



## education review // reseñas educativas

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

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reseñas educativas (Spanish)  
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### Brief reviews for February 2008

**Burke, Jim. (2007). *Teacher's Essential Guide: Classroom Management. How to Establish Positive Discipline, Organize Your Classroom, and Manage Your Teaching Time.* New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 112    Price: \$15.99    ISBN: 978-0-439-93446-6**

Any experienced teacher will tell you that one of the fundamentals to a successful classroom is classroom management. In *The Teacher's Essential Guide: Classroom Management*, Jim Burke offers what he has learned as a high school English teacher. This book offers practical and specific tips for various situations and problems that teachers may find in today's classrooms. The chapters are formatted very clearly with bulleted information that teachers can use right away.

Burke sets up his writing as a handbook. The organization of the book allows readers to easily find a particular topic that is of concern to them. There are four main topics: Your Classroom, Effective Instruction, Learning For All, and Positive Discipline. Each of these is comprised of four subtopics, which are further divided into five guiding principles. This allows teachers to find Burke's research and information on a specific topic very quickly. For instance, a teacher may be looking for information on how to reach English Language Learners. She can then turn to the "Learning For All" section with the subtopic of "Meet the Needs of English Language Learners." Under this heading are five practical tips such as "Provide clear, simple directions regarding behaviors and tasks," which is then further explained.

One thing that stood out in this text is the respect the Burke has for his students. Many classroom management books will focus on the things that teachers can do to make the students behave. However, Burke gives ideas that are more geared towards inspiring students to take control of their learning. Burke's appreciation for the individual is clear. There are sections dedicated to English Language learners, students with special needs, and specific learning disabilities. For a teacher with a new student facing one of these needs, a quick look in this book can provide some valuable strategies and tools to utilize.

As an interesting supplement to his book, Burke provides a self-assessment and troubleshooting guide for teachers. The two-page self assessment allows teachers to gauge which areas they may need improvement in. This can aid teachers in knowing which sections will be of most value to them. The troubleshooting guides offers tips on the common place problems that teachers are bound to face each year. These include missing homework assignments, cheating, and record keeping.

This book would be beneficial for both first time teachers and those with experience. For beginning teachers, it would be helpful to read through the book and take note of new ideas. Experienced teachers can utilize it as a handbook to turn to when a situation arises. The easy to use organization definitely allows it to be accessible for first year teachers up to veteran teachers looking to fine-tune their teaching.

**Reviewed by Aaron Lentner, M.A., Azusa Pacific University, and elementary school teacher. His interests include classroom management and moral education.**

**Chenoweth, Karin (2007). *"It's Being Done": Academic Success in Unexpected Schools.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing.**

**Pages: 250 Price: \$54.95 (Hardcover); \$26.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 13: 978-1-891792-40-3(Hardcover); 13: 978-1-891792-39-7 (Paperback)**

Education writer Karin Chenoweth spent two years visiting schools that, according to their data, were, and in many cases still are, successfully educating students that others had once believed could not be educated. Chenoweth provides a detailed description of the process of how schools were selected, including giving some valuable Web tool addresses that may be used to view school data in various ways.

Schools were chosen for this honor by "visit worthy" (p. 10) criteria which included:

- A significant population of children living in poverty and/or a significant population of children of color.
- Either very high rates of achievement or a very rapid improvement trajectory.
- Relatively small gaps in student achievement in comparison with achievement gaps statewide.
- At least two year's worth of data.
- In the case of high schools, high graduation rates and higher-than- state-average promoting power index (PPI).
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
- Open enrollment for neighborhood children—that is, no magnet schools, no exam schools, no charter schools. (p. 11-12)

The schools featured in this book as successful range in size from a small elementary school in Lapwai, Idaho (Lapwai Elementary School, enrollment 312, grades K-6) and a small junior-senior high school in Worcester, Massachusetts (University Park Campus School, enrollment 230, grades 7-12) to a large elementary school in Lincoln, New York (enrollment 774, grades K-6) and an even larger junior-senior high school in Elmont, New York (enrollment 2,039, grades 7-12). Concerning the percentage of enrolled students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunches, the range is from 51% (Centennial Place Elementary in Atlanta, Georgia) to 99% (M. Hall Stanton Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). M. Hall Stanton Elementary also has the highest significant population of children of color while the lowest population of children of color is found at Oakland Heights Elementary in Russellville, Arkansas.

After presenting each school's story, Chenoweth ultimately assures readers that there is no "magic bullet" for creating a successful school—she calls them "It's Being Done" schools (p. 216). She then provides a descriptive list of the common characteristics that the schools all share. Individuals reading this book to gain knowledge for their particular professional situations may read this list and reflect back on some of the stories of the individual schools featured in the book.

For example, a classroom teacher wanting to learn what it is to be successful in teaching the hard-to-teach student will find that in "It's Being Done" schools, teachers use data to ascertain valuable information on individual students, not just students as members of a group. At Centennial Place Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia, an individual profile is created and maintained for every student. At Port Chester Middle School in Port Chester, New York, instruction is based on data driven decisions.

Teachers in "It's Being Done Schools" don't teach to state tests even though they are well aware of what the stakes are and welcome the accountability that comes with testing. School time is valued and used wisely in these schools. Teachers have adequate time to meet in teams and prepare for the instructional needs of their students, constantly reassessing what they do in their classrooms. Teachers also are given opportunities to observe each other, using that observation process to strengthen their instruction.

If a principal were reading this book in an effort to gain wisdom concerning the leadership qualities of successful school administrators, he would find that principals in these "It's Being Done Schools" are ever-present in classrooms and in the school learning community. One principal highlighted by Chenoweth is Sharon Brittingham of Frankford Elementary School in Frankford, Delaware. Brittingham states that the leader must believe that educating the hard-to-teach student is achievable. She also believes that teachers have to be led to believe not only that the children are able to achieve but they as teachers are able as well.

Leaders in these schools also care about the quality of their teaching staff, making certain that the neediest students receive the very best instruction that is available in the school. These leaders give great attention to the instructional providers supporting them with quality professional development opportunities. The principals rely on team leadership approaches, establishing an atmosphere of respect and leading teams in making decisions that are best for students, not necessarily best for adults. Minimal time is spent on discipline in the sense of having to punish students.

A teacher or a principal reading this book will also find that to create a successful school and maintain that level of success involves intensive training of new and newly-hired teachers. Chenoweth sums up the characteristics of a successful school by writing that in "It's Being Done" schools, teachers and principals

expect their students to learn, and they work hard to master the skills and knowledge necessary to teach successfully (p. 226).

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

To the researcher who is interested in successful schools and discovering what happens in a successful school, this book could be very valuable. It offers glimpses into all levels of schools of all sizes and all demographic compositions. Chenoweth's use of the English language and her expertise in educational processes makes this text worthwhile and interesting reading.

However, the researcher does not fully explain her visits to the schools, whether her findings are the results of formal interviews, hours of observation, surveys, etc. A new researcher attempting to duplicate this kind of informative verbal photograph of a school would have little guidance. Also, stories begin to read in a very similar fashion as one progresses through the book. This may be unavoidable since some of the characteristics discussed are found in many of the settings.

The Achievement Alliance sponsored the writing of this book (p. 3). The organization's website states: "We believe that the No Child Left Behind Act represents the nation's best hope for raising the academic performance of all students and closing achievement gaps. Our goal is to provide accurate, nonpartisan information about student achievement." Readers who are not strong advocates for the policies of NCLB may be initially discouraged because of this sponsorship, but the programs and structure sometimes associated with the NCLB initiative are not overly featured in the stories.

One other small, possibly noteworthy issue, is that although the writer contends that these are "regular" schools, the University Park Campus School is a professional development school for Clark University. This partnership "offers professional development and mentoring to high school faculty members, allows them to take university courses for free, and provides student teachers for the school" (p. 26). The other schools featured in this book do seem more representative of schools with no such advantages.

Chenoweth shares that ideally personnel from schools—"crummy schools" she calls them (p. 14)—will read this book, realize that it can in fact be done and try to capture and copy the characteristics of a successful school with similar demographics to their own. Her self-reported attempt to "put a little flesh on the bare bones of quantitative data" (p. 13) does just that. Reading the vignettes that describe these schools, their personnel, and students will allow educators to not just see the results but to see some of the means to the ends. Chenoweth perhaps summarizes her work best when she writes that in these schools, she finds "good schools for any child, not just good schools for poor or minority children" (p. 3).

**Reviewed by Kandy Smith, a doctoral student in literacy studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. As a school consultant for the Tennessee State Improvement Grant, she works in classrooms across the state, helping teachers to improve student literacy practices.**

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**Copeland, Susan R. & Keefe, Elizabeth B. (2007). *Effective Literacy Instruction for Students with Moderate or Severe Disabilities*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.**

**Pages: 189    Price: \$24.95    ISBN: 978-155766837-0**

Authors Copeland and Keefe write a very insightful book on how to teach literacy skills to individuals with disabilities. The book focuses on the all the building blocks identified as being key elements, such as fluency, comprehension, word recognition and vocabulary development. Each chapter thoroughly describes effective, evidence-based literacy practices for individuals with moderate or severe disabilities. The authors provide the reader with easy to understand practices and ways to incorporate the practices into their everyday literacy and reading instruction. The writing is clear and concise which makes the book an excellent learning tool for experienced as well as novice teachers. The authors state throughout the chapters that while the book is focused on literacy instruction to individuals with disabilities the practices outlined are applicable for students with a range of learning needs.

Copeland and Keefe outline the power of literacy in our society. The authors seem to equate social independence with literacy. They highlight the importance of providing effective literacy instruction to all students but most importantly to students with disabilities. I believe this is a valuable part of the book because it helps to explain to individuals who are not experienced in special education the importance of empowering these students with effective literacy skills. The main focus of a special educator is to provide students with the skills to become independent in today's society. The authors make clear how "arming" students with disabilities with literacy skills can assist them in obtaining this independence. They do an

equally effective job outlining the possible pitfalls that can occur if educators do not teach students the needed literacy skills; outcomes such as unemployment, social isolation and low paying jobs. If educators do not teach these skills while the students are in schools, society as a whole will have to pay the price once these individuals grow into adulthood.

Possibly my favorite aspect of the book is that the authors explain how the previous forms of literacy instruction such as the readiness model and functional literacy instruction were not only ineffective but caused students with disabilities to remain isolated from students without disabilities. The federal mandates of No Child Left Behind and other legislation which state that students with disabilities need to have the opportunity to be exposed to the same instructional practices and educated with their regular education peers are explained and addressed in the book. To meet the mandates of federal legislation and to provide effective literacy instruction, all teachers have to become knowledgeable in evidence-based literacy practices.

Being a special education teacher I often hear individuals stating that students with disabilities are not capable of learning. The authors effectively point out that many students with disabilities can learn literacy if they are taught effectively. The fact they continue to stress in the book is that while students with disabilities may need some modification, the same strategies used for their "normal" functioning peers should still be employed.

The book is well written and explains to other educators many of the concerns special educators have had for years such as ineffective instruction and isolation. The authors provide multiple examples of how these two issues can negatively impact a student with disabilities. The best part is that the book does not just outline the negatives but provides the reader with strategies to improve instruction to these students and at the same time decrease the instances of isolation.

The authors also do an excellent job of collaborating with other experts in the field of literacy to write certain chapters. The collaboration widens the knowledge base of the book and brings many fresh, varied opinions on how to accomplish the task of teaching literacy to students with disabilities. The book is user-friendly, informative and written on a topic that is relevant in education today.

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

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**Joyce, Helen (2007). *Using Films in the Social Studies: World History*. Jacksonville, Florida: TEACHINGpoint.**

**Pages: 186    Price: \$60.00    ISBN: 1-59657-407-0**

Helen Joyce writes in her recent book, *Using Films in the Social Studies: World History*, on page 5, "...use films as a tool to an end, not as a way of keeping students 'occupied' for ninety minutes." The "end" to which Joyce refers is a deeper and more personal and relevant understanding of the skills and concepts we expect students to master through our use of multiple media sources in a highly differentiated and stimulating classroom. The intended audience for this resource is primarily high school World History teachers, but the films and activities could also be appropriate for some upper middle level Social Studies courses, as well. The approach Joyce advocates in this resource is one all teachers might consider applying to their respective subject area.

The book is wonderfully organized and is quite easy to read. There are fourteen chapters, each focusing on a different film with accompanying activities for the World History classroom. These activity worksheets allow the teacher to create a pedagogically sound environment for student learning in that Joyce provides activities for before students view a film clip, activities for engagement while the student views the film clip, as well as activities for after the film clip has ended to check for understanding, or even to refine and extend student learning.

For example, in Chapter 14, *Hotel Rwanda*, Joyce provides a basic summary of the film, and the units of study or themes which the film may address. The author also provides a brief discussion of class activities for laying an appropriate instructional foundation prior to viewing clips from *Hotel Rwanda*. The pre-film viewing activities require the students to complete appropriate background research on African Independence post-WW II, the role of the United Nations in African development, and the Rwandan genocide. The author includes an activity requiring the students to list issues from their background research they want to learn more about through viewing the film, and also provides follow-up activities for post-viewing discussion and essay writing. The author provides these same type activities for all fourteen films.

The films Joyce has chosen to include are powerful, and in some cases quite controversial. See complete list at <http://teaching-point.net/filmwld.html> Joyce includes several provisos to readers; one important warning to educators regarding respecting the copyrights of these films must be taken seriously. Another suggestion is that teachers review policies for the use of media and film in their respective districts. Joyce also wisely advises readers to carefully and thoughtfully consider the maturity level, age, and instructional objective of the lesson when considering which or what film clip to use.

**Reviewed by Dr. Stephen P. Covert, Principal at Ni River Middle School in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The reviewer is an Instructor in the Career Switcher Program with the Spotsylvania County Schools, as well as adjunct faculty at the University of Mary Washington. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Education from Virginia Commonwealth University. Correspondence concerning this review may be sent to [scovert@ms.spotsylvania.k12.va.us](mailto:scovert@ms.spotsylvania.k12.va.us).**

**Marzano, Robert J. & Kendall, John S. (2006). *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

**Pages: 208 Price: \$71.95 (Hardback); \$32.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 1-4129-3628-4 (Hardback); 1-4129-3629-2 (Paperback)**

I have benefited from using Bloom's Taxonomy over the years, and I like its simplicity. But, the New Taxonomy has become significantly more complex. In fact, Marzano and Kendall explain, their goal was to take Bloom's relatively simple "framework" and redevelop it into "a model or a *theory* of human thought" (p. 16). While theorists will no doubt be thrilled, I cannot help but wonder if this is a mixed blessing.

Marzano and Kendall begin their text by retracing the development of Bloom's original taxonomy and comparing it with other educational research over the last half-century. They provide a good case for the need to revise and update Bloom's ideas. The result, as one would expect from Marzano and Kendall, is a thoroughly research-based model. Unfortunately, the first chapter of the book focuses so thoroughly on comparing and contrasting Bloom's 1956 publication with more recent research—and the authors seem to assume readers are familiar with much of this research—most practitioners will likely find more confusion than clarity. Still, for those readers reluctant to accept a revised Bloom, or those who have discarded Bloom as outmoded, this chapter provides a strong foundation for legitimizing the New Taxonomy.

The model proposed in this text is much more complex than the original Bloom hierarchy. There is much less in the way of step-wise progression; instead there is a combination of "levels" and "domains." Six Levels of Processing composed of three Systems of Thought (Self-system, Metacognitive, and Cognitive) interact with three different Domains of Knowledge (Information, Mental Processes, and Psychomotor Procedures). One problem I encountered was keeping so many terms differentiated in my mind.

It was not until the second half of the book, when detailed examples are given of the New Taxonomy in practice, that I really felt the terms were beginning to mean something. The chapter on The New Taxonomy as a Framework for Objectives, Assessments, and State Standards provided a persuasive argument for using the New Taxonomy to improve overall student performance through a "spiral curriculum" that builds "more depth and complexity" of benchmark knowledge with each grade level (pp. 141-3).

The last chapter, The New Taxonomy as a Framework for Curriculum and Thinking Skills, gives examples of translating educational standards into specific curriculum. One purpose of revising Bloom's Taxonomy was to make a theory that could serve as a basis for developing an entire curriculum, and the authors have probably succeeded in that goal.

I have no doubt the New Taxonomy has the potential to provide a research-based theoretical foundation for curriculum; my reservation, however, comes from a nagging doubt the New Taxonomy will actually be used by many educators. Based on my prior use of Bloom's Taxonomy, I wanted to like the book and was excited to read about an updated version. Still, I felt as though I was slogging through this text more than I was learning how to improve student learning. The *New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* may well find a home in graduate-level Curriculum & Instruction programs, but I think most pre-service and experienced teachers will benefit more when the New Taxonomy is boiled down to a chapter in a more user-friendly book, like Marzano, Pickering and Pollock's *Classroom Instruction that Works*.

## References

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Development (ASCD).

**Reviewed by Bruce M. Sabin, EdD, who teaches biology students at the IB World School in Haines City, FL.**

**Mithaug, Dennis E.; Mithaug, Deirdre K.; Agran, Martin; Martin, James E. & Wehmeyer, Michael L. (2007). *Self-Instruction Pedagogy: How to Teach Self-Determined Learning*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.**

**Pages: 232 Price: \$64.95 (Hardcover); \$44.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 978-0-398-07722-8(Hardcover); 978-0-398-07723-5 (Paperback)**

A great deal of attention has been given to millions of children with disabilities because of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), implemented in 1975. The authors of this book provide a method of teaching that will help all students to become self-determined learners. However, their main focus deals with helping special education teachers and students with disabilities to learn about "a four-step pedagogical strategy for empowering students to become self-directing, self-determined learners before they leave school" (p. vi).

The title of this book caught my attention because I am directly involved with students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into my regular education classes. These inclusion classes involve many different types of students who have different needs, and I am constantly researching new ways to assist them in their quest to become successful in school.

An overview of the book describes teaching methods that encourage self- instruction pedagogy. Starting with chapter 1, the authors clearly explain the differences between direct instruction and self-instruction. Direct instruction focuses on teachers making choices and feeling in control. Self- instruction focuses on students making choices and feeling in control. Since research shows that most teachers use direct instruction, the goal the authors support is to help teachers to move away from direct instruction to student self-instruction in order to help students become self-determined learners.

How does a teacher know if their instruction is self-directed or student- directed? Chapter 2 provides teachers with tools to assess and determine where they are on a scale of instructional control. One instrument, Instruction and Curriculum Rating Scale for Self-Determined Learning, has 48 teaching statements that teachers respond to using a four-point scale. The next step is to score instructional-directedness (teacher-directedness and student- directedness), and curricular functionality (basic skills and applied skills) using the responses from the ratings identified on the scale. Next, a comparison is made with the instruction-directedness and curricular functionality scores of 253 other experienced special and general education teachers.

The next four chapters describe steps to help teachers shift from teacher- directedness to student-directedness. Chapter 3 describes the first step which includes three methods used to teach self-control--self-monitoring, self- evaluation, and self-adjustment. Chapter 4 is about step two which is teaching self-regulation. Two additional strategies, goal setting and self-planning, help students regulate their responses to any learning situation. The next chapters promote self-determined learning and self-determined Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) in which the student identifies the needs, interests, abilities for the IEPs and school-to-work transitions.

Chapter 7 discusses why teachers are reluctant to choose self-direction for their students. Some of the reasons are that the teaching approach is very different, that giving students choices leads to unpredictability, and teachers are used to being in control and making all the decisions. Chapter 8 summarizes the four main principles that promote self-determined learning which are choice, self-instruction, matching (comparing results with expectations), and persistence principles. Included at the end of the book is Appendix A, describing research on self-instruction and direct instruction pedagogies, and Appendix B, describing instruction and curriculum scales for self-determine learning.

A great deal of the information in this book confirmed beliefs that I had about the actions and beliefs of special education students. On a daily basis I witness students depending on the teacher for their learning and refusing to do work on their own because they believe they cannot do it on their own. Agran states that "when they [teachers] teach, students learn, and when they do not, students do not learn" (p. 47).

At times students will not do their work because they believe the special education teacher will do it for them. If students could learn ways to self- monitor their learning, then they would be involved with student-directed

learning. A specific and concrete example given was to have students use a tally card with questions like the following: "Am I on task right now?; Did I finish the task?; Was my behavior good?; Am I organized for this class?; Did I bring my homework today and put it where it belongs?" (p. 51). The students put a check mark "yes" or "no" and turn it in to the teacher each day. Interestingly, as I read this section, I wondered if the students would be honest with the answers. The authors addressed this concern indicating research shows a desired effect will be produced even if the students' responses are inaccurate because the students are attentive to the actions. I immediately tried this the next day in class with a student and found positive results. I asked the student to make a checklist in the corner of his paper with two columns (yes/no). Approximately every ten minutes, he was to identify if he was on task. The first day, he had 2 "yes" and 4 "no" responses. The second day, he had 4 "yes" and 2 "no" responses. The third day, he had 5 "yes" and only 1 "no" response. I do not think he was completely accurate, but I did notice an improvement in his ability to stay on task.

Another area that is difficult to help students learn is how to problem solve. The authors stress that teachers should avoid solving problems for the students. Instead, teachers should empower students to problem solve themselves. The section on helping students direct their learning is very helpful to teachers because each phase of problem solving is explained, along with the teacher's role, and supportive research. Even though the emphasis on self-determined learning focuses on students making the choices, the teacher's role is not over-looked. The teacher is still the expert and responsible for helping students learn through the students' own self-regulated efforts.

Overall, the purpose of the book is well-defined—to make teachers more aware of the research, learning methods, and benefits of self-determined learning. The authors recommend that all teachers be given the opportunity to learn and understand the importance of self-instruction pedagogy so that they can make informed decisions regarding the way their students learn.

The only information provided about the authors, Dennis E. Mithaug, Deirdre K. Mithaug, Martin Agran, James E. Martin, and Michael L. Wehmeyer, is their university affiliation, even though many of the references included in the book involve the authors' research.

**Reviewed by by Carol A. Rodano (Ed.D.), Adjunct Professor of Mathematics Education at Rowan University, Glassboro, N.J.; Math teacher at Bunker Hill Middle School, Sewell, N.J.**

**Ochoa, Gilda L. (2007). *Learning from Latino Teachers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 267    Price: \$24.95    ISBN: 978-0-7879-8777-0**

In *Learning from Latino Teachers*, Gilda Ochoa sets out to inspire teachers, students, and communities to critically and creatively engage with and address the injustices that prevail in the U.S. public education system, particularly for Latina/o students. To do this, Ochoa highlights the narratives of eight Latina/o teachers, thereby privileging voices and stories that are often silenced or excluded. These accounts are woven into a text constructed by a Latina feminist scholar and teacher who has experienced, both as a former student and community member, many of the same injustices revealed in the teachers' descriptions. While Ochoa's own life experiences inform both the inquiry and focus of the book, she stays true to her goal of creating a collaborative endeavor through adopting a critical qualitative approach and centering the voices of a diverse group of K-12 teachers who reflect upon their experiences as both students and teachers.

Ochoa, originally trained as a sociologist, works within a critical qualitative tradition, setting Latina/o teachers' narratives against the particular historical, political, and social conditions of Latinas/os in the United States. To gather data for analysis, she "listen[s] to Latina/o teachers" (p. 1), utilizing in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. The threads of the diverse experiences and stories are taken up in an analysis of the educational policies, system, and beliefs that have typically excluded and marginalized Latina/o students. To support her argument that equality for students of color requires a radical restructuring of the education system, Ochoa skillfully layers her participants' memories of struggle and humiliation as minority students with their memories of role models, inspirations, and hope. Through such an approach, a vision of change emerges.

The first three chapters provide the background and theoretical framework for the book. Ochoa introduces the teachers whose narratives make up much of the text, and discusses the diverse experiences of Latinas/os in the United States. She also delineates the theoretical perspectives commonly used to explain the achievement and wage gaps and marginalization and tokenization of Latinas/os in curricula and classrooms. Set against the backdrop of the dominant discourse of meritocracy in the United States, the blame for low performance or completion rates is commonly assigned to students rather than structural injustices. Such

views are supported by biological and cultural deficiency theories which have resurfaced as a part of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Critiquing such perspectives, Ochoa (and her participants) utilizes power-conflict theories to explore historical, ideological, and structural factors and better understand the unequal experiences of Latinas/os in education.

The highly readable middle section of the book looks at the experiences and elements at the microlevel which positively influenced participants' lives. Through teachers' narratives we learn about the power of family support in encouraging resilience and resistance, the importance of mentors and supportive school officials, and the significance of nurturing individual determination. The theory outlined in the beginning of the book is made clear in this section, and the teachers' own stories serve as critiques of deficit theories of Latina/o learning.

In the final section, Ochoa explores the practices of tracking and high-stakes testing and their negative effects on students and teachers. Staying true to her desire to center the perspectives of teachers rather than "experts" or "authorities," these chapters look at the problems of policies and practices from an uncommon vantage point—inside schools and classrooms. Had Ochoa ended the book at this point, the reader would be left with a bleak picture indeed. Instead, she closes with a final chapter and a conclusion which offer not only hope and a vision for a more just educational future, but also concrete recommendations for "how teachers, students, families, communities, and students might collaborate to improve schools along a vision of love, justice, and humanity over competitions and inequality" (p. 191).

If you only have time for one chapter, make it the chapter on Strategies for Effective Teaching and Learning (p. 191-229). Here, Ochoa presents a compilation of ideas for teachers, students, and families. From ways to create a more just curriculum, to strategies to create a more inclusive school environment for students and families, there are many concrete suggestions for actions teachers and other school officials can take. Additional sections targeted at students, families, and communities make it clear that this book is not only for teachers, but for anyone interested in and involved in creating schools in which all children are nurtured and valued.

Clearly, Ochoa has made a contribution with this book. At once informative, instructive, and visionary, the voices of Ochoa's teachers resonate with the stories in Gloria Ladson Billings' (1994) *The Dreamkeepers*. With an increasing Latina/o student population and a continued underrepresentation of teachers of color, issues of equality in U.S. education are more important than ever. This book takes an important step by creating a space for silenced voices to be heard and, by doing so, beginning to shift the focus of public discourse on education.

## References

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**Reviewed by by Susan Yopez, Ph.D. student in Educational Policy and Leadership at the College of Education at University at Buffalo-The State University of New York.**

**Pryle, Marilyn (2007). *Teaching Students to Write Effective Essays*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 95 Price: \$15.99 ISBN: 0439746582**

In the past, my students dreaded their individual writing conferences. While I intended to use these conferences as a way to help students improve their writing skills, the conferences too often left students feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. In the course of trying to help them improve their papers, I tried to cover too many problems at one time. However, after reading *Teaching Students to Write Effective Essays*, I have a new approach for one-on-one writing instruction. Marilyn Pryle uses a conversational style and the tone of a mentor teacher in explaining her approach for working with students to improve their writing. She is never condescending and respects the abilities and unique skills of her audience.

The lessons for essay writing are broken into 10 assignments. Beginning with letter writing and ending with poetry analysis, Pryle progresses naturally through each step in the writing process by building on students' prior knowledge. She writes, "I stress to all of them that interesting writing is not so much in the topic itself as in the telling of it" (p. 24).

There are reproducibles to go with each lesson. In my own classroom, the pre-writing sheets brought about the biggest change in my instructional pattern and in student response. Clearly, the questions are just right



for the eighth grade audience these lessons were written for (Pryle is an eighth grade teacher), though I agree with Pryle that they can just as easily be used in lower and upper level writing courses with little revision.

Additionally, I found the mini-lessons especially helpful in allowing students to focus on just a few parts of their writing at a time, rather than trying to fix everything with each revision. Having students take notes in a separate notebook for future reference is a great idea, especially in the way Pryle chooses to implement the use of the reference notebook and encourages students to keep it for just one year.

While we all know it is important for students to perform well on standardized writing tests, Pryle understands "our responsibility is to help students evolve as writers and thinkers, testing or not" (p. 87). Using the ideas in this book to guide your writing instruction will result in improved writing and thinking among your students.

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

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**Rose, David H. & Meyer, Anne, Editors (2006). *A Practical Reader in Universal Design for Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing.**

**Pages: 175    Price: \$26.95    ISBN: 1-891792-29-6**

This slim volume provides an excellent introduction to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and was edited by two co-founders of the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). Founded in the 1980s with the goal of identifying new technologies to create learning opportunities for students of all abilities and disabilities, CAST collaborators created UDL from an extension of Lev Vygotsky's work in psychology. The aim of UDL is to provide a simple, generalizable theoretical bulwark to support instructors as they prepare, conduct, and assess their classroom instruction for a variety of diverse learners.

UDL is hinged on a triumvirate of approaches to learning; the networks of the brain which recognize, strategize, and affect learning are supported by instruction that provides multiple and flexible methods of presentation, expression, and engagement, respectively. To put it simply, everyone learns differently; what UDL gives teachers is a framework for addressing specific differences in learning so that those differences cease to be barriers. The logic and reason of UDL is elegant and simple, and is fleshed out here with case stories of its application in classrooms and the research behind its development.

By including case stories as well as current research supporting the science behind UDL, the editors support their subject matter in multiple ways, and in doing so, model one key precept of UDL. Within its eleven chapters, the book's editors include case stories of UDL classroom applications, interviews with teachers, and list existing resources for teachers seeking to adapt curriculum. These are all well supported with research from the field, including brain imaging scans that show the neural networks involved in the *what*, *how*, and *why* of learning.

The promise of applying UDL in any classroom is wide, and it offers a solid answer to those who feel that Special Education is watered-down education. When a single teacher can tailor a content unit to target state standards as well as address differences in learning and ability while at the same time enriching the curriculum, she or he has achieved the opposite of reductionist pedagogy.

Higher education professionals from every arena of teacher education (both in general and special education) would do well to include this text as part of any survey or methods course. Not only does it include a list of available resources for diversifying the delivery of instruction (in the form of assistive and instructional technology) but it also addresses many of the real-life issues teachers face when planning and teaching lessons. A section on the role of assessment in the classroom provides rationales and guidelines for concerted, useful measurements of student progress as they are adapted to measure a variety of abilities and strengths.

Many current-day discussions of adapting curricula are centered on the difficulty of addressing a diversity of student abilities within a single classroom, and often, assessing this multiplicity with a single test to determine adequate yearly progress, or AYP. Applying theoretical frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning to the instructional cycle of planning, teaching and assessment could reverse some of these dilemmas for many teachers in today's schools. This may simply be "good teaching," but the editors of this text have gone out of their way to operationalize what good teaching looks like, how to make it happen, and why it makes sense for today's teachers to learn to teach to a great diversity of skill levels and abilities, even within a single content-area classroom.

Reviewed by Gita Upreti, MA. Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Special Education at the University of Arizona, Tucson.

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**Schniedewind, Nancy & Davidson, Ellen (2006). *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity*. Third edition. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Rethinking Schools.**

**Pages: 397 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-942961-32-4**

This third edition of *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity*, presents similar material to previous editions, although with attention paid to changes such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and post-9/11 aspects. The sequence of the book follows the "Sequential Process for Creating Inclusive Classrooms and Schools" developed by Schniedewind and Davidson. Geared for educators of upper elementary and middle schools, some of the ideas presented in this work are appropriate for students in grades above and below this recommended age range. Lessons are presented without grades indicated, so as to enable instructors to use these lessons with adaptations as needed for their own classroom.

Somewhat separated into four sections—not indicated in the table of contents but described in the introduction, the work begins with an introduction for teachers. The first of the sections, creating an inclusive, trusting community where students appreciate diversity in the classroom, is presented in chapters 3 and 4. The second section, consisting of three chapters, discusses enabling students to empathize with others' life experiences and explore why and how inequality based on differences exists. Chapters 8 and 9 help students examine discrimination in the institutions in their lives and see how it has affected them. The last chapter of the four parts of lesson ideas empowers students to envision and create changes to foster greater equality. The final chapter presents ideas on how to change the school itself.

Chapter 1 helps the educator recognize roadblocks to inequality, defining such topics as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, linguisticism, anti-Semitism and other religious oppression, ableism, and competitive individualism. Chapter 2 discusses teaching for equality, with topics such as humanism, social justice, societal challenges to equity, and the power to change for students and teachers.

Chapter 3 addresses building trust and communication, with ideas for getting acquainted, developing listening skills, building group process skills, sharing feelings and giving feedback. Chapter 4, devoted to developing skills for creative cooperation, expands on communication and trust with sections on learning cooperative skills, practicing interviewing, and encouraging creative thinking and problem-solving.

The second section begins with a chapter on expanding one's vista with new perspectives to see the world, sharing who we are, and discussing others' views. The second chapter in this section addresses new perspectives such as prejudices and stereotypes, and what can be considered "the isms"—which were identified in chapter one. The final chapter in this section addresses discrimination in areas such as resources, connections to others, and oppression.

Section three begins with a chapter on investigating one's environment, such as classroom, school and home. Chapter 9 introduces more environmental influences and their effects, such as the media and the community, and then provides ways to evaluate how this has affected oneself.

The final section, consisting of one chapter, talks about making changes and alternatives for the future. The final chapter builds on the lessons of the previous chapter, by providing ways to build confidence and skills for change, making changes at school, changing texts and books, making an impact on the media, and reaching out to others.

All of the lesson plans included encourage critical thinking, experiential, cooperative, participatory, and democratic learning in the classroom—all critical skills needed by our students. Each lesson plan begins with a title, followed by objectives, materials (if needed), implementation, ideas for discussion, tips for going further, and a follow-up suggestion where applicable. The work focuses on various forms of diversity, and the user can determine if they want to focus on a broad range of diversity in their classroom, or to simply narrow in on one or more specific types of diversity. Chapters 3 through 10 consist of comprehensive lesson plans, along with worksheets and/or handouts where needed, to utilize in the classroom. Callout boxes throughout the text also help teachers to gain more ideas on how to integrate and use the lesson plans presented.

The work concludes with an extensive resource section. This begins with a listing of resources by subject area (reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, and art); then a chart of the forms of

discrimination addressed by each lesson. The work ends with a set of annotated bibliographies organized by resource type (sources of materials, teacher resources, curricula, media, periodicals, background reading for teachers, fiction for young people, nonfiction for young people, poetry and legends, biography, and biography collections for young people).

While this work is of great use in our ever-expanding diverse educational system, the wide range of student levels attempted makes the lesson plans worthy of edits for any grade level. There are many great ideas presented in this work, but holders of a previous edition might want to defer purchasing the newer edition unless the older one is highly used.

**Reviewed by Sara Marcus, Adjunct Assistant Professor at Queens College GSLIS.**



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