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Brief reviews for March 2008

Arnoff, Kathie-Jo, editor (2007). *So to Teach: Inspiring Stories that Touch the Heart*. Indianapolis: Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education.

Pages: 114 Price: \$14.95 ISBN: 978-0-0912099-46-0

Teachers have stories — stories about teaching and learning that keep them motivated and refreshed. They don't often share these stories, but occasionally, the situation is ripe and you will have the unique opportunity to share in a treasured recollection. The stories give credence to why a person would continue in such a demanding profession. Sometimes, the story tells of a situation where the teacher was rewarded in a way that comes from making a positive difference in a life. Sometimes, the stories are sad and regretful of opportunities missed. Kathie-Jo Arnoff has collected such stories from "Telling Stories" in the *Kappa Delta Pi Record* and from *New Teacher Advocate*. The authors of the stories are classroom teachers.

This is an inspirational book that could be a gift for a new teacher. It could be a source of case studies for a teacher preparation program if a motivated instructor would take the time to match the stories to the course curriculum. The stories lose their impact if they are read one after another without processing and applying the ideas and suggestions contained in the story. The stories need to be savored and discussed and would be a good springboard for such discussion as part of a professional learning community.

Reviewed by Lee Ann Dumas. Dumas is a director for the division of Educator Initiatives and Performance in the Department of State Initiatives for the Texas Education Agency.

Flockhart, Dan (2007). *Fantasy Football and Mathematics: A Resource Guide for Teachers and Parents, Grades 5 and Up*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 194 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-7879-9444-0

Fantasy Football and Mathematics is written for middle school and high school mathematics teachers. Flockhart states that incorporating sports in mathematics enhances student motivation since students are actively engaged in their learning and must make decisions. Auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles are addressed. The resource book is organized into 3 sections and includes 46 practice work sheets and 46 quizzes. It is the fourth book in the Fantasy Sports and Mathematics Series (others being baseball, basketball, and soccer).

Students create and manage their team by selecting 11 real-life football players and 2 team defenses. They read box scores, collect data, and compute weekly points. Points are awarded for touchdowns, 2-point conversions, passing, rushing, and receiving yards, while points are deducted for interceptions and fumbles. Each week, students track their team's progress and make decisions such as trading players due to injury or disappointing performance. The web site, www.fantasysportsmath.com, is regularly updated and includes "players' values" that can be used when creating a team with a salary cap of \$40,000,000. One-year access to "players' values" is provided with purchase of this resource, after which a nominal fee is required.

The author provides 111 algebraic and non-algebraic methods to compute weekly points. Depending on grade level, the scoring system can include radicals, exponents, summation, factorials, integers, fractions,

decimals, or absolute values. Some scoring systems use relative proportionality (e.g., a touch down is always worth twice as much as a field goal) so the teacher can change scoring systems and students' rankings will not change. The default scoring system makes use of factors of 48:

$$W = \frac{1}{8}(T) + \frac{1}{24}(V) + \frac{1}{48}(P + R + C) - \frac{1}{12}(I) - \frac{1}{16}(F)$$

where W is the total points in 1 week for 1 player; T is the number of touchdowns scored; V is the number of 2-point conversions; P is the number of passing yards divided by 25; R is the number of rushing yards divided by 10; C is the number of receiving yards divided by 10; I is the number of interceptions thrown; and F is the number of fumbles lost.

Initially, I was concerned that the activity would not be of interest to females. Flockhart assures us that girls also enjoyed *Fantasy Football and Mathematics*. The author also reports that students' mathematical attitudes improved, as does attendance and academic achievement. This resource reminds me of students creating a stock portfolio in business class and tracking its progress. That activity engages high school students since money is involved. Incorporating sports to teach mathematics is no different.

Reviewed by Louis Lim, department head of mathematics at Richmond Hill High School in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada. Louis holds a Master of Education in curriculum studies and will graduate with a Master of Arts in mathematics in the spring.

Fuhler, Carol J. & Walther, Maria P. (2007). *Literature is Back!: Using the Best Books for Teaching Readers and Writers Across Genres*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 272 Price: \$29.99 ISBN: 978-0-439-88875-2

Carol Fuhler and Maria Walther are alerting teachers that there is no need to teach reading and writing with the traditional basal methods any longer. Children's literature includes a broad range of genres, titles and themes to fit any lesson and infuse it with creativity and originality. In other words, whole language practices are back and acceptable when used effectively by classroom teachers. This theory to practice book is reader-friendly and well organized; it would serve as an excellent textbook for a children's literature course in a teacher preparatory program. The text clearly defines the required aspects of a piece of quality children's literature, and demonstrates how easy quality literature is to discern from mass market books with high profile cartoon characters. The layout of the text includes handy "Try this!" points for classroom teachers with meaningful tips and suggestions for real-world application. Explicit examples of student work are shown throughout the text, which illustrate learning objectives for interdisciplinary instruction using children's literature.

There are also several sets of graphic organizers that are reproducible for teacher/student use. These are helpful and relate to the purpose of each chapter. The authors also created "Glance Charts," which organize a myriad of information within a single table that is easy to follow and understand. The "Character Perspective Chart" is a reproducible activity that teaches students how to organize stories they read into basic elements and to sequence events. I found the lists of favorite read aloud books and genres for different grade levels to be thorough and well referenced. These lists would serve a new teacher well, especially one who is not familiar with traditional children's literature or the variety of genres available for students in school libraries. This book explains in full detail the purpose of teaching genres and the reason why students should be exposed to each. It also touches on book illustrations and encourages teachers to teach children to look for the Caldecott medal for excellence in illustration.

The authors discuss the reading-writing connection at length and even go so far as to explain how teachers can conduct reading/writing workshops with their students. Technology references are integrated at the end of each chapter, providing resource information for teachers wanting to do more independent study on a particular theme or concept. The authors also include cross-curricular connections of how to include children's literature in science, math and social studies instruction. Their emphasis on the use of non-fiction texts or expository writing is essential. Non-fiction is oftentimes overlooked for flashier picture books and fiction favorites. Fuhler and Walther demonstrate how easy it is to incorporate the books with instructional objectives across disciplines. A variety of lesson plans with purposes and materials are also included within the chapters. The plans do not include traditional behavioral objectives or an assessment component, but they do explain how to conduct the learning activity in step-by-step fashion and could be easily adapted for any classroom. Tips for teaching with poetry are also included in this text with examples of work from such well-known authors as Jack Prelutsky and Shel Silverstein. The text concludes with a brief profile of the

qualities of exemplary classroom teachers and gives an informal account of how they incorporate children's literature into their classrooms to enhance instruction.

The collections of classic children's favorites listed for each genre throughout the book are superb, and will be especially valued by new teachers or parents who know nothing about children's literature. For those moving beyond the lists to selecting books, weaknesses of the text include a lack of emphasis on how to discern quality multicultural children's literature from stereotypical traditional favorites. There is a brief chart on bilingual collections of poetry, but more could be given on using children's literature with ESL learners and students with learning disabilities. Otherwise, the text is well written and easily applicable for elementary and middle school teachers.

Reviewed by Dr. Jennifer Holloway, an assistant professor in Cameron University's Department of Education. She currently teaches courses for teacher preparation and has also taught 3rd and 6th grades and served as an assistant principal and principal for eight years.

Joyce, Helen (2007). *Using Films in the Social Studies: Government/U.S. History*. Jacksonville, Florida: TEACHINGpoint.

Pages: 188 Price: \$60.00 ISBN: 1-59657-353-8

Teachers do sometimes use film, television and videotape materials for reasons that are not directly related to knowledge acquisition or skills development. In some schools in the USA, the practice of using videotape as a substitute teacher or time-filler are so common that they have become normalized by routine practice and are considered ordinary and appropriate (Hobbs, 2006, p. 35).

Flush with the commercial success of *The Birth of a Nation* as well as Woodrow Wilson's famous declaration that the film was "history written in lightning," director D.W. Griffith made the bold prediction that in schools and libraries of the future, motion pictures would become the text of choice for learning about history, rendering books obsolete. "Suppose you wish to 'read up' on a certain episode in Napoleon's life," he said. "Instead of consulting all the authorities, wading laboriously through a host of books, and ending bewildered, without a clear idea of exactly what did happen and confused at every point by conflicting opinions about what did happen, you will merely seat yourself at a properly adjusted window, in a scientifically prepared room, press the button, and actually see what happened. ... You will be merely present at the making of history" (Barry, 1915, p. SM16). In a strictly material sense, American schools and libraries have taken just under a century to bear out Griffith's prediction, as TVs, VCRs, DVD players and computers capable of streaming movies and live video have become standard classroom furnishings.

Unfortunately, the pedagogical sense of Griffith's prediction has also come to pass, as Renee Hobbs' research into "non-optimal" classroom practices has demonstrated, and as Helen Joyce notes in the introduction to her new book, *Using Films in the Social Studies: Government/U.S. History*. Showing a movie "without direction or correlation to a specific skill or concept ... as a way of keeping students 'occupied' for ninety minutes" (p. 5) has become so widespread that many students expect classroom movie viewing to resemble home movie viewing: a relatively passive entertainment experience.

That motion pictures can be used to facilitate students' mastery of content area material is not a revolutionary idea. The educational film genre has a rich history spanning all the content areas, as does the documentary. While these types of films are often produced for the school market with overtly informational purposes, they are not the subject of Joyce's book. What Joyce focuses on are narrative films, Hollywood entertainments that many authors — perhaps most famously, the historians and film scholars contributing to the best-selling *Past Imperfect* (Carnes, 1995) — have noted rarely allow fidelity to the historical record to get in the way of telling a good story. As powerful and indelible a vision of history as the silver screen may convey, the inevitable distortions and misrepresentations of facts that the filmmaking process yields means that D.W. Griffith's vision of education through unmediated movie watching is a quixotic ideal at best, a prescription for warped historical understanding at worst. It is into this breach that Joyce offers lesson plans for an eclectic array of fifteen classic and contemporary films to facilitate students' learning not just of historical information, but also of Constitutional principles and philosophies of governance.

Joyce provides a solid strategy for incorporating each film into the social studies curriculum, with activities designed to focus students' attention on core history and government objectives before, during and after viewing the films. Most lessons begin with an inquiry-based activity to establish a knowledge base of the historical era or government principle at the heart of the film to be viewed. These pre-viewing activities

involve students with a range of inquiry tasks, from conducting research into the Watergate scandal and the principle of the separation of powers in preparation for viewing *All the President's Men*, to researching for a debate on capital punishment as prelude to *Dead Man Walking* and even engaging in a simulation of starting a society from scratch after being stranded on a desert island for *Lord of the Flies*. Joyce also provides several strong suggestions for post-viewing activities designed to deepen and crystallize students' understanding of the historical events or Constitutional issues depicted in the films through class discussions, inquiry projects and writing in a variety of genres. The framework Joyce provides for incorporating each film into social studies instruction is solid and practical, and should give teachers interested in using narrative films as vehicles for content area learning more than enough guidance for crafting an engaging program of study.

However, compared to the generally strong selection of pre- and post-viewing activities provided for each film, the level of critical thinking demanded by the tasks suggested for students to engage with while they view the films varies widely. In an effort to promote active viewing and focus students' attention on the core social studies objectives to be mastered by engaging with these films, Joyce has created a series of "Note Sheets," which are available both in the book and on an accompanying CD-ROM. For most of the films, the Note Sheets pose a series of questions that skew heavily literal, asking students to summarize plot points or give information about the events and issues depicted in the film. Many such questions could be answered quite easily without actually watching the films, which would seem to run counter to the purpose of promoting active viewing. Nowhere does Joyce suggest prompts or activities to focus students' attention on the visual or stylistic properties of the films, a missed opportunity to hone students' media literacy skills along with mastery of social studies content objectives. Some of the Note Sheets pose analytical questions, asking about, for example, the ways in which women and Native Americans are depicted — or perhaps stereotyped — in *Last of the Mohicans*, but such higher-level questions are rare. Finally, for a handful of the films, these worksheets amount to little more than blank sheets of lined paper on which students are expected to take notes on a topic suggested by the teacher as they watch, in preparation for a culminating writing assignment.

In sum, Joyce's book provides a good foundation upon which to build a curriculum in U.S. History or Government that incorporates a diverse array of interesting and important films. The ideas for weaving narrative films into the study of civics and American government are particularly intriguing, although it should be noted that as of this writing, three of the highlighted films (*Separate But Equal*, *Acceptable Risks* and *Crisis at Central High*) are not currently in print on VHS or DVD, and a few of the others may be difficult to find in all but the most well-stocked video libraries. However, despite the scarcity of some of the more interesting films and the widely varying levels of critical thinking demanded by the during-viewing activities, the greatest value of this volume of *Using Films in the Social Studies* may be in the framework for teaching social studies through film that Joyce advocates and details throughout the book. Thomas Edison predicted that introducing the film projector into American classrooms would "make school so attractive that a big army with swords and guns couldn't keep boys and girls out of it" (quoted in Dockterman, 1997, p.7). If Joyce's ideas inspire readers to brainstorm creative and engaging ways in which many other interesting movies beyond those detailed in the book might be usefully employed in the enterprise of content area instruction, perhaps the visions of both Edison and D.W. Griffith could truly come to fruition in ways that reward active viewership and combat the unfortunate but all too real image of schools as cineplexes.

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Reviewed by Dr. Sean Kottke. Sean received his Ph.D. from Michigan State University in Educational Psychology and Educational Technology. He currently teaches courses in reading and classroom technology at The Robert B. Miller College in Battle Creek, MI.

Kirby, Dawn Latta & Kirby, Dan (2007). *New Directions In Teaching Memoir: A Studio Workshop Approach*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 195 Price: \$23.00 ISBN: 0-325-00668-7

Dawn Latta Kirby and Dan Kirby channel their wealth of experience teaching writing at all levels in their newest book *New Directions In Teaching Memoir: A Studio Workshop Approach*. In this book the authors focus on one particular genre, contemporary memoir, and revise the traditional writing process in a new approach. They spend the first few chapters defining the genre of contemporary memoir and explaining the philosophy behind the studio workshop approach. Contemporary memoir is not an autobiography; it is an episodic "honest recounting of human struggles and triumphs" (p. 3). Throughout the book, a variety of student and published excerpts demonstrate the techniques introduced. There are also plenty of reproducible handouts. Although the vocabulary may be unfamiliar, treating writing as art, as meaningful work, the way artists in the studio do, is a concept many teachers strive to instill in their students.

The philosophy of the book is best written by the authors themselves: "Even though our students may not be writing the next New York Times bestseller, we want them to work as if they were" (p.59). Repeatedly, the authors refer to published memoir examples, and the book has an extensive bibliography, divided by subject and type. Clearly the literature study is completely integrated into the writing process described. The authors devote two chapters to varying forms of the genre, and one entire chapter to publishing and assembling the final product, continuing the metaphor of an artist preparing an exhibit for an art show. Rarely do books about writing for the classroom devote such space to the publication step of the writing process.

Ritual is an important element in the studio workshop classroom, so students must be given more than adequate time to work in class. The process begins with studying published memoirs and writing original pieces, perhaps in response to prompts given by the teacher. These prompts, seen traditionally in journal entries in high school classrooms, are called "spider writings" by the authors. The authors include many such prompts, although few of them are probably unfamiliar to most writing teachers. The student examples and published memoir excerpts are extraordinary. Teachers may use them in the classroom hoping to inspire students to write to that level. After writing these short pieces, the students examine them for patterns, choosing a few for extensive revision into the contemporary memoir. "No writing is wasted writing . . . but not all writing will be worth publishing," the authors write (p. 23). Focusing the prompts toward a finished product, even if not all the pieces will be used, gives the writing a purpose that traditional journaling lacks.

Students then read back through their spider writings to develop what the authors call a "scheme," an answer to the "So what?" question. The authors clearly lay out this process with step by step handouts written in student friendly language. Deciding on a scheme may lead to students writing additional pieces or elaborating on already written ones. Again, published examples provide guidance in addition to the peer writing groups and the instructor. Revision is emphasized throughout the book, including tips for peer conferencing with writing groups, teacher conferencing with individual students, and teaching mini-lessons. The authors create a chart of "higher order" and "lower order" revision skills, recognizing that students sometimes need to leave their piece for a few days, although they should always be working on more.

Evaluation and tracking student progress are also addressed in their own chapters, complete with handouts ready to use in the classroom. Reflection on the piece and the process are emphasized in Chapter 10: Tracking Memoir-writing Processes, which provides a variety of methods for motivating students toward their goal of a completed contemporary memoir. The next chapter on evaluation opens with several pages lamenting the use of multiple choice and direct writing assessments and the time they take away from useful instruction. Several sample rubrics are included as well as evaluations of the writing groups and a final reflection. The authors even briefly write about using a memoir portfolio instead of just one finished piece.

New Directions in Teaching Memoir is more than just a how-to, explaining how to implement these ideas in the classroom; Kirby & Kirby clearly define the framework and philosophy behind the concept. Nothing introduced is earth-shattering, but the subtle differences from the traditional writing process result in a new approach to a common writing assignment for high school and college students. While most teachers will probably not be able to devote an entire semester class to this approach as the authors seem to, the technique and assignment could be used for a short amount of time or the strategies adapted for other genres. This book neatly balances practical advice and activities with theory and beliefs about teaching writing at all levels.

Reviewed by Beth Kania-Gosche, an instructor for the Educational Studies and English departments at Saint Louis University.

Kondo-Brown, Kimi & Brown, James Dean, editors (2007). *Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Heritage Language Students: Curriculum Needs, Materials, and Assessment*.

New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.**Pages: 368 Price: \$35.00 ISBN: 0805858784**

Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean heritage language students: Curriculum needs, materials, and assessment is a collection of essays on current issues of heritage language (HL) learning. It includes both research-based articles and application and practice on education from 16 authors. Contributors discuss every aspect of learning Japanese, Chinese, and Korean as a heritage language from the theoretical perspective to practical application. It is very inspiring to read this work because it is the most up-to-date and complete collection available with a specific focus on Asian languages. The appearance of the work will encourage more researchers, educators, and teachers to take an interest in heritage language teaching due to the explicit arguments and guidance offered here.

The book includes 12 chapters, divided into four sections. In the first section, the book provides an overview of current issues in heritage language programs and suggests a future research agenda. Kondo-Brown and Brown adopt the six components of curriculum development proposed by Brown (1995) as a foundation to arrange the book. They also examine current Chinese, Japanese, and Korean heritage programs. Language needs analysis is the most important concept discussed in this section. The authors assert that there should be more research on language needs analysis, language assessment tools, and how to development curriculum and incorporate relevant material in HL instruction. Failures of learning HL are caused by heterogeneous language learners being placed inappropriately by using a test or self-report questionnaires. The misplaced tracking leads to teachers having difficulties providing for individual needs. A lack of instructional materials, trained teachers, and community supports along with inappropriate teaching methodologies and curriculum designs also affects the learning outcomes.

Section 2, contains is a collection of Japanese and Korean HL studies on language needs analysis, learning strategies, and language measurement. The chapter by Kataoka, Koshiyama & Shibata uses as an example the Japanese heritage language program at Hoshuukoo school. This program teaches Japanese students in the U.S. the same instruction program as students who are in Japan. Findings showed school the should consider two more factors affecting Japanese students living in the U.S. ∅ length of stay overseas and their age of entry into the U.S. Students in this case have difficulty learning Japanese in the English-dominate speaking environment. The study demonstrates that the school should modify instructional strategies for children in the English-dominant speaking environment. The study also suggests the importance of home and community in helping children learning a heritage language.

Hasegawa's chapter elaborates the importance of language measurement tools. She finds there are some types of language measurements used to test Japanese proficiency which should be modified. Furthermore, the chapter also reminds educators that testing or assessment should not make children bored or frustrated; instead, the design of a test should be interesting, motivating and inspiring.

There is also a comparison between heritage language learners and non-heritage learners of Korean and Japanese. Kim examines how an individual's background (parental influence or language background) affects their processing of sentence structures and markers. Kondon- Brown and Fukuta examine the lack of pronouns in Japanese on heritage learning in that language. These studies find that learners adopt similar learning strategies to process instruction; however, the individual background of the learner has a significant impact on learning. Findings suggest that educators should consider what psycholinguistic mechanisms work for each individual student.

Section 3 focuses on the role of attitude, motivation, identity, and instructional practice. In Lee & Kim's study on Korean HL learners, U.S. students show less instrumental motivation and view Korean as a less high status language. Many students still want to learn it as their heritage language because of the benefits of being bilingual and bicultural. For some it is a deeper personal benefit, they feel they need to learn the language to represent their identity and ethnicity, and to establish membership in their community. The process of identity construction affects HL learners' perception of teachers, peers, and instruction. Therefore, in order to motivate the HL learner, the chapter suggests that content-based instruction is an ideal approach.

The last section covers curriculum design curriculum with specific chapters on Japanese and Chinese. Douglas discusses his process of curriculum design (Douglas, 2005), explaining procedures to understand learners' needs, to link language and content, to incorporate a teaching approach and material, and to assess and evaluate the learners' performance. The chapter is especially important teachers in hetogeneous classrooms who might have multiage students or those arriving in the U.S. at different times/ages. The chapter provides explicit steps to guide novice or in-service teachers to get to know the learners better. The last two chapters discuss the integration of technology and online chat in Chinese heritage language learning. The new technology brings more innovative and interesting activities. It only improves literacy and character

learning but also broadens the students' cultural awareness. Online chat also increases interactivity and engagement, even more than robust traditional classrooms. Zhang & Davis found that students have more confidence, eagerness, and willingness to learn in this real communication context with its non-threatening environment. This is a good example for educators to understand that any learning context should be based on authenticity.

Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean heritage language students: Curriculum needs, materials, and assessment is a good collection from authors who contribute to heritage language study from different theories, research, practices, and applications. The book is a resource for teachers working with heritage language speakers and community workers who are promoting heritage language education. As the most up-to-date, complete discussion of HL it should appeal to graduate students. The book provides profound thinking for researchers — asking research questions that seek better solutions for learning heritage languages. The discussion of how technology improves HL learning should be important for software designers seeking to understand heritage language speakers' needs and learning preferences in order to create a more accessible learning context.

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Reviewed by Hsiao-ping Wu, The University of Texas at San Antonio

Ravitch, Diane (2007). *Ed Speak: A Glossary of Educational Terms, Phrases, Buzzwords, and Jargon*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Pages: 245 Price: \$23.95 ISBN: 978-1-4166-0575-1

Diane Ravitch's *Ed Speak* is a unique resource book for the teacher candidate who is seeking state or national certification. It is also a very good resource for the professionally young educator. Education like other professions has its own language not easily understood by people outside the educational community.

The importance of learning a profession's unique language, can be illustrated with this analogy. I would be considered by many to be a very educated person since I have a doctorate in Mathematics Education. Yet all the years of formal education can not help me explain how to crochet a simple blanket even though I have been crocheting since I was in preschool. You see, I do not know what to call the specific stitches as I have never learned the written or oral language of crochet. Yes, I can make blankets and I can model for you how to make many different stitches, but if we are not in the same location at the same time, I can not communicate with you about how to do this task.

Just as I am crochet illiterate, professionally young teacher candidates often come to the classroom without being able to have meaningful communications with professionals as they are not usually literate of Education terms. Ravitch offers this book as a vehicle for the teacher candidate or the professionally young educator to become education literate. Teacher candidates today must be able to pass state or national tests verifying their knowledge of the education profession. If teacher candidates do not become literate in the pedagogical, it will be difficult to impossible for them to become a certified teacher and/or be professionally successful— making a positive difference in the academic lives of students in their classroom.

Ravitch says the book is a glossary in which she defines terms, phrases, buzzwords and jargon relevant to the field of education. She begins the book with the letter A and proceeded through the alphabet letter by letter. Each letter has many entries some common, some less so. Many if not most of the items deserve the added attention. Each is fully explained as it relates to the education profession. The terms are related to the pedagogy of teaching rather than the content. Terms which are in the realm of general education like "fuzzy math" are included. How is fuzzy math defined? "A derogatory term used by critics to refer to new methods of teaching mathematics that emphasize estimation, multiple approaches to problem solving, and use of calculators in the elementary grades..."(p101). Content specific terms or words such as estimation, addition, etc. are not included in the book. Many educational theorists are also listed in the book and their beliefs and works explained. Ravitch does not even forget to include some of the court cases which have had a major

impact on education. One would not be able to locate "aha moment" in a dictionary nor would one be able to find it in most education books. Aha moment is just one of the phrases explained in this book.

In the last section, Ravitch provides a list of acronyms and abbreviations. Each field has its own acronyms in addition to its own language. There are many acronyms that have "twin" acronyms in other fields. Having this convenient list is very important. Just try to put an acronym in as a search on internet. It is amazing some of the sites you visit before arriving at the desired one.

This book has great potential as a resource for both teacher candidates and the professionally young teacher. It is one that no teacher candidate should be without when preparing for the certification tests. It should be (and is) a required book in pedagogy classes for teacher candidates. It is a book very worthy of a place on every educator's bookshelf.

Reviewed by Barba Patton, Ed. D. Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Instruction (Math Ed) at University of Houston-Victoria. Also Chair of Initial Certification Programs. Prior to teaching at the university level, taught in grades K- 8, math at community college and technical school levels and was in public school administration.

Seal, Latrice M.; Pollard-Durodola, Sharolyn D.; Foorman, Barbara R. & Bradley, Ashley M. (2008). *Vocabulary Power: Lessons for Students Who Use African American Vernacular English*. Level 1 Teacher's Manual and Student Workbook. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 320 Price: \$49.95 ISBN: 978-1-55766-680-2

In today's climate, accountability is paramount. Specifically, within education, high-stakes standardized exams are commonly used to measure student knowledge of key domains. Undeniably, reading comprehension is necessary for successful performance on these exams. But how does vocabulary development affect reading comprehension abilities? Research shows that poor reading comprehension skills often stem from low vocabulary skills. *Vocabulary Power*, a program of lessons targeting students who use African American Vernacular English, aims to address this gap through research-based strategies and practices for improved reading abilities.

The national debate over African American Vernacular English (AAVE), affectionately called "Ebonics," dates back to 1996 when the Oakland School Board brought attention to instructional barriers schools faced in teaching African American school children Standard American English (SAE). *Vocabulary Power* addresses these barriers by providing 20 weeks of lessons to help students bridge the gap between AAVE and SAE.

The program includes a teacher manual and a student workbook. Many of the books used in each lesson incorporate African American cultural elements or are written by African American authors. This distinguishes *Vocabulary Power* from other vocabulary development programs. By making each text relevant to AAVE-speakers, student engagement will increase, thereby improving word retention and reading comprehension. Below are some of the books used in Level 1, targeting students at a third-grade reading level.

- *Richard Wright and the Library Card* by William Miller
- *The Stories Julian Tells* by Ann Cameron
- *Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World* by Mildred Pitts Walter

The teacher's manual begins with a brief introduction that previews key instructional strategies used throughout the program. Next, the authors describe a sample 5-day schedule that details how teachers should use the vocabulary program. Each week consists of 5 days of vocabulary instruction with a different text each week over a 20-week span. Day 1 previews the lesson, allowing teachers to display the 15-word list for that week. Students recite the new words collectively and write them down in their student workbooks. Next, the teacher reads the words and definitions aloud, as students read silently. Students then take turns reading sentences containing the vocabulary words aloud. Finally, for homework, students will study the words and definitions and complete vocabulary activities.

Day 3 and 4 follow a similar format, interweaving key reading strategies such as making predictions and using context clues. Furthermore, students develop vocabulary skills through identifying multiple meanings and analyzing prefixes and suffixes. Engaging vocabulary activities vary from crossword puzzles to bingo. On the final day of the week, students are given a 15-item assessment. The items include matching exercises, identifying words that do not belong in a given list, and multiple choice items. Each week follows

the same format for a total of 20 weeks—the program is very repetitious, making teacher usage easier and student success more likely. Every 4 weeks, students spend a week reviewing for a 28-item multiple choice exam.

Vocabulary Power is a unique vocabulary development program. Few vocabulary curricula target students who use AAVE and develop other important reading comprehension strategies. Also, each lesson previews the next week's vocabulary words within classroom activities, familiarizing students to upcoming words. Finally, this program steers away from rote memorization, giving students an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary through word etymology. These practices can improve word retention and reading abilities, lessening the gap between students who use AAVE and students who use SAE.

The activities are varied and engaging. Vocabulary development is not simply a boring, mundane process that students eventually dread. Unlike other programs, *Vocabulary Power* engages students, increasing their intrinsic abilities to learn new vocabulary words. Overall, this program gives power to students who are historically overlooked. Every teacher who instructs students who use AAVE will greatly benefit from this tremendous resource.

Reviewed by Jade Caines, Emory University.

Tauber, Robert & Mester, Cathy Sargent (2007). *Acting Lessons For Teachers: Using Performance Skills in the Classroom*. Second edition. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers.

Pages: 224 Price: \$34.95 ISBN: 978-0-275-99204-0

Acting Lessons For Teachers: Using Performance Skills in the Classroom attempts to encourage all teachers to integrate performance strategies into their teaching to create a more effective learning environment, expand their teaching methods and gain confidence. Tauber and Mester examine the skills of actors and make comparisons with skills needed to be an effective teacher and communicator.

Differences in teacher's communicative styles do impact the degree to which students learn and learn meaningfully. This is something all teachers can learn and use to accomplish that universal teaching goal. By adopting some creative verbal and nonverbal techniques, we can help more students learn more in all levels and types of educational settings. The techniques we recommend are found in the world of the actor (p. 3).

Tauber and Mester divide the book into three parts — Background, Acting Lessons and Epilogue — and organize the chapters with introductions, explanations of topics, a summary of each chapter and ERIC resources. The main goal of the text is for teachers to "develop acting skills that can help them communicate better" (p. 6).

The Background section presents research on performance skills and describes specific skills to be an effective teacher/actor. Chapter 1 reminds teachers that passion and enthusiasm will permit "greater student achievement" and "effective teaching across all disciplines, all grade levels, and all categories of students" (p. 7). Teacher passion and enthusiasm is contagious and "the process is reciprocal and non-reflexive as we build on another's enthusiasm and passion of the subject matter and for the learning process" (p. 10).

Chapter 2 introduces the "craftsperson's toolbox" containing the skills needed by a teacher to be effective in the classroom. The most important component is mastery of the subject area. "The evidence is clear: enthusiastic teachers, those who are expressive in their manner and method and who demonstrate mastery of their subject matter, do earn higher student evaluations" (p. 17). The toolbox also contains animation in voice, animation of body and creative use of classroom space to be used routinely by the teacher. Humor, role-play, use of props, suspense and surprise "are most effective when used less routinely in the classroom" (p.18). This section concludes with a review of "the educational foundations for the use of theatrical devices as teaching strategies" (p. 25). The authors lay out a broad discussion of research, educational theories and practical accounts of using acting strategies in the classroom.

The Acting Lessons are the essence of the text. Tauber and Mester take each tool and clearly demonstrate the techniques to become a teacher/actor. The authors give a thorough explanation, include illustrations, and dedicate a section of each chapter to student review. Each chapter examines one acting skill and relates the skill to its teaching counterpart. For example, chapter 4 explores "Animation in Body." Animation is identified as physical movement using facial expressions, gestures, posture and some nonverbal expressions that can be used everyday within the classroom.

Our attention to our physical behavior in the classroom is especially warranted because this generation of students has been attuned since birth to the visual rather than the aural medium. Many teachers have been heard to complain that television has had such an impact that students cannot seem to pay attention to material unless it is presented in a visually stimulating manner (p. 36).

Animation helps teachers get information across to their students in a more successful way than reading from a PowerPoint presentation. The authors point out that studies have shown "a teacher's nonverbal expression is positively linked to instructional effectiveness as long as that expressiveness is perceived as natural and is not excessive to the point of distraction" and "the more expressive teachers, within reasonable bounds of moderation, are better liked by their students. Thus, the students are more motivated to learn" (p. 36).

The authors indicate several behaviors to avoid. One is sending contradictory messages to students in the classroom, for example, a teacher tells the student she has time to answer but looks at her watch after a few seconds. Also, do not upstage a student; that is, do not walk, turn your back or write on the board when a student is speaking. Avoid all behaviors that will be distracting to students. Unfortunately, some habits are subconscious but teachers should try to be aware of these and replace them with more purposeful animation. Animation along with props can make a classroom more effective and conducive to learning.

Props, discussed in chapter 9, "set the stage, ... provide context and character, ... clarify information, ... capture and hold attention ... [and] make classroom material more memorable" (p. 96). Guidelines for using props include: rehearse with the prop before the class to confirm it is working correctly; display the prop instead of passing it around so distractions will not occur; use the props as visual aids, not lessons; and most importantly be sure the prop can be seen by the audience (p. 102-03). Props can illuminate a lesson and help students achieve a higher understanding of a topic, but should be used sporadically so as to keep the students' interest.

The Epilogue includes a summation of the teaching strategies presented in the book. Chapter 13 is titled "Behind the Scenes, Loosening Up, and Preparing for That Step across the Classroom Threshold." The authors emphasize the importance of preparation before the performance or lesson being taught. The chapter acknowledges that teaching is a difficult job to execute and provides bulleted advice on preparation. Chapter 14 addresses classroom management noting how acting skills can help reduce classroom discipline problems and produce a more positive working environment. It correlates the skills examined in chapters 4-12 with effective classroom management. The bottom line is "teachers get what they expect" (p. 158). Chapter 15, "Enthusiastic Teaching: A Conversation with Friends" focuses on educators ranging from elementary teachers to university professors who have implemented the acting teacher approach in their classrooms. Each educator discusses his or her approach to acting and their successes with acting strategies.

As an educator, I can relate to the topic of an actor teacher because I believe most teachers perform when teaching. The strategies in *Acting Lessons for Teachers: Using Performance Skills in the Classroom* are very applicable in classrooms across disciplines. I have used the strategies in the classroom, especially animation of the body, and voice. But, after reading the text, I understand more fully how I can hone my skills to be an effective communicator. I would highly recommend this book to pre-service or experienced teachers because the strategies can improve teaching throughout grade levels.

Reviewed by Star Nance, University of Oklahoma.

Weingartner, Rudolph H. (2007). *A Sixty-Year Ride through the World of Education*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books.

Pages: 167 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 0-7618-3731-0

Rudolph Weingartner's "sixty-year ride" is the time he has spent in colleges and universities. A ride can often be exhilarating, and we note this excitement Weingartner feels when teaching undergraduates in philosophy, or the joy he gets from woodworking and art as avocations outside academe. But a ride can be bumpy, with missed turns or wheels stuck in mud, and Weingartner reveals some of the unpleasantness of the higher education workplace. He moves several times, from faculty member at an elite liberal arts college to full time administrator at a private research university, and his insights are personal and absorbing.

Weingartner was educated as a philosopher and spent his early career teaching the discipline at two widely different institutions, San Francisco State and Vassar College. He then became dean of liberal arts and sciences at Northwestern University (where I knew him only by sight during my doctoral studies in philosophy) and late in his career for a brief period, provost at the University of Pittsburgh. Weingartner's ride

through education spans the changes in academe over the past century, from a system where faculty were hired based on a good word put in by their major professor, to the beginning of the era of accountability in higher education. Weingartner's take upon these developments is frank and refreshing.

The book is structured as a narrative of his life, interspersed with reflections upon education. Thus his brief chapter on elementary education calls for teachers who know one subject well and are thus specialists in it (similar to John Dewey's means of identifying good teachers by their love of a single subject). In this and other chapters, Weingartner offers observations and opinions that show how a liberally educated person thinks about issues in which he is not completely knowledgeable. He is unconvinced by those who denigrate or lessen the importance of a liberal education. The following passage is a novel insight into the motivation and outlook of such a person:

"Practical" people sometimes assail liberal education as superfluous. They are the world's true optimists: they think that human beings are prepared by nature to understand the world, to keep pace with social and technological change, to make wise decisions about their own futures and the futures of others, to lead satisfying lives. I myself am sufficiently pessimistic to think that the least it takes is work. (p. 38)

Weingartner is candid about his brief tenure as provost of the University of Pittsburgh. He fought for more funds and was denied such by the university's president. Weingartner declared that he could not continue working as provost under these circumstances. What happened next may sound familiar to many people who have worked as administrators in higher education. Weingartner tells it with an economy of language that underscores the finality of the event:

Almost ten days later I was working at my desk on routine correspondence when an emissary from the president's office handed me a letter. [The president] wrote that he could not accede to my request, seeing it as "dispensing" his authority. He referred, too, to fundamental differences in how we saw the role of provost, as well as regarding some institutional goals. [He] therefore accepted my resignation, giving as its date the day before graduation.

Other parts of the book contain equally potent and compressed discussions of liberal education, graduate school, publishing in the academy, and other topics central to faculty and administrator concerns in colleges and universities. The book's informal and engaging style makes it ideal as a supplementary reading in courses in higher education leadership or the history of higher education. It is also appropriate for faculty development programs or programs for academic administrators, such as new deans or department heads.

Reviewed by A.G. Rud, Purdue University.



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