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Brief reviews for June 2008

Cooke, Heather (2007). *Mathematics for Primary and Early Years: Developing Subject Knowledge.* Second Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Pages: 222   Price: $120.00 (hardcover) $42.95 (paperback)   ISBN: 9781412946094(hardcover) 9781412946100 (paperback)

Heather Cooke is an experienced practitioner and has a particular interest in helping people who struggled with mathematics in school. The purpose of this book is to help students and trainees build self-confidence in their dealings with mathematics. This textbook is part of a series entitled *Developing Subject Knowledge*, which includes English, Mathematics and Science. It provides materials for students to achieve qualified teacher status and is used on the second level Open University course, which is part of the Foundation Degree in Early Years.

Being an experienced middle-school teacher for twenty-two years and teaching math education courses as an adjunct professor for five years, I am very interested in finding ways to help students decrease their math anxiety. Many students have knowledge about mathematics and are proficient in their mathematical skills, but they still have math anxiety. The author makes the claim that this book was written with the intent to help students who have little confidence in their mathematics ability. Cooke believes that students who revisit mathematical ideas from a different perspective and look at the problems from an adult's point of view can reduce math anxiety and improve their confidence. The major difference in this text from other textbooks is that there are task-driven exercises with an emphasis on active learning geared towards meeting the needs of students who lack confidence in their mathematical abilities. These types of students limit their possibilities of learning more mathematics and of benefiting from knowledge and skills that could move them forward in their future goals.

The first chapter introduces a way to learn by "doing and thinking about mathematics." Questions are presented that encourage students to think about what mathematics is and comments are provided on different positive strategies to help students learn what to do when they are "stuck" on a problem. Emphasis is placed not only on learning mathematics, but on understanding it and making sense of it. I totally agree with this approach. I have seen many times where students learn the mathematics but have no real understanding of it and are not able to retain the information. The task-driven approach used in this text is very interactive. Questions and comments appear throughout the problems that encourage students to think about what they notice and to look back and decide the next best move. The last part of chapter one explains the different ways that the book can be used. The student can work from the beginning to the end or only work on particular topics. There are not many practice problems because the student is encouraged to think through the problems thoroughly, but additional problems are supplied on a web site or in books listed in the references. Calculators are needed for some problems and students are encouraged to create a mathematical dictionary to include unfamiliar mathematical terms, symbols, representations and connections.

The next seven chapters involve number sense, measures and proportion, statistics, algebra, geometry, chance and probability, and proof and reasoning. Each chapter gives an overview of what is covered in the section with problems for the student to try, comments about the problems for discussion, and visual drawings to help with understanding of the problem.

As I read through the text and participated in completing the problems, I found them to be interesting and thought-provoking. The idea that "less is more" definitely applies to these problems. Students are encouraged

to think about the problem, try it, analyze it, revisit it, and understand it. For example, in the geometry chapter, 2D transformations are explored in tasks 97 through 103. Reflections, rotations, and translations with interactive tasks such as folding paper, copying shapes, analyzing changes, and revising original problems are included. Extending the problems to include algebra involves transforming shapes using coordinates are included in task 104. The author says a great deal at the end of this section when she states, "It is not important that you remember these connections between a transformation and the changes in coordinates. What is important is that you are aware that such connections exist and that you could produce your own examples (specialize) in order to reconstruct them (for other connections for different transformations) for yourself" (p. 149). In my experiences I have found that many students memorize these connections but have no real understanding of transformations. I believe the interactive approach used in this text can be very helpful to students' understanding of many different mathematical problems.

The last chapter reviews strategies to help students who will be taking examinations. Books and web sources, along with references are provided in this section. A supplementary self-evaluation guide with answers follows the final chapter and students can use this before they study each chapter. This assessment can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and can reduce the amount of work to be done using the textbook. A practice assessment test is also included with solutions that are thoroughly explained.

Students who have any level of math anxiety would definitely benefit from using this textbook because it provides them with opportunities to learn mathematics in a non-threatening way. Students who pursue teaching elementary mathematics would also benefit because they could develop a deeper understanding of mathematics in order to help their future students.

Reviewed by Dr. Carol A. Rodano, adjunct professor at Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ, and The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Pomono, NJ; middle-school math teacher at Bunker Hill Middle School, Sewell, N.J. Interests include mathematics education and math anxiety.

Feber, Jane (2008). *Active Word Play: Games and Activities that Build Vocabulary.* Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 70   Price: $19.95   ISBN: 978-1-934338-16-2

Teachers know that a day of school can fly by. Meeting standards and objectives leaves little time for fun and games. Therefore, when we get a chance to integrate meaningful learning with fun activities, it can very beneficial to the student. Jane Feber's new book, *Active Word Play: Games and Activities that Build Vocabulary*, allows teachers the opportunity to make this a reality in the classroom. Feber provides over thirty activities and games that can be integrated into upper elementary and middle school classrooms to help build vocabulary.

The book is setup in an easy to read format. The games and activities are explained in 1-2 pages. Each one has a short description, list of materials, directions, and possible variations and suggestions. The book then provides pictures, diagrams, and templates where needed. Teachers could integrate some of these activities as a one-time fun game. There are others that could be used as a continual part of vocabulary strategy. One of the strengths of Feber's book is that it could be used by a teacher planning over summer break, as well as by a teacher cramming before class starts. The layout is very clear and the objective and description of each activity is easy to grab hold of.

One of the activities presented by Feber is titled "Bumper Stickers." The basic idea is for students to create a bumper sticker that uses one of their vocabulary words as a slogan. Each sticker contains a picture, usually humorous. The example given is "heartrending." The example slogan is: "It's heartrending to think they actually gave you a license." The bumper sticker then shows a car slamming into a stop sign. This is a fun, quick activity that could aid students in understanding new vocabulary words and provide some decoration for the classroom.

A more advanced activity is "Vocabulary Wheels." With this, students write vocabulary words on a construction paper circle with a short definition on the opposite side. It is then attached by a metal brad to a folded piece of rectangular construction paper with cut-out. Students can see the word as they turn the wheel and then see the corresponding definition on the opposite side. This activity is explained in 9 clear steps with a picture displaying the final project.

The games and activities in Feber's book vary extensively. I presented the previous two examples to help display this. The Bumper Stickers could be quickly placed into a normal school day where the teacher is looking for a little extra practice on vocabulary in a short amount of time. Vocabulary Wheels would take a

little more time and preparation for both the teacher and the students. An important benefit of this book is that it provides various games and activities that are both simple and complex. It can be used for many different situations and classrooms. For teachers of vocabulary, whether it is language arts or content areas, the ideas in this book provide excellent resources that will be enjoyable for students.

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

Ferguson, Ronald F. (2007). *Toward Excellence With Equity: An Emerging Vision For Closing The Achievement Gap.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Pages: 300   Price: $59.00(hardcover) $29.95(paperback)   ISBN: 978-1-891792-79-3(hardcover) 978-1-891792-78-6(paperback)

What could hip-hop, television, and teacher perceptions have in common? According to Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson in his book *Toward Excellence with Equity: An Emerging Vision for Closing the Achievement Gap*, it is possible that they are all three at least partially responsible for the gap in test scores representing achievement between America's black and white youth. As an economist whose work in the 1980s was initially situated in an interest in why the earnings of black and white Americans were not equal, Ferguson writes in the book's introduction that he "became hooked on the idea of raising test scores" because "apparently, improving reading and math skills among black youths was a very promising strategy for reducing racial earnings inequality" (p. 2).

Toward Excellence with Equity is a collection of essays and papers Ferguson has written throughout his career; chapters have introductions, summaries, conclusions, and afterwords as needed to establish their context and update their status. Readers are given the opportunity to read about research involving such instruments as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) from the 1990s, a survey used to measure basic reading and math skills and study the issue of why people made different earnings. In the longitudinal work of this research, participants were surveyed as teenagers and then again as young adults with jobs. Ferguson writes that the results "shed light on one aspect of the inequality puzzle: the growing black-white gap in earnings" (p. 2).

Another research instrument discussed in the text is the Armed Forces Qualifications Test (AFQT). Scores from 1949 and 1953 didn't reveal why blacks and whites eventually earned differently; even in the 1960s, they were not key predictors. Ferguson writes that by the early 1990s, AFQT scores were "quite important predictors of the hourly earnings for young adult males and females" (p. 2). Jobs were changing, requiring employees to have abilities in math and literacy to succeed. The AFQT tested both math and reading. Success on the AFQT became a foretelling of the possibility for earnings.

Readers with limited knowledge in statistics and data analysis may initially be alarmed by the wealth of tables of statistical information provided in *Toward Excellence with Equity*, but, as the reader continues, he will find that while Ferguson provides the numbers, he also does an excellent job of explaining the results in the narration of the book. So, statisticians may read and appreciate the support from the data while those who are not as learned in quantitative research may read and profit from Ferguson's guiding narrative.

Ferguson's beliefs concerning the discrepancy between the academic progress of black and white students are presented and supported in very interesting and thought-provoking ways. In chapter 2, Ferguson writes that the explanation may have at one time been found in the forced busing and mixed messages that black leaders in the 1970s provided to black youth. Hip hop is also mentioned as perhaps one of the ways that black youth pulled away from alignment with society's ideas of public education as they searched for ways to express themselves as black people. Reading this volume, one finds there are passages along the way that arouse the feeling that "he makes sense; this certainly could be a valid reason for the gap in black and white test scores." Not only are Ferguson's thoughts and opinions convincing, in many cases he provides the data that prove his contentions to be very possible.

Ferguson answers his chapter 3 title "Can Schools Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap?" by examining the six most popular proposals for improving the test performance of black children and thus closing the gap. Does preschool help if black children then find themselves in elementary school classrooms with ineffective teachers? Ability grouping and tracking are discussed with Ferguson expressing his belief that the grouping and tracking are not the actual issue; the issue usually again involves teacher quality for the lowest achieving kids. He discusses instructional interventions. The discrepancy between home and school cultures is a possible issue that retards the academic growth of black students. Class size is also an issue that is

included in the discussion. An effective chapter summary provides the author's beliefs concerning each of these issues with the ultimate concern focused on teacher quality.

The chapters in this book address various issues concerning why black and white students do not score similarly on standardized tests, including as chapter 5 "A Diagnostic Analysis of Black-White GPA Disparities in Shaker Heights, Ohio." While some black students in this "well-to-do suburb" (p. 149) match the college entrance exam scores of their white neighbors and classmates, there is still a "disproportionately black" group of students with the same opportunities in this setting who struggle to pass Ohio's graduation exam. The findings from this quantitative case study include an examination of race, attitudes, family background, and behaviors as they relate to the achievement disparities. An appendix outlines the Tripod Project for School Improvement, a professional development model Ferguson created with input from educators in Shaker Heights.

The reader of *Toward Excellence with Equity* will gain much insight concerning the gap between the academic achievement of black and white students in America's public school but can gain that knowledge without a concluding sense of guilt. Ferguson somehow manages to present the facts, numbers, and his own philosophies concerning this racial divide without insinuation of blame toward any one group of people. His focus on the success of our nation as the ultimate goal for education and society guides his writing from the beginning to the end of this book.

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.

Gentry, J. Richard (2007). *Breakthrough in Beginning Reading and Writing: The Evidence-Based Approach to Pinpointing Students' Needs and Delivering Targeted Instruction.* **New York: Scholastic.**

Pages: 128, includes DVD   Price: $24.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-00725-2

In his earlier book, *Breaking the Code*, Gentry built on the work of Clay and Ehri introduced what he terms "phase theory" and his belief that writing and reading are all part of the same process of code breaking. *Breakthrough in Beginning Reading and Writing* expands and details Gentry's theory. Phase Theory contends that early writing is a precursor to and leads naturally to reading, that the process of learning to read and write (i.e. code breaking) naturally progresses through 5 phases, and that a skilled teacher can identify the child's current phase by identifying aspects of the child's writing characteristic of a particular phase.

Gentry is not referring to formalized instruction in writing, with its emphasis on mechanics, but rather to what he calls "kid writing." This involves a child's early attempts at writing ranging from squiggles to squiggle/letter combinations to use of invented spellings. He also uses related activities such as an adult modeling "adult writing" by transcribing a child's description of his/her picture. According to Gentry, "invented spelling is the perfect vehicle for code breaking" (p. 66). In fact, the teacher's analysis of invented spellings determines in which phase the child is currently operating and thus identifies the activities needed to help the child move smoothly into the next phase.

In part I, Gentry discusses the characteristics of each of the 5 stages and how to identify the stage of a particular child. The phases are as follows:

> Phase 0: Operations without letter knowledge
> Phase 1: Operations with letters but without sounds
> Phase 2: Operations with partial phonemic awareness
> Phase 3: Operations with full phonemic awareness
> Phase 4: Operations with full code and chunking knowledge

The accompanying DVD provides helpful examples of Gentry working with 5 children representing each of the 5 phases, analyzing the writing they do for him, and discussing why each child was classified at his/her respective phase.

Part II discusses phase theory in light of the current policies regarding the teaching of reading and writing. No Child Left Behind's emphasis on "reading first" tends to exclude writing from the process of learning to read. He contends that the policies have put the part before the whole, i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, etc., rather than on the whole. Gentry believes that the learning of the parts should flow from experience with the whole. The skilled teacher, as s/he provides reading and writing experiences for the

child, should point out phonemic, phonics, and spelling patterns, for example, that will benefit the child at his/her particular stage and help move him/her to the next stage.

The book ends with a call to action composed of three proposals for reforming education in the twenty-first century. Gentry proposes revamping teacher preparation to include a special emphasis on teaching beginning reading, providing universal access to preschools, and providing incentives to bring the best teachers to the worst schools. While this section makes some good points, it is not directly related to phase theory, and therefore appears somewhat disconnected from the rest of the book.

In the introduction, Gentry describes the vagueness and uncertainty that surrounded the teaching of beginning reading when he first entered the classroom more than 30 years ago. Students who caught on quickly did fine, but there was no clear understanding of how to help students who struggled. Through phase theory, Gentry hopes to provide a clear blueprint for teachers to follow, eliminating the trial and error which he experienced. It should be emphasized that Gentry's examples deal with students of normal ability; he does not discuss students with learning disabilities or other specialized needs. While I am not a classroom teacher, his approach makes a lot of sense. Gentry's articles on spelling show frequent citation in *Web of Science*, and phase theory builds on this earlier research. *Breakthrough in Beginning Reading and Writing* provides a clear and logical process for teachers to follow in helping beginning readers learn to read. As such, it will be a welcome resource to teachers in kindergarten and the primary grades.

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Gentry, J.R. (2006). *Breaking the code: The new science of beginning reading and writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

No Child Left Behind Act, 20 USC 6301 (2001).

Reviewed by Christina Cicchetti, M.S., Ed.S., Education Services/Reference Librarian, University of California Riverside

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Gillham, Bill (2007). *Developing a Questionnaire.* Second edition. London; New York: Continuum.

Pages: 112   Price: $29.95   ISBN: 9780826496317

Perfect timing! Just as I embark on dissertation research that requires some sort of a survey, I've found just the right help, an uncomplicated text that provides a thorough analysis of how and why to develop a questionnaire. Gillham's quick read covers the good, the bad, and the ugly in terms of utilizing questionnaires in research. I appreciate the fact that a how-to book on questionnaires starts out by warning the reader about the pitfalls of their use and advises careful consideration of both use and design.

Gillham's philosophy behind this text is that research is a practical matter and any instruction in how to conduct it should be just as practical. An excellent example of this is found in the chapter on the statistical analysis of closed questions. Gillham's explanation of why and how the chi square test should be used is aimed at the non-mathematicians among us and is as clear an explanation as I have yet to encounter. His tips on strategies for making sure you get a maximum number of completed questionnaires returned to you are also practical as well as creative. Unapologetically, this streamlined manual includes recommendations for further readings that go into much greater depth.

Beyond discussing the pros and cons of questionnaire usage, Gillham's comprehensive guide covers how to draft the questions and design the layout, various approaches to dissemination, result analysis, and the presentation of results. The sequence of the text is such that a novice researcher could start at page one and by the end, have formulated a solid questionnaire and know how to extract information from it.

Gillham cautions the novice researcher that questionnaires normally raise more questions than they answer. He suggests a multi-method approach to cross validating questionnaire results by incorporating interviews and then follows that up by describing how one might go about making sense of all that data. I have found this text useful not only in designing my questionnaire and formulating my questions, but also in deciding

whether or not to even include a questionnaire in my research design.

Reviewed by Amy Larrison Gillan, science teacher, Southmont Junior High School, Crawfordsville, IN, and doctoral student, Science Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Education, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN. Area of research interest: ocean literacy and stewardship.

Heidger, Terri & Stevens, Beth (2008). *Become a Good Reader! Six Simple Steps.* **Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.**

Pages: 20   Price: $9.95   ISBN: 978-1-934338-13-1

Learning to read is just like "doing a dance." Heidger and Stevens present a wealth of condensed research-based instructional strategies in this little flip-book. *Become a Good Reader* represents the collective 50 plus years of teaching experience and knowledge, from these two highly regarded teachers, about how to best support emerging and struggling readers.

Aimed at teachers who are working with emergent and struggling readers this flip-book promises "six simple steps" to effective teaching of reading. While the strategies offered do represent and describe many proven and foundational reading instructional strategies, here in this flip-book format they are presented as a "reminder" of a presumed greater teacher knowledge, understanding, and skill base. Each strategy reminder gives the experienced teacher a quick reference to sound teaching strategies. For novice or beginning teachers — teachers who are developing their expertise in intervention and instruction — these quick tips and simple steps may lead to misapplied interventions and unfounded reading strategy instruction.

Primarily the snapshot strategies and flip format target experienced, seasoned teachers who can best utilize this colorful, flip-book as a way to support "best practice." Additionally, teachers attending reading workshops, or schools that have focused professional development on reading strategies for emergent and struggling readers would find this little flip-book to be a handy follow-up reference and condensed reminder of sound reading intervention strategies.

As an experienced teacher myself, I would consider purchasing this book for teachers more readily if it were titled: *Become a Good Reader — Six Strategies to Support Emergent and Struggling Readers*. Kept at the finger- tips of an experienced teacher this flip-book accomplishes the condensing of strategy prompts resulting from over 50 years of teaching and "dancing" experience.

Reviewed by Jan E. Blake, a doctoral student in Literacy Studies in the Department of Theory and Practice at The University of Tennessee.

Israel, E. Susan; Sisk, A. Dorothy & Block, Cathy Collins (2007). *Collaborative Literacy: Using Gifted Strategies to Enrich Learning for Every Student.* **Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

Pages: 256   Price: $80.95(hardcover) $38.95(paperback)   ISBN: 9781412916974(hardcover) 9781412916981(paperback)

In their resourceful book, *Collaborative Literacy: Using Gifted Strategies to Enrich Learning for Every Student*, Susan Israel, Dorothy Sisk, and Cathy Collins Block provide education practitioners with both theoretical insight and a pragmatic framework to increase collaborative activities. Such activities would take place in classrooms where students can generate their own ideas, and then in groups, utilize those ideas towards creating a new product. The authors define collaborative literacy as "the use of multiple strategies to engage the readers in a group setting" (p. 11). The definition is central to the book's coverage of a wide variety of research- based collaborative literacy guidelines for all student types — average and gifted learners, advanced-level readers, gifted students with special needs, and high achievers. The authors also show ways to promote parent-teacher collaboration in order to blend school and home in one flow of continuous learning opportunities.

The authors take turns authoring chapters, taking advantage of each person's strengths. The wide-ranging message and value of the book corresponds very well with the authors' belief that "collaboration helps develop and enrich reading, writing, speaking, and thinking experiences…realized by the end product" (p. 1). For the authors, the end product was a collaborative construction of the book itself.

The volume is divided into four parts: part one is a summary of the latest research on gifted education, and the conceptualization of building collaborative literacy. It also offers advice on how to identify and mutually engage advanced readers and gifted students, showing how to involve all types of students in common collaborative literacy building. This part of the book provides an engaging mix of theorizing and observation on giftedness, interdisciplinarity, and conceptual connections. It also focuses on identity- centered adjustments in curriculum, and, last but not least, emphasizes the role of environment (both home and school) for students with special needs.

Part two outlines ideas on how to engage regular and gifted students in a multicultural classroom to develop a cohesive learning community. It discusses rationales for constructing collaborative literacy when teaching reading and writing, and examines options for building collaborative literacy with parents. In addition, in this part the authors discuss useful techniques for building collaborative classrooms in terms of the following categories: peer access, pace and goals of teaching, a path of inquiry that is aligned with talents, interests, and learning styles, cultural diversity, reading instruction, and parents.

Part three covers the topic of comprehension development and higher-level thinking and shows ways to increase natural curiosity and creative thinking. It emphasizes the benefits of inquiry-based learning and provides guidelines on how to evaluate collaborative literacy. In this part, the three authors (plus Jennifer Gilmore, Nicole Caylor, Whitney Wheeler, and Shari R. Parris — none mentioned on the front cover of the book) provide a detailed emphasis on the importance of lesson process modeling. They discuss pre, during, and post metacognition assessments; awareness of student creativity and obstacles that may block creative engagement; the use of technology; and evaluation in order for students to be able to think at a higher, more analytical level.

In part four, which consists of only one chapter, Israel discusses how to increase teacher self-efficacy in terms of constructing collaborative literacy by reflecting on the mindset of the teacher. She also gives advice on how to develop dense collaborative literacy environments through an effective organization of available resources (newsletters, journals, periodicals, books, and Internet sites).

As Susan Israel points out in the text's introduction, this book is a response to the need to provide educators (specifically, regular classroom teachers) "with a research-based resource that synthesizes literacy strategies used in gifted education and higher level thinking strategies from the field of reading education to build collaborative literacy" (p. 3). The book provides an excellent contribution through its complementary use of research and successful strategies. The resources of existing literacy research were skillfully re- applied to construct rationales, organization, and implementation of collaborative literacy practices for every student, teacher, and parent.

Reviewed by Gatis Dilans, PhD program in Culture, Literacy & Language, the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Jensen, John (2007). *The Silver Bullet Easy Learning System: How To Change Classrooms Fast And Energize Students For Success.* Philadephia: Xlibris.

Pages: 181   Price: $27.89 (hardcover) $17.84(paperback)   ISBN: 978-1-4257-6620-79(hardcover) 978-1-4257-6609-2(paperback)

John Jensen claims that he is "not a teacher by trade" in the introduction to his new book. However, he does claim to know of a silver bullet (not to be confused with a popular beer slogan) which will transform traditional classroom environments. Teachers can follow his seven step process, which oddly resembles a pre-service teacher's lesson plan template, to energize students. His book, *The Silver Bullet Easy Learning System: How to Change Classrooms Fast and Energize Students for Success*, begins with a misspelling on the book jacket and title page, and goes downhill from there. It is difficult to get past the misuse of bold faced text and odd text spacing throughout the book. It's as if you bought a used textbook from the university bookstore that a previous reader has highlighted, but they've highlighted things you don't necessarily find important to remember or worthy of drastic fluorescent shading. The text progresses slowly with a weak introduction comparing student learning to athletic achievement. It cites student regurgitation of a kindergarten teacher's verbal behavioral expectation as a model for successful learning. I'm not convinced that recitation of a directive can be considered as student success or a "score" on the standardized assessments by which student learning gains are currently measured, or that it implies learning has taken place. The remainder of the text is neither easy nor energizing, as the title might suggest.

The seven core elements of the Silver Bullet Easy Learning System are simplistic components of teacher

preparation programs taught throughout the country and include: Understanding, organization, practice, scoring, performance, good feelings, and communications. The author notes that this process is revolutionary in transforming classrooms without costing educational systems money by requiring additional curriculum materials or training. I think the real question is why a teacher not employing these seven common sense practices is still teaching? The seven steps are not directly addressed in- depth with their own chapters, but incorporated into mini-introductions of fifty-four methods of how to practice this process. These methods should likely be renamed as tips or suggestions as none are comprehensive models of instruction.

The fifty-four methods are an exhaustive listing of idiot-proof, common- sense practices in teaching like the use of independent practice in a lesson plan. Another method is the use of "memory hooks," which Hilda Taba called concept teaching in her spiral curriculum layout in the 1960's. There is also reference to the use of mnemonic devices for recalling factual information. Assessing student learning by scoring instead of grading is suggested in chapter 7, but may not be endorsed by school administrators as it is not common practice and is not how standardized assessment systems measure student success or how school API scores are calculated. Many of Jensen's methods are simply tips for organization or structuring of class instruction, time management, the development of student/teacher interpersonal skills, and communication techniques from Speech 101. In this regard, the author fails to deliver a new model for revolutionizing classrooms of the 21st century and instead settles for a rehashing of tried practices from the past.

The ideas in this book resemble a collection of practices that span the past three decades in education. The author does not appear to be as concerned with learning gains or measurable student success from current data-driven programs with well-written behavioral objectives as he is with student engagement, or time spent on task. The first chapter is a schedule of timing for a lesson that illustrates how a teacher chooses to engage students during small blocks of time in order to maximize the use of their short attention spans. He does not elaborate on how this practice energizes students, but it does illustrate how to control student behavior by micromanaging their task completion schedule. The idea of time management is not a new concept and can be learned by novice teachers through observation of veteran teachers and by learning from their own teaching experiences. It is referred to again in chapter 6, where the author asks teachers to use a digital timer to "quantify to the second the time they (students) waste in changing from one learning activity to another" (p. 105). Would the teacher's time not be better spent learning how to conduct more efficient transitions? This could be learned by observing a mentor teacher or while sharing best practices with colleagues at a school faculty meeting.

The majority of this book focuses on communication in the classroom with the discussion of feelings. Incorporating the teaching of communication skills within a lesson is a practice that open-concept design schools in the 1970's were exploring and are typical practice in today's classrooms and school counseling programs. Much of the dialogue is reminiscent of a Dr. Phil episode where "I hear you say…" is used in teaching conflict resolution and emotional understanding. Another idea introduced by the author is the use of "mind movies," which is not unfamiliar to teachers who used the Success for All packaged reading program, which included that exact term in teaching reading skills within a given timeframe each day. The "Partner Practice" outlined in 9 different steps in chapter 2 of the book sounds an awful lot like cooperative learning from the 1980's. These ideas are not necessarily changing classrooms, but are common practices incorporated into everyday learning.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover topics of classroom management that incorporate direct teaching and modeling of communication skills, the use of discussion groups and conflict resolution, and the use of rules and consequences to help students learn to control their own behavior while taking responsibility for their actions. These topics are clearly addressed in Harry Wong's *The First Days of School*, which is the modern day bible for novice teachers in the field. Chapter 6 includes methods for helping students focus learning which again refers to teachers sharing an expectation, engaging learners, and helping students organize their thinking. Chapter 9 discusses a pilot program of the silver bullet in use and chapter 10 delves further into implementation of the methods. The appendices list topics that students would like to talk about in classes, but that are not necessarily linked to student success and could be viewed as a glorified interest inventory. The author also provides graphic organizers for scoring and measuring student progress with the silver bullet process at the end of the book.

This author should practice what he preaches in one of his fifty-four methods and focus attention on the topic of transforming classrooms with efficient practices and energizing students for success. The text fails to deliver what the title suggests in a rambling collection of activities that teachers might entertain if they were able to focus their attention span long enough to make it through page 181. This book lacks editing, continuity, purpose, structure and a readable format. Chapters are filled with unpolished numerical listings of activities or ideas referred to as methods for improvement that are not research based or supported with statistical data of measurable student learning gains, which is how student success is measured in the age of No Child Left Behind. Perhaps if Jensen were a "teacher by trade" as he so eloquently stated, he could

develop more useful literature instructing real teachers on how to perfect the profession to which they've devoted their time, effort, talent, and creativity.

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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.

Jossey-Bass Reader on The Brain and Learning. (2008). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 457   Price: $35.00   ISBN: 978-0-7879-6241-8

Advances in neuroscience, medicine, and technology have promised revolutionary changes in the way we understand and approach our lives and human behavior. Current research endeavors no longer focus simply on curing disease, but on improving, enhancing, or optimizing normal behavior and skills. As our understanding of human cognition and learning deepens, the desire to capitalize on this understanding through the development of better educational approaches and tools also grows. While it would be optimal if the results of bench and laboratory science were easily translatable to the art and practice of daily living, experiences both past and present constantly remind us this is not the case.

This text is a compilation of facts, philosophies, and perspectives on advances in neuroscience, biology, educational theory, and a common desire to improve, if not completely reinvent, the current educational system. As the editors note in the Introduction, the key to this will be "the creation of a new field that integrates neuroscience and other areas of biology and cognitive science with education" (p. xvii). Accomplishing this will require the creation of a new interdisciplinary science and the goal of the text is to help educators learn about the human brain and neuroscience in order to craft research goals and objectives factually grounded in these sciences.

The book begins with basic overviews about the brain, the ongoing debate about brain-based learning, and how the brain operates while learning the basic fundamentals of education (e.g., math and reading). It also offers discussions on the interplay between emotions and learning as well as the different pathways utilized for learning different subject matters. The pathways used for learning music differ from those sparked by a lesson in grammar, although there is often crosstalk between pathways. Each of the chapters could stand alone, so the reader with a specific interest is able to go directly to their area of interest although reading the chapters sequentially provides an interesting tapestry of information. There is overlap between chapters, particularly in the earlier part of the text, but this overlap does not become redundancy. The authors are all highly qualified and experienced, and each chapter is distinct from the others in tone and approach. While reading the text, I had the feeling of being at a multidisciplinary conference with a wide variety of speakers; while some were more engaging or easily understood then others, overall the quality was superb.

For those interested in advancing the possibilities uncovered by neuroscience research in education, the text provides an excellent introduction to brain biology, mechanics, and how the brain interfaces and interacts with the world at large. If there was a similar book regarding education and educational theory written specifically for neuroscientists and biologists, it would be a wonderful complement to the *Jossey-Bass Reader on The Brain and Learning.* Together they would form a platform of basic knowledge about both fields, serving as a curricular model for the creation of this new interdisciplinary science.

Reviewed by Michele Curtis, MD, MPH.

Lipson, Marjorie Y. (2007). *Teaching Reading Beyond the Primary Grades: A Blueprint for Helping Intermediate Students Develop the Skills They Need to Comprehend the Texts They Read.* **New York: Scholastic.**

Pages: 288   Price: $27.99   ISBN: 9780439767576

The subtitle of Marjorie Lipson's *Teaching Reading Beyond the Primary Grades* is an apt description of this excellent addition to Scholastic's "Theory and Practice" series: "A blueprint for helping intermediate students develop the skills they need to comprehend the texts they read." Teachers, parents and not least of all students know that the mantra "learn to read/read to learn," so often used to distinguish the aims of reading instruction in early and later elementary classrooms, is a fiction that masks the complexity of teaching and reading in both contexts. It too often prevents older students from receiving purposeful instruction in the strategies successful readers use to make sense of an increasing variety of text forms and genres. As the RAND Reading Study Group noted in their 2002 report, *Reading for Understanding* (cited frequently by Lipson), reading at the third grade level in the third grade is no guarantee that a child will be able to comprehend the complex and various texts he or she will encounter in subsequent grades. What children need beyond the primary grades is reading instruction that is "comprehensive and balanced" (two of Lipson's buzziest of buzzwords), and what Lipson delivers in this book is indeed a blueprint for achieving such a goal.

Bookended by strong chapters on strategies for organizing and differentiating assessment-informed language arts instruction, the four pillars of Lipson's research-based model for teaching reading receive detailed treatment: engagement and motivation, background knowledge and vocabulary, metacognitive reading strategies, and word study. Every chapter provides a solid, highly readable review of the research supporting best practices in the area under consideration, as well as several enlightening critical analyses of student writing and think alouds. Lipson also includes excerpts from popular age-appropriate texts, and "Into the Classroom" vignettes that integrate best practice recommendations into an adaptable framework for systematic reading instruction.

In contrast to some professional books that present mini-lessons and best practice ideas in a more or less haphazard laundry list fashion, Lipson grounds all of her recommendations in an interactive model of reading that she and her colleagues developed in the early 1980s. She consistently situates her ideas in a comprehensive approach to language arts instruction that balances reading with writing, individualized guidance with small and whole group teaching, and top-down metacognition with bottom-up processing strategies. "Discussion and Reflection" questions at the end of each chapter are crafted in such a way as to make Lipson's book valuable to pre-service and in-service teachers alike.

Should intermediate level language arts teachers with well-worn copies of Atwell's *In the Middle* and Robb's *Teaching Reading in Middle School* already in their professional libraries make a space for Lipson's *Teaching Reading Beyond the Primary Grades*? Definitely. What Lipson adds to the detailed instructional programs outlined in those earlier, now classic works of teacher literature is an integrative, assessment-informed framework that encourages teachers to take an anthropological eye in determining the unique needs of individual students and crafting instructional interventions that reflect the best of what research has demonstrated about reading comprehension. Lipson's book is an exemplar of what Scholastic has set out to achieve with its Theory and Practice series, and is ideally crafted to become essential reading in pre-service and professional development circles.

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Reviewed by Dr. Sean Kottke, Reading/Language Arts, The Robert B. Miller College, Binda School of Education

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Marshall, Stephanie, editor (2007). *Strategic Leadership of Change in Higher Education: What's New?* London: Routledge.

Pages: 193   Price: $45.98   ISBN: 978-0-415-41173-8

Stephanie Marshall's *Strategic Leadership of Change in Higher Education: What's New?* chronicles 13 stories of change in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. In his preface, Ewart Wooldridge emphasizes how storytelling must be interwoven into the process of leadership development. What unfolds

are narratives from contributing authors who are fellows in the Leadership Foundation of Higher Education's Fellowship Programme. In brief chapters, they outline processes their institutions used to implement change with transparent, rich analyses on lessons learned, reflection and recommendations.

Change was needed for reasons like merging two institutions, revamping an HR department, fusing more research into a teaching-centered mindset, creating succession-minded programs and cultivating diversity. The editor groups the narratives by their approach to change: through a structured change, through incentives, and through capacity-building.

The structured change model is top-down and strategically planned. Diagrams and models help illustrate the sometimes complex structures for the reader. About half of the fellows in the program use this framework and four narratives are included. An example of the incentive-based approach to change is at a small teaching intensive college where leaders wanted to further develop its research and scholarship. They focused on "enablers," or incentives, like short sabbaticals, small grants, money for pursuing advanced degrees, etc. Overall, the author feels like the initiative was fruitful and all had "successfully completed their research work" (p. 89).

Capacity-building is an approach used by Bournemouth University, which wanted to add global perspective and sustainable development across its curricula. Capacity-building focuses on teamwork and Bournemouth's team represented most campus stakeholders. Through meetings, presentations, focus groups, surveys and conversations, the team developed a strategic report and action plan, some of which was already implemented throughout the planning process.

The approaches to change varied but each narrative embodies the concept that change is a process. There are no quick-fixes and the authors are forthcoming with shortcomings in their processes and implementation. A couple of stories merit particular note.

Helen Valentine and Julian Constable share a change story about a complete restructuring of Anglia Ruskin University. A QAA audit declared limited confidence in the institution, and a new vice chancellor began a change process to simplify an organizational structure that had become unmanageable. Changes were debated by management and to a lesser degree in the faculties, but all were invited to send thoughts to the vice chancellor. Eight schools and 24 central units were restructured into five faculties and 12 units. Surveys were conducted to gain insight on managers' views before, after and during the change process. The perceptions ranged from strong support to a "dismissive attitude" but 84 percent of respondents agreed the university was in a better place.

One commonality the authors note is that restructuring is "a painful but necessary process" (p. 60). Valentine and Constable include the emotional realities of restructuring. In their lessons learned, they urge others to "be aware of the enormous personal stress for those whose jobs are affected by the restructuring" (p. 63). Personal situations must be handled before someone can focus on the institution's vision. They suggest how displaced staff can be great resources when dealing with extra work created by restructuring. The authors report signs that restructuring was successful. The university is experiencing better student retention, better finances, and better outcomes on audits.

Finding successors for a possible 20 leadership positions led Newcastle University to change the way it approaches leadership development. Its historic "papal" selection for leadership positions wasn't going to work. Tony Stevenson and Lynne Howlett tell the story of a leadership program's development. Engaging senior management and incorporating many leaders in the creation of the pilot were key. Another part of the design was identifying and training "observers," who would act as facilitators and mentors at the leadership program. Next, applicants were accepted into the program after an advertising/marketing campaign and application review. Supervisors helped encourage reluctant future leaders to apply. At a 1.5-day event, participants were briefed on the leadership program, completed Myers Briggs Type Indicators and three other questionnaires, heard from existing leaders about their realities, role-played, received feedback on personality questionnaires and discussed issues as a group.

The event was just the start to the program and participants had one-on-one follow-ups with an observer. Then, individual leadership development plans were produced. Instead of purchasing a pre-fab leadership program, Newcastle decided to create a version that would cater to its needs. The pilot was successful for participants and observers. Ten participants are working toward leadership positions, one has already attained a position and there's a waiting list for the next leadership program. The university is exploring applications for other leadership needs on campus and will better know the long-term effect as emerging leaders assume higher positions.

Common themes prevail in the 13 narratives. One is the importance of buy-in from the top. Another is having champions for the change, which should include top administrators. Staying the course is reiterated in

different ways. One that Marshall highlights in her introductory chapter is from Valentine and Constable: "Hold ones nerve!" Trust is commonly cited as a facilitator of the change process and a lack of trust hinders change. Some chapters highlight the importance of celebrating early successes and show advantages to implementing initiatives throughout the process, not only in an action phase. Communication shows up as a common theme, and recommendations are that it happen often and be clear. The fellows warn against relying too heavily on electronic communication. A conclusion chapter that weaves common themes and challenges the reader to think about his or her own change initiatives would have strengthened the text.

The book lends itself to new administrators' study of strategic planning and implementing change. It might make a good preface for a change initiative at a campus. Participants could sample different approaches and extract from the lessons learned to create their own change plans. At the least, this text creates a catalog of experiences for the first fellows of Leadership Foundation of Higher Education's Fellowship Programme and a history of changes in UK higher education.

Reviewed by Sarah Maben, a Doctoral Student in the Higher Education Program at the University of North Texas.

Merrell, Kenneth W. (2007). *Strong Teens-Grades 9-12: A Social & Emotional Learning Curriculum.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 192   Price: $34.95   ISBN: 978-1-55766-932-2

Teenagers certainly face challenges in developing their social-emotional confidence. General education classes, unfortunately, do not always provide for their needs in this sphere. Kenneth W. Merrell's *Strong Teens: A Social & Emotional Learning Curriculum* is the last of the Strong Kids curriculum series, aimed at high school age students (grades 9 through 12). The proposed curriculum may just be one of those useful guides to establish the confidence that young adults need. It addresses social-emotional and mental health aspects of the students. The book, which could serve as a teacher's manual, consists of two major parts — the theoretical background and the curriculum itself.

The proposed twelve-lesson curriculum touches upon topics of emotional stability, stress and anger management, goal setting, clear and positive thinking, and other related issues. Each lesson, designed to last approximately 45 minutes, introduces the students to the issues and prompts their responses by means of individual assignments and cooperative learning activities. The author offers clearly written lessons, which include not only suggested activities, but also sample scripts for teacher presentations, as well as handouts, transparencies, and homework sheets. The accompanying CD-ROM includes the same handouts, transparencies, and homework assignments from the corresponding lessons. Lesson preparation time is greatly reduced by the careful planning of all the basic details of the lesson, thereby making the book attractive to busy teachers.

Although the author presents very detailed lesson descriptions, the language used in the teacher sample scripts as well as in the activities themselves seems rather simplistic, and more appropriate for a younger audience. Some modern-day teenagers may find the teacher's script patronizing and the activities overly condescending. The author, for example, suggests that the teacher use the following script in one of the lessons: "Fear is an uncomfortable feeling. When I feel afraid, I feel scared, my heart races, my stomach feels queasy, and I may even cry." Even though it is important to explain the concept of fear, such straightforward explanation seems to be more appropriate for younger students rather than high schoolers. Since the general idea of the course is attractive and much needed for a high school age group, the author might want to consider revising the material to better suit the high school audience.

Taking into account the current trends in offering language courses through content areas, however, *Strong Teens* may serve as a content base for language instruction either in an English as a Second Language or even English as a Foreign Language setting. The uncomplicated language of the material may serve as a sheltered instruction tool in order to accommodate language learning. Additionally, since the author has provided a separate section with recommendations on how to adapt the material for English language learners and students from different cultural backgrounds (pp. 16-19), teachers may find it rather useful in such cases.

In general, it might be challenging to implement the *Strong Teens* program into an already well-established general high school curriculum. However, once the tone of teacher scripts and activities are revised, schools might consider using the proposed course as a part of their communications or health education courses. Additionally, the course may be implemented by school counseling services or extra-curricular organizations.

Reviewed by Kira Gulko Morse, Doctoral Student, Department of Bilingual Education, Texas A&M University Ð Kingsville.

Noddings, Nel (2007). *When School Reform Goes Wrong.* **New York: Teachers College Press.**

Pages: 93   Price: $50.00(hardcover) $19.95(paperback)   ISBN: 0807748110(hardcover) 0807748102(paperback)

As a second-year teacher of a first grade special education class in the South Bronx, I was concerned when my student Jamel kept falling asleep in the classroom. One moment he would seem fine, and then the next moment his head would start "pecking" towards the table until he would fall sound asleep. Once he even fell off a chair and hit his head against the floor. I was concerned he might have a serious medical issue, so I inquired about his sleep habits and found a simple but disconcerting explanation: Jamel shares a bed with his mother and two younger siblings.

Jamel's situation, which is clearly hurting his school performance, is one example out of many similar obstacles faced by my students, who live in one of the poorest congressional districts in the United States. However, those students face the same "high expectations" to pass standardized tests under the No Child Left Behind act as students just across the river in Manhattan, one of the richest districts in the country. Before reading Nel Noddings's book *When School Reform Goes Wrong*, I felt that something was fundamentally twisted about the way the NCLB act approaches the "achievement gap." Noddings book has given me sound arguments and historical context for what until now was just a vague gut feeling.

Noddings is not afraid to attack and refute many of the catchphrases of the NCLB act, such as "the soft bigotry of low expectations" and "no excuses." Each chapter of her book is dedicated to a fundamental tenet of NCLB: equality, accountability, standards, testing and choice. In clear, unassuming words, she explains how the language of the NCLB act usurped each of these concepts to mean something quite different from its original meaning.

In the chapter titled Accountability, Noddings shows how this concept was borrowed from business and runs the risk of being harmful if not built upon responsibly. Under NCLB, accountability centers on the "bottom line," as it does in business. In the current way it is practiced, where educators are accountable only for test scores, it narrows learning and "removes the necessity to develop intellectual habits of the mind" (p. 44). Responsibility, on the other hand, is our deeper and wider responsibility towards our students as whole human beings, for their intellectual, social, emotional, physical, ethical and aesthetic development:

> Responsibility is a much deeper, wider ranging concept than accountability. Typically, a worker or teacher is accountable to some higher authority, and accountability can often be satisfied by conformity, compliance with the letter of the law. In contrast, responsibility points downward in hierarchy. As teachers, we are responsible for those below us—those for whom we serve as authorities. Teachers may be accountable to administrators for certain outcomes, but they are responsible to their students for a host of outcomes. (p. 39)

When I noticed that Jamel kept falling asleep in my classroom I was responsible to find out why and report it to his mother and my supervisors. However, the NCLB act fails to address this fundamental role of education. Furthermore, where does the act state the responsibility of the federal government towards our students, teachers and educational system as a whole? The NCLB has a double standard of using "accountability" to point a blaming finger downward, while ignoring the government's responsibility of providing an adequate standard of living and learning conditions to our children.

The term "equality" is laden with the same kind of misuse. *When School Reform Goes Wrong* argues that under NCLB equality came to mean "sameness." In other words, we neglect to recognize and celebrate differences in students' abilities and talents, and provide them with education that develops these talents:

> One troublesome effect of NCLB is that group and individual differences have been confounded. When we expect all children to master the same material, we may easily fall into confusion. Which things should all students learn, and at what point should we provide different educational experiences for children with different aptitudes and interests? This is a question of fundamental importance in education, and the current standards movement has suppressed its discussion. (p. 29)

Noddings raises many such important questions in her book, although some are not answered satisfactorily.

When School Reform Goes Wrong reads a bit like a trial attorney's opening statement, where the issues are dealt with in broad strokes but without enough detailed evidence to support them. One of her arguments is that the system of tracking students into vocational and academic training is inherently positive but was poorly executed in the past, because it stigmatized vocational training and didn't offer challenging classes. She argues against the widespread view "that anyone who will amount to anything must go to college" (p. 33) suggesting that "in the next decades most job openings will be in the service sector." (p. 33) However, I would like to know exactly what kinds of jobs she is referring to, and what kinds of salaries these jobs offer. Surly we need cashiers and short order cooks, but can a single mother raise her family on such salary or is she better off on welfare? Here I would have liked to see some sound statistics to back up Nodding's claim.

In spite of these shortcomings, I agree with Noddings's main argument. Although the NCLB started out on the moral high ground of closing the achievement gap, it is ill-conceived, morally questionable and has the potential to cause inexcusable damage to our students, teachers and the educational system as a whole. As I was reading the book I realized how much the NCLB has made me feel at fault for my special education students' failure to meet "standards," even as a teacher in a non-testing grade. I do everything in my power to close the "gap" and bring them to a standard that was determined for them. What is it that I am doing wrong? Is it that my high expectations are not genuine enough? Am I really expecting my students to succeed or do I subconsciously not expect them to succeed as much as I should? If I expect with every bone of my body that Jamel will not fall asleep in my classroom will he not?

After reading Noddings's book I don't feel I need a shrink anymore. I feel perfectly normal knowing that there is someone out there who understands my plight and the plight of my students. I feel encouraged that there is someone reputable who understands that much more is needed to close the achievement gap than some abstract emotional exchange between teachers and students, (an exchange that, one might add, costs the government no money). Noddings is not afraid to say what many educators know but don't admit: that socio-economic factors are one of the main causes of this gap, and that by stating this fact we are not "making excuses." Furthermore, we have a moral responsibility as a society to address the issue, even if it will not automatically close the achievement gap, because it is the decent thing to do:

> A compassionate and rational society would see health care, adequate housing, clean air, instruction in parenting, accessible transportation and genuine physical education as essential parts of equal opportunity. "All children can learn"? Maybe — if they are not sick, suffering toothache, squinting to see the chalkboard, abused at home, breathing air contaminated with lead, worried about a parent in prison, or serving as a caretaker for young children. (p. 36)

I have seen my students struggle with all of these issues, and as special education students, with much more, but how is the government showing responsibility for their well-being? I recommend Noddings book to every teacher in a situation similar to mine, if only as something to hold onto hoping the NCLB storm will pass.

Reviewed by Hagar Sadan, an MS in Urban Education candidate at Mercy College, NY, and a first grade special education teacher in the Bronx.

Pianta, Robert C.; La Paro, Karen M. & Hamre, Bridget K. (2007). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Manual Pre-K.* **Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

Pages: 108   Price: $49.95   ISBN: 978-1-55766-941-4

Measurement of classroom effectiveness can be a difficult task to undertake. Arguably, this is particularly true for classrooms with younger children, since there are no standardized or otherwise evaluative tests which are administered to the students. Furthermore, classrooms with younger children — in particular, pre-kindergarten, as with this manual — have a largely different focus than do classrooms educating older children: for younger children, the focus is often on structured activities involving teamwork and teaching the ability to follow direction and instruction, whereas instruction for older students is almost exclusively dedicated to declarative and procedural knowledge. Therefore, Pianta and his colleagues have devised CLASS — the CLassroom Assessment Scoring System — in order to assess teacher/student interactions in the classroom, which are so critical in this young age bracket. These educators and researchers have undertaken somewhat of a great feat, and appear to have succeeded quite admirably.

Importantly, the manual is extremely user-friendly, as evidenced not only by the manner in which it is written, but also by the very helpful scoring insert that provides an overview of the CLASS dimensions including exemplar behaviors for each. The manual is very detailed in its explanations of proper application and usage,

and offers comprehensive descriptions of how CLASS should be used in a wide variety of situations. In this manner, CLASS appears to be extremely flexible, and the manual attends to this by providing alternative administration and scoring procedures in detail. The manual and the insert also give concrete behavioral examples for each of the potential scores on each of the dimensions, evidencing a behaviorally-anchored rating scale, or BARS, a rating format which has been shown to be valid and effective, albeit costly (e.g.: Campbell & Cairns, 1994; McIntyre & Gilbert, 1994; Rarick & Baxter, 1986).

The manual should also be commended for recognizing that further rater training beyond the manual is necessary, and referring readers to a training website (http://www.classobservation.com, see p. 7). Without explicit mention of the type of training, it appears as though CLASS aims to utilize a frame of reference, of F.O.R., training, which much research has shown to be a particularly effective type of rater training in that it is able to familiarize raters with the sought-after (and also unwanted) behaviors (e.g.: Schleicher, Day, Mayes, & Riggio, 2002; Sulsky & Kline, 2007).

Although some concerns do arise in a careful critique of the manual and, more generally, the CLASS system outlined therein, a short evaluative summary such as this is not in a position to detail all of them. Nevertheless, it is necessary to briefly touch upon some overall concerns. First, the CLASS system as presented in the manual raises concerns of a possible cultural bias, particularly when considering individualistic versus collectivistic cultures. The manual should explicitly state that said evaluative system should be used only in Western cultures, for instance, until sufficient research has shown that CLASS is also applicable for collectivistic cultures. Likewise, given pedagogical differences even between Western cultures, some might argue that CLASS should be further limited to the nation(s) in which it was been developed and tested, presumably the United States.

Secondly, another concern is the manual's recommendation that evaluation typically begins "at the beginning of the school day and continues throughout the morning for at least 2 hours" (p. 9). Although the manual does say that afternoon observation is possible in some cases, and that "both structured and unstructured times of the school day are important to observe" (p. 9), the fact that a particular time period is suggested is somewhat worrisome, since it is likely that children — and possibly also their teachers — will exhibit different behaviors based upon the time of day (e.g.: Türnüklü & Galton, 2001; Zagar & Bowers, 1983). This is particularly true if certain activities are consistently scheduled for the same time of day. It appears as though CLASS could be substantially improved were it to recommend observation either throughout the day or at various times on different days.

Finally, although such a relatively new assessment system cannot be entirely faulted for the lack of such studies, CLASS would benefit from additional validity studies — including some attention to issues of divergent validity — which should be referenced in future editions of the manual. These studies should be conducted on all variations of CLASS observation, particularly videotaped class sessions to be evaluated later. This variation on the typical CLASS evaluation should be sufficiently investigated, since although videotaped sessions are becoming increasingly warranted and supported (e.g.: Lammers & Kirchner, 1985), there remains some concern about their validity and suitability. It is important to give due consideration to the videotaped alternative, however, since regularly-scheduled live observations are likely to be prohibitively expensive for many school districts.

Nevertheless, for the most part these issues can be easily rectified by minor changes and/or additional empirical support, and they should not detract from the quality of the manual or of CLASS as a whole, which appears to be based on a particularly comprehensive literature review and pilot testing effort. Although an extensive discussion of the theoretical and empirical foundations for CLASS is not addressed in the manual, it is arguably beyond the scope of this more application-based publication, and, as the authors note, can be found elsewhere (Hamre & Pianta, 2007; La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). In all, Pianta and his colleagues do an excellent job of concisely reviewing the background information to the extent necessary in the manual, and basing their evaluative recommendations squarely on such foundations. They should be commended for a job well done and for, as they credit teachers in their acknowledgments, their "dedication to improved practice" (p. xi).

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Reviewed by Maura J. Mills, M.S., Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Kansas State University.

Robb, Laura (2008). *Differentiating Reading Instruction: How to Teach Reading to Meet the Needs of Each Student.* **New York: Scholastic.**

Pages: 303   Price: $29.99   ISBN: 0-545-02298-3

Laura Robb's *Differentiating Reading Instruction: How to Teach Reading to Meet the Needs of Each Student* introduces the principles and practice of differentiated reading instruction. The goal of differentiating instruction is to observe and understand the differences and similarities between students and plan instruction according to their individual needs. To meet the needs of students at different instructional levels, it is crucial for teachers to move reading instruction from one text for all to differentiation. Instead of shifting abruptly from traditional to new techniques, the author suggests a gradual process to develop differentiation. This is a practical guidebook that helps teachers of adolescent learners to build differentiated lessons on the basis of daily reading instruction.

The author starts by introducing fundamental knowledge to understand why and how to plan differentiated instruction. It is essential for teachers to build a foundation before presenting the instruction. Robb suggests establishing routines. Various useful techniques are recommended to prepare the students for instruction. For example, from her abundant experiences, the author provides a sample schedule to set up classroom routines, practical strategies to encourage classroom discussion, a choice of assessments to determine students' instructional levels, written plans and frameworks to incorporate differentiation strategies, and sample lesson plans to teach different texts. Once the teacher has established a classroom foundation, the students are ready to read independently at their own reading level.

Instead of presenting innovative approaches, this book demonstrates how to apply traditional teaching methods to differentiated reading instruction. A story at the beginning of each chapter depicts real classroom practices. For example, the teacher can move students toward independent reading by introducing reading strategies through reading aloud. First, the teacher models for students how to apply a specific strategy while reading aloud to the whole class. Then, the teacher supports the students to practice these strategies in their reading. Finally, the students are able to use the strategies for independent reading. The author provides examples of how to plan and practice strategic reading aloud in reading class. She suggests five steps to present the lesson, name the strategy, explain how to do it, summarize the key points from previous reading, read the passage aloud, and show how to apply the strategy during reading.

Another useful technique of differentiation is the use of multiple texts for reading classes. Although the students read different texts according to their instructional level, it is important to focus on the same theme or topic. The author provides practical guides for choosing materials and useful tips to establish a classroom library for the purpose of independent reading.

Finally, the author takes the readers to her classrooms in which whole class instruction, small groups activities, independent reading assignment, and writing instruction and differentiation are practiced. With her thorough descriptions of classroom activities and lesson plans, readers are able to observe the expert's teaching practices.

This is a valuable and practical resource for teachers who need to apply differentiation in reading instruction to the meet the diverse needs of the students. The book contains useful principles, guidelines, and full strategic lesson plans for designing and implementing differentiation. It is highly recommended for teachers who hope to see every student reading and learning in the classroom.

Reviewed by Ming Chang, doctoral student at the Department of Bilingual Education at Texas A & M University - Kingsville

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