statement often heard at my institution, "What is important is what gets measured." Clearly, if deans and department heads want to help create an environment where mentoring becomes a priority, establishing the expectation, measuring the outcomes stemming from those expectations, and then rewarding results is one roadmap for success.

The final chapter contains a short list of recommendations for department heads and deans. Formal and informal mentoring programs are reviewed. Then in a few short pages Johnson discusses how a mentoring culture can be created, how competent mentors can be identified, how mentoring structures can be defined to fit existing resources, and how a mentoring program can be managed and rewarded, all in a very concise and thoughtful manner.

The real strength of this book is that it can be used by faculty members and academic administrators in any

institutional setting and any discipline. Johnson's review of the risks and rewards on this important dynamic are comprehensive and very useable. It is a wonderful perspective on one of the most meaningful relationships a faculty member can have.

**Reviewed by Steve Janosik, Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the School of Education at Virginia Tech. He also serves as the program director and the director of the Educational Policy Institute. His major research interests are higher education law and policy, and administration, management, and professional standards. He has co-authored two books and authored or co-authored 10 book chapters and 40 refereed journal articles. His latest publications include articles entitled, "Anticipating Legal Issues in Higher Education" and "The Influence of the Clery Act on Administrative Practice in Higher Education."**

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**Kendall, Juli, & Khuon, Outey (2006). *Writing Sense: Integrated Reading and Writing Lessons for English Language Learners K-8*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

**Pages: 214 Price: \$20.00 ISBN: 1-57110-442-9**

This engaging and easy-to-read text clearly defines the importance of integrating reading and writing activities for all learners, not just those who are acquiring skills in a new language. However, it underlies the special importance this integration holds for students who are negotiating a new language as well as establishing comprehension and composition strategies. Early on, they establish the connections between thinking skills and oral and written language activities.

Instructional strategies in this book are correlated with the developmental stages of English Language Learners' (ELL) proficiencies: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate, and advanced. Chapters on the beginning stages offer teaching strategies and activities based on building schema, using questioning strategies, creating opportunities for visualizing, and establishing frameworks for making inferences. In the later developmental stages, students are guided in determining the importance of text, synthesizing information, using fix-up strategies to make meaning, and practicing self-monitoring for meaning and comprehension. Each chapter is filled with suggested materials including books, charts, realia, and most importantly, authentic student samples.

Lessons provide opportunities for students to write to a variety of audiences and for a range of purposes. The format of providing clear instructions for teacher behaviors, methods for active student engagement, and follow-up practice for student learning will appeal to beginners as well as established teachers who will be able to adapt the ideas to their own materials and methods. The transitional narratives offer a lively means of engaging the reader and introducing or clarifying the lessons presented. The appendix offers a wealth of resources and references as well as a number of useful checklists, rubrics, and forms, all ready for immediate classroom use.

This book will be especially useful to those who are planning literacy instruction for English Language Learners. However, it also provides a framework for those who are offering trainings to teachers who are serving ELL students across the curriculum, in other content areas. This book can be easily and quickly read for professional conversations in a book group or professional learning community. In addition, those who are writing curricula and reviewing state and local standards will find the information helpful in establishing important connections between oral and visual literacies.

One drawback of this book is the heavy reliance on the Keene and Zimmermann (1997) text, *Mosaic of Thought*, and I'm wondering if readers who have not read that text first will be able to read and understand this text as confidently as they might. I think it would also be helpful to have read their first text, *Making Sense: Small-Group Comprehension Lessons for English Language Learners* (Kendall & Khon, 2006) prior to this one. However, even first time readers of these concepts and strategies will find much to interest and assist them in their teaching practices.

The authors' unique perspectives — Kendall is a literacy specialist, trained in Reading Recovery, and Khon is a multi-language learner who received her teacher training in Cambodia — offer the reader a rich understanding of the challenges in helping English Language Learners (ELL) to succeed in schooling.

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**Reviewed by Joan M. Taylor, Ph.D., Title I Program Coordinator for Washoe County School District and Adjunct Faculty for College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno. Joan has recently co-authored three texts *Reading First in the Classroom* (Pearson/Allyn & Bacon); *Improving Student Writing, K-8*; and *Literacy Assessments: Practical Tools for Teaching and Learning in K-8 Classrooms* (both with Corwin Press).**

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**Lauer, Patricia A. (2006). *An Education Research Primer: How to Understand, Evaluate and Use It*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 184 Price: \$30.00 ISBN: 0-7879-8323-3**

This book is intended to help teachers, principals, superintendents and policymakers become more informed consumers of education research. In addition, students in teacher education and educational leadership, as future teachers and administrators, and the faculty who assist them in education and social science can use this primer as a resource. The basic theme of the book is that information from research is more reliable than other sources such as stories, experiences, and logical arguments. As a primer, the goal is rather basic: help readers understand education research, evaluate its trustworthiness, and determine the usefulness of research in guiding education practice and policies.

Primers serve as small introductory books on a subject. This book is a useful introduction in many ways. It seeks concept understanding more than just learning terminology. In the first chapter, the reader is provided a plain language analysis of empirical versus non-empirical evidence and the basic idea of research as a systematic gathering of empirical evidence. In addition, the reader sees in plain language the issues in education research: what are we seeking to show, what is the context, how was the study conducted. The basic discussion is then followed with a summary that bolds such terms as research question, research design, research method, and validity. The book highlights key terms in bold throughout, which is useful for readers skimming the book seeking specific concepts and highlights the terminology of research while not ignoring the conceptual understanding.

The various appendices seem most useful as a continuing reference tool. For those who have not read many research reports, Tips on Reading Research Reports provides a wonderful description of sources, the parts and purposes of those parts, and the differences between evaluative reports and literature reviews. A nice glossary of research terms is provided and would be useful to have at hand as one reads research. This glossary includes illustrations that aid in understanding certain statistical concepts. A Statistics Tutorial plainly explains and demonstrates statistical concepts beyond the glossary and would certainly be useful in understanding and evaluating research. Assistance is also provided in how to find educational research.

The strength of the body of the book lies in the lists of questions that practitioners and policymakers can ask of research. An example is the exhibit Guiding Questions About Scientific Principles in Education Research. Practitioners and policymakers could have this exhibit copied and readily available as a checklist in guiding their evaluations or in directing staff considerations. Along these lines, the exhibit Research Utility Assessment Guide is intended as a practical evaluation guidance tool.

In this era of No Child Left Behind and its narrow definition of scientifically-based research on which educational practices are to be based, this book is most helpful. Where the book fails is in the most fundamental issues of science, research, and knowledge. The book, much like the federal education administration, ignores the fundamental philosophical, political, and social basis of research. The assumption that empirical, scientific research is superior to all other forms of knowledge is questionable and assumes a political stance while espousing science as non-political. Interestingly, in the initial chapter, while stating that empirical, scientific research is superior to all other forms of knowledge, the author relies on these other forms of knowledge to make a logical argument. When discussing how teachers learn about instruction, the author states "It is well known that teachers in the absence of other information tend to adopt instructional practices that their own teachers used" (p. 4). An inquisitive reader will ask how is it well known? The author does not provide citation to research studies supporting this statement. Perhaps it is true and perhaps it is well known from the very methods that the book seems to condemn: experiences, stories, and collected wisdom of generations of practitioners.

To dismiss such ways of knowing is very troubling. It dismisses potentially great sources of knowledge and is culturally myopic and racist. European-Americans have assumed their knowledge and methods as superior

since first stepping foot in this hemisphere. Indigenous knowledge, as well as indigenous people, were deemed inferior despite the vast libraries in some cultures and the oral stories passed down for millennia based upon experience and observation. So while the reader will find this book useful, they should question the fundamental nature and views of research and education: What is knowledge? How do we know? Whose knowledge counts? What is the nature of humans? Is education simply a matter of prescribing the right method of instruction to a deficit in the learner? What is the nature of learning?

The references below are examples of excellent scholarship challenging a narrow view of science and research, teaching, and learning. Apple (2004) helps us understand the political nature of knowledge. Kana'iaupuni (2004) shows us the problem with ignoring other ways of knowing in research. Reagan (2005) shows us non-western knowledge and educational practices around the world and how valuable the knowledges are. These can start an educator on a path to challenging the hegemony of a narrowed Western research perspective.

### Further Reading

Apple, M. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum* (3rd Ed.). New York: Routledge.

Kana'iaupuni, S. (2004). Ka'akalai Ku Kanaka: A Call for Strengths-based Approaches from a Native Hawaiian Perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 33 (9), 26-32.

Reagan, T. (2005). *Non-Western educational traditions: Indigenous approaches to educational thought and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

**Reviewed by Michael W. Simpson, J.D., M.Ed., currently studying higher and American Indian education at the University of Arizona.**

**Masingila, Joanna O., Editor (2006). *Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 6 - 8*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.**

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

*Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 6-8* is the third in a series of four books devoted to teaching and learning mathematics in grades pre-K-12. This series seeks to "tell us about teaching and learning mathematics from the inside ... from the perspective of school-based teacher researchers...." (p. ix).

While this volume is designed to encourage classroom teachers to develop an awareness of and commitment to understanding, the 11 chapters in this volume address issues related to the teaching of mathematics that are relevant at all levels of education both in the United States and internationally. Significant attention is given to the following issues:

- Developing and effectively integrating alternative assessments and instruction;
- Developing and extending classroom teachers mathematics content knowledge;
- Developing supportive and meaningful contexts for studying mathematics;
- Reflecting on instructional practices and the influence on students' learning.

The chapters in this volume report the progress and/or results of studies conducted by collaborations of middle school teachers and college professors. Classroom teachers describe their journey to strengthen their mathematical content knowledge and pedagogical practices while developing opportunities for their students to learn mathematics in new and different ways. They describe their own personal and professional growth as they work closely with other classroom teachers or college professors to plan, implement, and reflect on changes in their classrooms to align with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Principles and Standards for School Mathematics (2000). The authors describe the challenges and feelings of discomfort they contend with along their journey and how their perspectives on teaching and learning mathematics changes throughout this process. They also describe the successes they encounter evidenced by their own understanding of mathematics teaching and learning and their students' understanding of mathematics or articulation of ideas about mathematics. The work in this volume reminds us that while reforming mathematics education can be difficult in the present climate of teaching (fraught with social inequities, high-stakes assessments, and a saturated curriculum), it is entirely possible and immensely worthwhile to help our students to become thinkers and doers of mathematics rather than recipients of unrelated facts and nonsensical algorithms. This book does an excellent job of discussing pertinent issues related to the teaching



and learning of mathematics in the middle grades. It is easy to read, provides the reader with insights on the experiences of teachers committed to supporting their students learning, and serves as a catalyst for others thinking about or working to reform mathematics education.

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**Reviewed by Kadian M. Howell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education, Penn State University Berks. Email: kmhowell@hotmail.com**

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### **McLaughlin, Maureen; Homeyer, Amy & Sassaman, Jennifer. (2006). *Research-Based Reading Lessons: Grades 4-6*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 233    Price: \$25.99    ISBN: 978-0439-84381-2**

Authors McLaughlin, Homeyer, and Sassaman focus on the four identified building blocks of literacy—word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The book begins by giving the reader research-based knowledge as to why these strategies have been identified as being such a major part of teaching literacy to students in the 4-6 grades. Each component is separated into a chapter. In each chapter the author not only outlines the research base of each component, but also explains how the component helps the student and provides strategies for teachers to incorporate each of the components into their classroom instruction.

The authors provide examples of lessons they have found to be successful in teaching the four components or building blocks. The lessons provide strategies to present the lesson in different formats such as whole and small group instruction, reflection and goal- setting. These different formats help to facilitate the learning differences of the diverse learner. The lessons are clearly written and easy to follow for the teacher and student.

Possibly my favorite aspect of the book is the appendices. The reason I believe they are such a good part of the book is that they contain the useful materials. Many books provide instructional strategies but do not provide the teacher with the tools needed to adequately implement the strategies. The authors of this book help teachers to be successful in their teaching, not only by giving the teacher a "script" to follow, but also by providing the materials to supplement the "script."

Written from a reading teacher's perspective, this book provides a resource for beginning and experienced teachers. The book also can be used as a learning tool at the university level to ensure preservice teachers have a reference to guide them prior to going into the classroom. The book is user-friendly, informative and relevant for any reading teacher.

**Reviewed by Jacques D. Singleton, Ed.D., Instructor, Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership, University of Memphis.**

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### **Mooney, Margaret E. ; Young, Terrell A. et al. (2006). *Caught in the Spell of Writing and Reading: Grade 3 and Beyond*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers.**

**Pages: 208    Price: \$27.95    ISBN: 1-57274-749-8**

While innumerable resources exist that address reading and writing instruction at the primary level, there is an apparent gap in the literature pertaining to the intermediate grades. Mooney and Terrell aid in filling this gap with a comprehensive and useful resource for teachers of reading and writing in grades 3-8. Comprised of contributions by seven experienced leaders and educators in the field, *Caught in the Spell of Writing and Reading* presents new perspectives on Mooney's model of reading and writing "to, with, for, and by" students in the intermediate classroom.

Among the highlights of this book, there are many that make it an essential resource for every intermediate teacher's toolbox. First and foremost, the authors emphasize the *learner* as the focal point of all instruction, practice, and assessment. An Outcomes and Approaches chart is presented repeatedly, providing a quick reference while reminding the reader that the focus remains on the outcomes of the learner versus the approach. The learner outcomes—"self-awareness," "self-correcting," "self- assessing," and "self-

improving"— provide the framework for the book which effectively supports the authors' emphasis on student-centered learning.

Another strength of this resource is the authors' ability to effectively bridge research-based techniques typical at the primary level classrooms into the intermediate classroom. Acknowledging that strategies such as guided reading and shared reading are often "bemoaned" in the upper grades, the authors present a convincing argument as to why these strategies are needed at all grade levels by emphasizing that "readers of all ages need continuing instruction on how to process or navigate their way through text" (p. 79). The authors support this argument with sample lessons that include teacher-student dialogue, along with examples of student products.

From Casting the Spell to Weaving the Magic Together, *Caught in the Spell of Writing and Reading* proves to be a "must-have" guidebook for the beginning teacher as well as a useful resource for the veteran. Citing many notable leaders in the field, including Cunningham, Allington, and Trelease, and through addressing tough topics such as formulaic writing and Sustained Silent Reading, the authors present practical insights and effective techniques for planning, instructing, scaffolding, and assessing intermediate readers and writers. Young proclaims in the conclusion, "The aim of this book is to help teachers create engaged readers and writers" and I believe many would agree that they hit their mark.

**Reviewed by Danna Parsons, University of Houston.**

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**Robb, Laura (2006). *Teaching Reading: A Complete Resource for Grades 4 and Up*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 476 + 25 transparencies    Price: \$79.99    ISBN: 0439771366**

Laura Robb has a long list of accomplishments in the field of reading, not the least of which is her 40+ years as an educator. Based on this vast experience as a teacher and literacy coach, she continues to develop teaching resources and conduct staff development workshops. In *Teaching Reading*, Robb has put together a collection of research-based, classroom tested, instructional strategies designed as a comprehensive resource on reading instruction (p. 7).

When I first looked through the book it seemed like more of the same material publishers slap together in order to meet a new perceived need in teaching. But I have to say, after using some of the material, I found the suggestions and strategies right on target. I also liked the 3-ring binder presentation which made it easy to flip through different portions of the book and will allow me to reorganize the material to fit my needs. I was able to find a lesson on a topic that had been a problem in my classroom and use the strategy plan and accompanying material the next day. I didn't have to create the material from scratch because the lesson plan, formative assessment and instructional materials are all included in the book.

Specifically, the binder is divided into five sections, (1) Language Arts, (2) Content Area, (3) Journal Writing, (4) Classroom Libraries and (5) Professional Study. Each segment contains an introduction explaining the section. The Language Arts, Content Area and Journal Writing sections include: strategy lesson outlines with time indicators; various forms of assessment material; instructional supports such as transparencies and blackline masters; and opportunities for differentiating instruction. Classroom Libraries is a small section reviewing the importance of independent reading, reading conferences, book talks and funding options for the library. Professional Study offers guidelines for facilitating workshops at the district or school level.

From the onset the author explains how the text will be useful and how to use each section. She bases the reading instruction on what she calls a three-part strategic reading model (p.9), which essentially outlines lessons based on instructional strategies used before, during and after reading. Robb has aligned the overall methodology with the Carnegie Corporation report, *Reading Next* (2004) which outlines fifteen components of effective adolescent literacy programs.

Many seasoned literacy instructors may already know and use many of the strategies outlined in the book. Robb also includes specific teaching examples, and as I read through the book, some of the examples seemed to speak specifically to me. Robb adds a very genuine, conversational tone to the text which makes this 400+ page book very readable. But there is a lot of information in this book! For those of us immersed in reading and literacy instruction on a daily basis, the book offers a fresh perspective and solid working examples that are sometimes missing from similar books.

The publisher suggests that the text would be useful for classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and staff developers. I think the book would work well with beginning teachers in helping them organize all the

instructional strategies they learn in a teacher education course.

### Reference

Biancarosa, C., & Snow, C. E. (2004). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. Available online at <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/ReadingNext.pdf>

**Reviewed by Renee Baxter, M.S.Ed., Adjunct instructor and reading program director.**



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