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reseñas educativas (Spanish)  
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**Brief reviews for September 2008**

**Benjamin, Amy (2008) *Formative Assessment for English Language Arts: A Guide for Middle and High School Teachers*. Larchmont, NY : Eye On Education.**

**Pages: 139    Price: \$29.95    ISBN: 978-1-59667-075-4**

The book *Formative Assessment for English Language Arts* is written in short, easy-to-read chapters and filled with reproducible handouts. The first three chapters serve more as a review for the experienced teacher, although new and preservice teachers may appreciate the concise and practical approach. The first chapter opens with a fairly standard explanation of formative and summative assessment, as well as English specific examples and nonexamples of each. Despite this expanded definition, the rest of the book gives little explanation of how to use the results of the multitude of formative assessments for actual instruction, merely providing assessment examples and reproducible handouts. In fact the first three chapters seem to be mostly unconnected to each other and the rest of the book.

For example, the second chapter translates the National Council for Teachers of English standards into a chart with simple, accessible language and provides sample tasks associated with each. This visual would be a helpful introduction to these standards for any preservice or new teacher of English. However, the chapter includes just a brief mention of a standards portfolio, which is not mentioned again in the book or explained in any detail and only serves to confuse the reader. The next chapter deals with rubrics and provides multiple examples, including a useful section on the five mistakes that teachers often make when using rubrics. Unfortunately, this chapter is again unconnected to the previous chapter about standards, and there is little mention of what to do once the teacher has completed the rubric for the assignment or how to use this assessment to improve instruction.

The second part of the book gives example assessments for reading, note-taking, and vocabulary growth. While all of the examples in these sections are centered around English Language Arts, most would also work for other subject areas, especially the vocabulary chapter. *Formative Assessment for English Language Arts* also includes a section on writing, organized by the steps in the writing process. Some handouts provide a fresh perspective on this process, such as the assessment of a draft by a teacher which uses the colors red, yellow, and green, like a stoplight, to indicate where a student is struggling. Others in this section, especially the graphic organizers, are more confusing since only a blank copy of the assessment is included rather than a completed sample. The chapter on formative assessment for writing does connect to the chapter on rubrics, and the book would flow better if these sections were closer together. The chapters in the second section are uneven, with some parts using specific explanations of how to implement the assessments while others merely present the activity. Finally, the third section of the book addresses performance tasks. The lone chapter provides real world examples with a narrative of a teacher using the rubrics and assignments. However, this section is only thirteen pages and feels cut short.

At about 140 pages, *Formative Assessment for English Language Arts* is easy to read, especially since the bulk of its pages are blank reproducibles rather than text. Unfortunately, the book could use more text to explain how to use all of the assessments provided and how to adapt instruction based on the results. This is not emphasized nearly enough for a book with formative assessment in the title. While a few references are scattered throughout (fifteen in the entire book), more information on formative assessment in this field would strengthen the theoretical foundation of the book. Although this book revolves around middle school and high English Language Arts, many of the chapters are also applicable to other content fields, and many of the assessments could be adapted for students younger than middle school. In fact, some of the assessments feel too simplistic to use at the upper high school levels and may need adjusting. Overall there is little new information or skills offered in these pages for experienced teachers, and even preservice or new instructors

should be cautious about using only this book as a comprehensive guide to formative assessment.

**Reviewed by Beth Kania-Gosche, an instructor of English education at Saint Louis University. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction and has a Masters degree in the same field from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her research focus is on writing assessment at both the high school and college levels.**

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**Burke, Jim (2008). *Teacher's Essential Guide: Effective Instruction*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 128    Price: \$12.99    ISBN: 9780439934541**

Based on classic and current research, *Effective Instruction* is a concise teacher-oriented book written by an experienced teacher, Jim Burke. This simply written and clearly formatted reference, one in The Teacher's Essential Guide series, offers practical instructional advice. This volume addresses typical challenges that many teachers face, such as: how to use assessment to improve instruction, how to increase student engagement and comprehension and how to design effective lessons.

Burke offers a wide variety of suggestions on multiple topics in a short, teacher-friendly volume. After a brief introduction citing the National Research Council on how people learn, this easy-to-read guide starts with a self assessment on effective instruction posing questions that directly correspond to the book's ten chapters, fitting into the three major themes: instruction, classroom culture, and curriculum. Readers are encouraged to start with the most urgently needed areas, rather than proceed cover to cover. With a consistent and predictable approach, each chapter begins with a handy five point summary called "Guiding principles," and succinctly develops the main ideas followed by multiple brief examples explaining each point. Clear and utilitarian illustrations and charts throughout the book include sentence starters, lesson patterns, a graphic organizer handout, student behavior guidelines, classroom grouping options and a student-written yearly planning chart.

Although many classroom examples come from a senior high English perspective, the teaching suggestions are general enough to transfer to almost any instructional situation. Advice such as "analyze your teaching pattern" and "consider students' developmental needs" is applicable to both new and veteran teachers alike, and demonstrates that the author has worked with pre-service and experienced teachers as well as teaching for years in his own classroom. The book has a decisively language arts bent, with multiple classroom examples given for English, history, social sciences and art; the author minimally includes illustrative stories in mathematics and science, such as biology and health.

Consistent throughout the book is the author's insistence that teachers design their lessons with students and learning outcomes in mind. Burke assumes that teachers have the freedom to practice their craft and gives them the tools to do it. In practice, certain advice may not be applicable for some teachers depending on their situations. For example, some districts may use predetermined textbooks with very scripted lessons so that Burke's chapter on Curriculum Basics: Teach Skills and Knowledge in Context may not be fully usable by its teachers. However, whatever the range of circumstance, these wonderful ideas can be seen as objectives to be attained gradually or practices to be implemented immediately. Even if a teacher cannot follow every piece of valuable advice this year, this is a book to keep and refer to each year as a self measure and a list of attainable goals to remember.

**Reviewed by Cathleen M. Alexander, University of California, Davis.**

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**Cecil, Nancy Lee & Gipe, Joan P. (2009) *Literacy in Grades 4-8: Best Practices for a Comprehensive Program*. Second edition. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.**

**Pages: 452    Price: \$44.00    ISBN: 978-1-890871-85-7**

Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, and Morrow (2001) remind us that classrooms are successful and become exemplary because they establish a supportive community, provide appropriate levels of challenge and support, use multiple methods and materials, and provide expert instruction in reading processes as well as reading skills. When evaluating Cecil and Gipe's *Literacy in Grades 4-8: Best Practices for a Comprehensive Program* (2nd ed.), it was Pressley's et al. description of exemplary reading classrooms which guided me. Cecil and Gipe's purpose in writing this book is to provide intermediate- and middle-grade teachers with the most effective practices based on current research. Assuming the position that reading is a holistic, constructive, strategic, and interactive process, Cecil and Gipe address the following questions in this book:

- What practices can teachers utilize to help all students become successful readers?
- How do teachers motivate students to choose to read beyond the classroom?
- How do teachers use assessment to inform literacy instruction?
- How do family and community influence a student's success in reading and writing?
- How do teachers use state and district standards as a means to guide effective instruction?

Within the realms of these questions, additional topics which are of particular interest to intermediate- and middle-grade teachers are also discussed. These topics include content area literacy, oral language development, fluency and vocabulary instruction, writing instruction, reading comprehension and literacy instruction for student with special needs.

In an effort to assist teachers and preservice teachers in understanding new concepts and encouraging them to implement effective literacy instruction, Cecil and Gipe incorporate several special features within their book. The following special features distinguish this particular book from other practitioner books:

- **Classroom Activities** — Seven of the twelve chapters include classroom activities. Specific, step-by-step activities are provided for instruction in word study, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, content area reading, oral language development, and literacy beyond the classroom.
- **Vignettes** — Each chapter begins with a short vignette describing the classroom of a teacher who is employing the subject addressed in the chapter. These short vignettes helped me mentally picture the concepts discussed in the chapter. In turn, these vignettes also assisted me in applying the featured concepts to my own classroom.
- **Suggested Website** — Cecil and Gipe provide an interactive website which features additional questions, activities, videos, and a list of other helpful websites. This website assisted me in studying the featured concepts and gave me additional ideas concerned with classroom application.
- **Checklists and Assessment Devices** — A variety of checklists and assessment devices are provided in the appendices. These assessments are particularly helpful in investigating and documenting the attitudes and needs of students.

*Literacy in Grades 4-8: Best Practices for a Comprehensive Program* is certainly a comprehensive text which provides educators with a complete guide to reading instruction. I found that this book provides detailed explanations of a variety of concepts, issues, activities, and assessments, all of which are connected to reading instruction. In fact, I found this text to be so thorough in explaining reading processes and skills that I have started recommending it to preservice teachers and to my fellow inservice teachers.

## References

Pressley, M., Allington, R.L., Wharton-McDonald, R., Block, C.C., & Morrow, L.M. (2001). *Learning to read: Lessons from exemplary first grade classrooms*. New York: Guilford.

**Reviewed by Stephanie A. Grote-Garcia. Stephanie is a doctoral candidate and adjunct at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. She is also a Reading Specialist and works primarily with students who are identified as dyslexic.**

**Culham, Ruth & Coutu, Raymond (2008). *Using Picture Books to Teach Writing With the Traits: K-2. An Annotated Bibliography of More Than 150 Mentor Texts With Teacher-Tested Lessons*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 112   Price: \$18.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-02511-9**

One might ask—why would Culham and Coutu choose to write a book on utilizing children's literature as a way to expose students to the writing traits? Teachers already know that writing prompts, current events, and journal writing are tried and true forms of teaching writing. But, are they exciting? I happen to think that children's literature is an untapped source of teachable moments. I suspect Culham and Coutu would agree. The authors cite the "great teaching potential in picture books" (p. 5) as one of the reason why they chose to design this book. To explain more fully, children's literature provides readers with "a visual delight," "a clever layout," and "prose that beckons the reader back for a second or third reading" (p. 4).

The book is organized efficiently in that each writing trait (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions) has a dedicated chapter. Each chapter begins with an easy to understand definition of the writing trait; in other words, a definition that primary students can understand. As an added bonus, a chapter on presentation is included as the culminating chapter, which is exciting since this is often overlooked in writing. Most chapters include 3 lesson plans and an annotated bibliography of at least 25 picture books to use in preparing lessons for the trait.

The authors chose to include familiar pieces of children's literature in their annotated bibliography. You may recognize *The Kissing Hand*, *It's Okay to Be Different*, *Henny-Penny*, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and *Knuffle Bunny*. Newer pieces of children's literature selected include *Ice Bear: In the Steps of the Polar Bear*, *Always and Forever*, *Courage*, and *Food Fight!*.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book as a way to expose new teachers to 150 different pieces of children's literature and provide 18 step by step lesson plans which are fast and simple. Go to your school library and check out one of the pieces of children's literature included in the lesson plans and you are ready to teach a lesson on one of the writing traits.

**Reviewed by Darryn Diuguid, an instructor of children's literature and elementary methods in language arts at McKendree University. He previously taught 2nd grade in a high poverty school district.**

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**Foster, Harold M. & Nosol, Megan (2008). *America's Unseen Kids: Teaching English Language Arts in Today's Forgotten High Schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

**Pages: 140    Price: \$18.50    ISBN: 978-0-325-01060-1**

For some Americans, images of dilapidated buildings, over-crowded classrooms, and metal detectors are more likely to appear on the sets of Hollywood movies than in their local schools. The realities of large, inner-city schools are distant, abstract. In *America's Unseen Kids: Teaching English/Language Arts in Today's Forgotten High Schools*, Harold Foster (a veteran teacher educator) and Megan Nosol (a novice English teacher) call attention to forgotten high schools and the students who attend them. They use the term "forgotten schools" to refer to large, urban, high-need schools struggling with low academic achievement, high drop-out rates, and limited resources. These "forgotten schools," which often serve students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and students of color, remain invisible to mainstream society. Disturbed by the authoritarian atmosphere and stifling curricula often found in these contexts, Foster and Nosol encourage urban teachers to 1) build strong personal relationships with students and 2) enact progressive, rigorous curriculum—the kind of curriculum more commonly found in suburban, middle-class schools—to engage and empower all students. In a warm, narrative writing style Foster and Nosol share their experiences teaching English/Language Arts in an urban school and ultimately work to disrupt stereotypes that shroud America's forgotten schools.

For more than ten years Foster, at the University of Akron, has worked together with Sally Eisenriech, a high school English teacher, to coordinate a partnership linking groups of preservice teachers with students at a nearby forgotten high school. Nosol, Foster's former graduate assistant and a student-participant in that partnership, encouraged Foster to write a book about his experiences. Together, they co-wrote *America's Unseen Kids*, which highlights the efforts of one particular cohort of preservice teachers over the course of a school year to forge personal and academic connections with hard-to-reach students in an urban school. The book is organized into five chapters. The opening chapter outlines the challenges facing urban schools, while the following three chapters focus on the three units they recommend: writing workshops, reading workshops, and Shakespeare. Each unit reflects solid, student-centered, research-based pedagogy, such as literature circles, grammar mini-lessons, one-on-one writing conferences, writing portfolios, a public performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and celebrations of student work. Each chapter includes examples of handouts, suggested reading selections, and other practical considerations English teachers will find useful.

The curriculum itself is unremarkable in terms of innovation. For example, writing workshops center on standard writing assignments, including autobiography, persuasion, and extended response. What is more remarkable is the tenacity with which they persist in the face of the same stubborn obstacles that vex teachers in many urban schools: students reach their classes so far behind in reading and writing skills that it seems hopeless to catch them up; students move away or move on before they get a chance to make a lasting difference; and students with tremendous potential fail to graduate because they cannot pass a standardized test. Teachers, especially urban teachers, will likely recognize themselves in the honest accounts of these struggles, but they may be left with more questions. While neither Foster nor Nosol claim to have any easy answers, they remain firmly committed to high expectations and the virtues of a progressive curriculum to empower all students to achieve.

At a time when teachers are feeling the pressure of increasingly standardized curriculum and testing, Foster and Nosol provide important reminders. They remind readers that students of forgotten schools are most often subjected to curriculum focused on facts and skills, devoid of creativity or student choice — and that when teachers employ engaging, progressive, rigorous curriculum they serve as agents of change, offering all students the rich education they deserve. They remind readers that when teachers reach out to form partnerships with other teachers, professionals and communities members, they achieve more in

collaboration than they do alone. In this way, although the book cannot offer simple solutions to complex problems, it does offer both practical and inspirational examples to teachers striving for success with students in forgotten schools.

**Reviewed by Carlin Borsheim, Doctoral Candidate, College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.**

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**Hoyt, Linda & Therriault, Teresa (2008). *Mastering the Mechanics: Ready-to-Use Lessons for Modeled, Guided, and Independent Editing Grades K-1*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 192 Price: \$21.99 ISBN: 054504877X**

Your mom was in the kitchen baking a lemon-meringue pie for your dad who was at work while you were in the living room practicing the piano. Maybe you were one of those lucky, miserable kids whose mom made you take piano lessons for ten years AND practice every day. If so, during all that time, whether you liked it or not, you learned that written music has visual marks that dictate musical phrasing, movement, rhythm, and tempo. Those marks are some of the rules of music and help musicians talk to each other and to us.

The rules of music provide the talented as well as the tragically tone-deaf with insight and hope that music might be made. Without these consensual, written rules, music would be a mess. Likewise, in the field of writing, it would be equally messy without our rules of engagement. These rules fall primarily into two categories: conventions and mechanics. Conventions of writing include: spacing of words on the page, handwriting, spelling, and grammar. Mechanics of writing include: punctuation and capitalization.

Hoyt and Therriault do a splendid job of helping both experienced and new teachers understand the role of conventions and mechanics in teaching young children to become effective writers. They also point out in their book on more than one occasion that the purpose of writing is to communicate not to become masterful at the conventions and mechanics of writing. They remind us that requiring children to focus too much, too soon on conventions and mechanics can produce children who can write—but who simply don't. Too much focusing on the conventions and mechanics of writing can scare children, it can stifle creativity, and it can make writing one more tedious chore in what otherwise could be a remarkably fun school day.

Hoyt and Therriault present this book as one book in a series of three. The other two books are titled the same as this book under review except that the second book is for grades 2-3 and the third is for grades 4-5.

Although Hoyt and Therriault do not state it explicitly in this particular book, teachers of writing have come to accept that the stages of writing include pre-writing, rough draft, revising, editing (proofreading), and publishing. Hoyt and Therriault do state explicitly that the purpose of writing is to communicate. Communication should be the primary goal of writing instruction with the idea that teaching about writing conventions and mechanics should take an important and necessary but secondary role in the teaching, learning, and assessment process (p. 7). Hoyt and Therriault do not support prepackaged writing programs; and they do not believe that checklists teach children how to write (p. 27).

What do they believe? They believe that children learn best from having teachers model good writing in front of them. They believe that children's literature is an excellent source for modeling good writing. They believe that think-alouds work. They believe that creating a classroom teeming with teacher-created charts and a word-wall helps children learn. They believe that learning occurs in approximations over time. They believe that reading and writing are joyful engagements. They believe that all children can write. And they believe that the conventions and mechanics of writing are mere tools to help people communicate better; conventions and mechanics are not ends unto themselves (pp. 11, 9, 12, 17, 14, 13, 29, 8, respectively).

Based on those beliefs, this book presents 49 writing lessons for children in kindergarten and first grade. Each lesson is taught over a three-day period. Day One of each of the 49 lessons requires the teacher to model the skill. Day Two is guided practice of that skill; and predictably, Day Three is independent practice of that same skill. Hoyt and Therriault also advocate the use of authentic and true experiences when modeling new writing skills. For example, on page 8, they show how a teacher used her real-life walk through the woods to model a piece about how much she enjoyed the quiet of the forest. (p. 8).

The writing skills and lesson plans outlined in this book come from Hoyt and Therriault and are presented clearly and explicitly. The authors provide a scope and sequence chart of all writing skills. And they provide a filled-in year-long planner at the very beginning of their book to give teachers guidance about when specific writing skills will be taught. They also kindly provide a blank, year-long planner on page 171 so that teachers can plan their own writing lessons if they find themselves in a school with a prescribed, district-mandated curricula.

Hoyt and Therriault do point out that one of the best resources for choosing which writing skills to teach is the children themselves. A form on page 170 gives teachers the opportunity to chart the skills their students need based on samples of unedited writing that the children submit. At the top of the page is a place to list skills; down the left-hand side is a place for the children's names. This is a quick visual presentation of how many children need help with spacing, handwriting, spelling, grammar, punctuation, or capital letters.

The 49 lessons are the meat of the book comprising 116 pages out of 192 total. They provide solid ideas for modeling, specific ideas for guided practice, and multiple follow-up ideas for independent practice and extension. For example, on pages 80 and 81, the authors create a 3-day lesson on teaching children to use complete sentences again using modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. Pages 94 and 95 explain how to model, guide, and extend students' abilities to use four possessive pronouns his, her, its, and their. On pages 152 and 153 teachers model how to effectively use past-tense verbs, possessive pronouns, and commas in a series.

This book is about writing. It follows a helpful pattern of modeling, guiding, and extending the lesson for each and every lesson. Each lesson plan employs the use of a turn and talk strategy, an appropriate assessment activity, and a method for summarizing that day's lesson. All 49 lessons are pedagogically sound. They follow standard principles of learning that show modeling, engagement, feedback, and practice do result in high achievement. Each lesson honors language, literature, approximations, communication, and kindness. The kindness in this book is represented throughout the text and in the many photographs of children and teachers engaged in talk, thought, and joy.

The book gives additional teaching ideas using power-burst lessons, high-frequency word lists, alphabet cards, word patterns, word wall ideas, checklists, student self-assessment sheets, and samples of students' work. Hoyt and Therriault mention that they do not physically write on the students' work. That statement is made only one time on page 13 as a small caption under an illustration; but it needs more emphasis. Hoyt and Therriault do not write directly on the children's papers; they write on sticky notes that are attached to the papers. This is an important point since the illustrations and photographs in this book make it appear that the teachers are actually writing on the children's work. Additionally, on page 12, Hoyt and Therriault remind us about using strips of correction tape to edit young children's final drafts as a way of avoiding smudges and over-erasing while at the same time encouraging young writers to see editing in a positive light.

Publisher Scholastic makes the black-line masters at the end of the book available for free at their online site. They provide the web address in the book.

A final thought about this book involves the use of children's literature to teach the conventions and mechanics of writing (p. 9). It is possible to use a piece of literature in such a way that the book is reduced to an instructional tool rather than the piece of art which it is. To avoid this temptation, it is recommended that children be provided multiple opportunities to hear a book read aloud before the book is used to teach a specific writing skill. These multiple readings broaden the children's opportunities to focus on a variety of features inherent within the book as opposed to focusing on one specific teaching objective.

We commend the authors of this book. Linda Hoyt has a long-established reputation for bringing heart and soul to her audience; and she and her co-writer have done it again. This book is a well-written and easy-to-follow series of writing lessons which, over time, will produce children who can and do privilege the act of writing.

So to rewrite and paraphrase Three Mo' Tenors at their Chicago concert:

It don't matter if you're young or old;  
Pick up your pen and  
Let the good times roll.

**Reviewed by Marsha Grace, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where she teaches courses in children's literature, reading and writing processes, and stages and standards of reading development and Mary Beth Tierce, Visiting Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where she teaches courses in School and Society and courses in Teaching, Planning, and Assessment in a field-based program.**

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**Knoster, Timothy P. (2008). *The Teacher's Pocket Guide For Effective Classroom Management*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

**Pages: 120 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1-55766-918-6**

Knoster has done a superb job of capsulizing the essence of classroom management in a very clear and

organized manner. This pocket guide for teachers consists of nine chapters; with each chapter named in the form of a question. Each chapter focuses on a key question that begins with So... and addresses one of the why's, how's, or what's associated with effective classroom management. For example, the first chapter is named and answers the question, "So why should I read this book?" Other chapters include: "So why do kids act the way they do?" and "So how do I prevent problem behavior in my classroom?" Knoster describes his book as "somewhat akin to a Cliff Notes version or connecting the dots of foundational classroom management procedures, valuable regardless of whether you are an aspiring high school teacher or a veteran of more than 20 years in a Kindergarten classroom"(p. 2). After reading this pocket guide for effective classroom management, I would agree with Knoster's description of this book's value.

One of the strengths of this pocket guide for teachers is that the author "speaks" to the reader throughout the book. Knoster writes in a conversational tone and is able to clearly understand and relate to the frustrations teachers of all grade levels and years of experience with respect to establishing effective classroom management. He emphasizes the significance of creating a positive classroom environment and its overall impact on classroom management. He offers his readers viable options for establishing positive relationships with even the most difficult students, thereby enabling such an environment to exist.

Throughout this book, Knoster exhibits a sense of humor in his writing and offers the reader compassion with respect to the difficulties experienced each year in establishing effective classroom management. His "real" comments are a comfort to all teachers regardless of grade level and number of years teaching. The message that, "Don't worry, everyone experiences issues with establishing and maintaining effective classroom management at one time or another," is clearly communicated and provides teachers with a source of energy and motivation to "hang in there" because they will succeed.

Another nice feature is that the author makes effective use of the margins on a number of pages to highlight the "essence," in one statement, of that particular section of the chapter. Sometimes the graphics are also used to emphasize the essence. When appropriate, Knoster also makes effective use of tables and charts. For example, tables are used to list classroom procedures and expectations for student behavior and to more clearly report research and related data.

The last chapter appropriately asks and answers the question, "So, how do I connect the dots?" As Knoster states, "A classroom climate conducive for learning is not something that just happens on its own" (p. 86). He goes on to identify three interrelated principles of preventative practice, using a table that includes a clear description of the principles and their relationship to prevention. This chapter ties together all of the ideas and concepts introduced throughout the book, thereby, "connecting all of the dots."

And finally, what makes this book valuable is its extensive list of references and resources and its appendices. The author's list of references and resources is current and includes a number of Internet web sites that teachers can access for additional information and ideas. The appendices include what the author refers to as the "Three Bees: Be Ready, Be Responsible, and Be Respectful." Knoster has prepared a table that includes a description of the Three Bees for elementary, middle, and high school students when the students arrive at school, during individual work, when the teacher is talking, during group activities, and when changing activities. These tables are very helpful in enabling teachers to define their expectations for students during each of these key components of everyday classroom activities. Also included in the appendices is a sample behavior contract that teachers could easily adapt and utilize with any problem situation with a student.

In conclusion, Tim Knoster has accomplished his goal in creating a teacher's pocket guide for effective classroom management. This book is a valuable resource for all teachers of all grade levels and all levels of experience.

**Reviewed by Dr. JoAnn P. Susko, Assistant Professor, Department of Graduate Education, Leadership, and Counseling, Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ.**

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**McKnight, Katherine S. & Berlage, Bradley P. (2007). *Teaching the Classics in the Inclusive Classroom: Reader Response Activities To Engage All Learners*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 200    Price: \$24.95    ISBN: 978-0-7879-9406-8**

McKnight and Berlage have assembled activities for middle and high school English classrooms that utilize often-intimidating classic texts; these activities can potentially involve all students in a class with heterogeneous ability levels. This is the kind of book I wish I had had during my first year of teaching high school English to students in Special Education when my mentor teacher advised me to "skip" Shakespeare because his plays would be too difficult. Students with special needs often retreat into silence when faced

with intimidating and alienating canonical material, and teachers can feel at a loss, as well. Instead of simply skipping curriculum or resorting to simplified versions of the original works coupled with lower-order questions, McKnight and Berlage advocate covering the classics in their complex entirety and in more creative ways than just teacher-created quizzes and teacher-centered discussions.

Using Rosenblatt's reader response theory as a framework, the lessons and approaches in this book are centered on the elicitation of students' voices. Divided into sections on pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities, with additional chapters on writing and vocabulary activities, this book is organized in a convenient way for an overwhelmed teacher. The addition of specific lesson plans and templates, as well as examples of students' responses, can help teachers envision how these strategies might work in their own classrooms. Chapter 7 contains particularly detailed descriptions of select activities, anticipation guides among them, for teaching *Romeo and Juliet*, which is surely one of the more challenging texts for struggling readers. Also, it's particularly helpful that many of their activities include relevant IRA/NCTE standards addressed in that lesson, for this helps teachers see that a standards-based lesson need not sacrifice creativity or imagination.

Some educators will be familiar with many of the activities in this book but will likely still find it convenient to have them in one collection and will perhaps find some novel ideas. Some more familiar activities, like Reader Theater, are combined with the "Making Memories Lesson Plan," which has students create scrapbook pages based on a text's characters and "Character Book Bag," which asks students collect artifacts based on the inferences they make about key characters. The activities of this book all aim to shrink the distance between the classics and students' modern lives. *Teaching the Classics in the Inclusive Classroom* would be a helpful supplemental text to middle and high school English teachers, as well as a useful reference for those in teacher education who wish to lessen the apprehension their student-teachers might feel about teaching the classics.

**Reviewed by JuliAnna Avila, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA.**

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**Merrell, Kenneth W. (2007). *Strong Kids-Grades 3-5: A Social & Emotional Learning Curriculum*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

**Pages: 176    Price: \$34.95    ISBN: 978-155766930-8**

Merrell has written a series of four books in support of students in grades kindergarten through 12. The engaging class activities (summarized as lesson titles) are designed to encourage the development of skills needed to: understand one's own feelings, deal with anger, understand others' feelings, think clear and positive, let go of stress and set goals. The curricula are custom-made to the particular needs and experience of the specific age group for which it is intended and may be implemented in schools and treatment or counseling centers. This manual (textbook of lesson plans) provides teachers a means to address needed teaching and learning opportunities in a meaningful, clear, and efficient manner.

The detailed text is easy to follow and manage. Merrell provides estimates of the time needed to complete each section of the lessons, a list of materials needed, and even a script to guide the focused 30-45 minute lessons. The curriculum can be completed in 10-12 weeks. It is brief enough to be integrated with a school district's state mandated curriculum; yet, each part includes the elements of an effective lesson. Each session consists of a:

- **Review:** suggestions for connecting the learner with the lesson content.
- **Introduction:** a clear statement for students of the purpose and objective.
- **Name and Define Skills:** The content of each lesson is presented through lecture, role play, and/or visuals.
- **Modeling:** Once the material has been presented, the text shows how the teacher can model applying the concepts, highlighting significant aspects using techniques like classifying, categorizing and comparing. The plan takes students to the application level via activities such as problem solving, summarizing, etc.
- **Guided practices:** Since each lesson builds on the last, it is essential that students understand before proceeding. The lesson offers an opportunity for each student to demonstrate new learning by working through an activity or exercise under the teacher's direct supervision.
- **Closure:** Summary of the objectives learned.
- **Independent Activity:** A homework handout to each student gives a chance to evaluate the student's understanding of the objectives.

To maintain the skills learned and reinforce the positive changes that may have emerged through the involvement in the original twelve lessons of the curriculum, Merrell provides "booster lessons" in the book's appendix. Additionally, a compact disc accompanies the textbook as a resource of supplement materials.



Between the 1999-2000 and 2003-2004 school years, violence increased in school from 71 to 81 % (Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E.F., and Lin-Kelly, W., 2007). Couple this fact with the fact that we are living in a time of constant change. There is a collapse in social structures with more single-families than previous generations. (Harrison, 2000). Schools are larger. People move several times throughout their lives. With the lack of security, community, and connection; children, adolescent, and young adults are not always given the opportunity to develop the skills needed to cope with or solve problems. Vital skills needed in life. Many students need a program like this one. *Strong Kids: A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum*, is designed "for the purpose of teaching social and emotional skills, promoting resilience, strengthening assets and increasing coping skills of children and adolescents" (p.3). It provides teachers a means to address needed teaching and learning opportunities in a meaningful, clear, and efficient manner.

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**Reviewed by Kimberly Giaudrone Haney, a doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, in the department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum. Specifically, Ms. Haney is interested in the classroom relationships.**

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## **Moustafa, Margaret (2008) *Exceeding The Standards: A Strategic Approach For Linking State Standards And Best Practices In Reading & Writing Instruction*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 176   Price: \$21.99   ISBN: 0-545-03178-8**

In *Exceeding the Standards*, Margaret Moustafa presents an approach for linking best practices in reading and writing instruction to state standards. The current emphasis on accountability and assessment has resulted in significant changes in the way teachers go about the business of teaching children to read. Concerns about student achievement have resulted in the proliferation of instructional programs that purport to be explicit and systematic, with novice and veteran teachers alike being encouraged to adhere to a script to ensure that they are adequately covering the required objectives. As Moustafa states in the first chapter, "accompanying the rise of expanded, more specific state standards has been a tendency for some to use state standards to promote specific instructional programs" (p. 6). Veterans are often frustrated, finding that many teaching strategies they have used effectively in the past are now discouraged. They must be able to defend these practices to their administrators, or set them aside. This book provides a useful tool by demonstrating ways that practices such as reading aloud, self-selecting reading, and writing workshop relate to state standards for reading and writing instruction.

Moustafa attempts to bridge the chasm between the standards and the instructional strategies that she identifies as best practices. She does so by first making a distinction between the two. Standards describe that which needs to be taught; often describing in explicit detail what students must be able to do to demonstrate mastery of that objective. Standards tell what to teach, but not how to teach. To illustrate how practice and standards mesh, a matrix is provided.

The matrix is the inspiration for the book. Chapter 3 consists of a detailed chart that demonstrates how the reading and writing standards for kindergarten through fifth grade in Moustafa's home state of California can be linked to instructional strategies. She is quick to point out that the matrix is meant as a model rather than a comprehensive document, clearly states that "experienced literacy educators will quickly see many strategies" that are not included in the book (p. 7). Nonetheless, it is a useful tool for visually capturing the way that strategies can be used to address the required standards. A web address is provided that the text states models how to construct a matrix for other states, but the link proved to be nonfunctioning. This was disappointing since the matrix is the primary focus of the book. (*Editor's note: The correct link is apparently provided on the publisher's web page and directs users to <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/scholasticprofessional/pdfs/exceedingthestandardsmatrices.pdf>*)

Readers will have mixed reactions to this book. Teachers who are unfamiliar with the strategies described will find the detailed directions for implementation helpful. For example, a large portion of the fifth chapter is devoted to directions for conducting individual reading assessments through the use of reading records. Teacher unfamiliar with the process will find these directions clear and easy to follow. For teachers who are experienced in administering individual reading inventories, this chapter presents no new information.

Similarly, novices may find the sections on read alouds, self-selected reading, and reader's theater helpful. Veterans who are looking for specific ways to use these strategies to address standards may be frustrated with the general nature of the text.

The greatest criticism of the book is that it seems to fall short of the promise of its title. While the strategies identified by Mosutafa are old favorites for many teachers, they are well known and well used in many classrooms. The matrix could be a very useful tool, but its very general nature limits its effectiveness in clearly demonstrating how the standard is met by the practice. As an example, 10 different objectives are identified on the matrix as being addressed through read alouds. A novice teacher might be left with the impression that by reading to her class, she will automatically address these standards. The problem is evident when one looks at a particular standard such as "recognize and name all upper and lower case letters of the alphabet" (p. 18). The likelihood of meeting this objective through the use of a read aloud is highly dependent on the teacher's approach. The objective might be addressed by reading an alphabet book to the class, but is unlikely to be met when reading a fairy tale without specific attention to letters and letter names being made during the reading — which would not really be appropriate practice during a read aloud. Unfortunately, there is no discussion on how to select texts or adapt the read aloud to meet or exceed specific standards.

*Exceeding the Standards* is an easy to read resource that provides teachers with a model for linking instructional strategies and practice to the required state standards. It demonstrates to teachers that it is not necessary to choose between meeting standards and using best practices. By creating a matrix with their own state standards, teachers will find a valuable tool for supporting their instructional decisions. Readers who are looking for examples of exactly how these strategies can be used to meet their state standards may be disappointed with the lack of specificity in the discussions.

**Reviewed by Karen J. Kindle, Ed.D., University of Missouri-Kansas City.**

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**Muschla, Judith A. & Muschla, Gary Robert (2008). *The Math Teacher's Problem-A-Day, Grades 4–8: Over 180 Reproducible Pages of Quick Skill Builders*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 210   Price: \$19.95   ISBN: 478-0-7879-9764-9**

For many years the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has worked hard to refine the mathematics curriculum so that mathematics teachers will be able to help students learn as much meaningful math as possible. In 2006, the NCTM published *Curriculum Focal Points for Prekindergarten through Grade 8 Mathematics: A Quest for Coherence* to help teachers decide what the important mathematical topics for various grade levels are. This publication is offered to school districts to help them organize their curriculum and emphasize the processes of mathematics in teaching, learning, and assessment. The NCTM describes a focal point as a cluster of related knowledge, skills and concepts which specify the mathematical content in a way that will help students have better understanding of their mathematics learning.

Judith A. Muschla and Gary Robert Muschla have written *The Math Teacher's Problem-A-Day* which highlights the Focal Points the NCTM has emphasized for grades 4 through 8. This is an excellent resource for teachers who want their students to be competent in the concepts and skills that the NCTM has identified for these grade levels.

The book contains over 180 reproducible "5-Minute Fundamentals" worksheets dealing with numbers and operations, algebra, geometry, measurement and data analysis. The authors provide a detailed table showing how the worksheets align with the Focal Points and Standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics along with clearly identifying the grade level. The titles of the worksheets pinpoint the skills that are being address. For example worksheet 1.65 for grade seven in the first section for numbers and operations is titled "Equivalent Fractions, Decimals, and Percents." There are three different skills being emphasized which are writing percents as fractions and decimals, simplifying fractions, and writing sets of numbers in order from least to greatest. A bonus problem is included on every worksheet and an interesting math trivia is at the bottom of each page. The math trivia on this worksheet (p. 66) states, "No one knows who was the first person to use the symbol for percent, %." The origin of the symbol can be traced back to an anonymous Italian manuscript written around 1475." Another example in the geometry section is titled "Naming Two-Dimension Shapes" for grade four. The skills on this worksheet include naming the type of figure that matches the written description of shapes, writing the best name for pictures of two-dimensional figures, and solving a problem dealing with a figure. The math trivia (page 114) states "The word *polygon* is taken from the Greek work *polygonos*, which means using many angles." A complete answer key is included at the end of the book which can help teachers and students save time.

As a current 8th-grade math teacher, I find that there are many periods during the year when there is not enough time to start teaching a new topic. I agree with the authors' suggestion that these worksheets would be an excellent way to productively fill the "downtime gaps with meaningful problems that target material students need to learn." (p. v) The worksheets could also be used as reviews or extra credit for the students to motivate them to do important mathematics. On each page the math trivia is different and interesting and the bonus question involves critical thinking and is fun to solve. As an adjunct math education professor, these worksheets would be easy to share with future elementary teachers to give them an overview of the types of problems students are expected to proficiently complete during grades 4 to 8.

One recommendation I would make is to group the worksheets by grade level and then by category. This would help a teacher quickly find the worksheets that deal with her or his individual grade level. The table in the front of the book does identify the grade level, but the teacher needs to flip back and forth to find specific grade level worksheets.

Together these authors, Judith and Gary Muschla, have over 55 years of teaching experience and have co-authored seven math books published by Jossey-Bass. I believe they have another "winner" and recommend this book to elementary mathematics teachers who are looking for new resources to help their students keep up with the current mathematics curriculum.

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**Reviewed by Dr. Carol A. Rodano, adjunct professor at Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ, and middle-school math teacher at Bunker Hill Middle School, Sewell, N.J. Interests include mathematics education and math anxiety.**

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**Nash, Robert, J.; Bradley, LaSha DeMethra & Chickering, Arthur W. (2008). *How to Talk About Hot Topics on Campus: From Polarization to Moral Conversation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 268    Price: \$38.00    ISBN: 978-0-7879-9436-5**

*Hot Topics* is a call for, a how to, and the seminal text on what the Moral Conversation is and how to carry it out. The authors describe moral conversation on page 8 as:

The Latin etymology of the word conversation is to live with, to keep company, to turn around, to shift perspective. Thus a moral conversation is literally a manner of living whereby people keep company with each other and talk in good faith, in order to exchange sometimes agreeable, sometimes opposing ideas. Above all, however, moral conversation is a mutual sharing of all those wonderful stories that give meaning to people's lives. In most cases, these stories are rich in religious, political, social class, ethic and cultural context. Moral conversation obligates each of the participants to listen actively and respectfully to the stories of others, both to understand and affirm them as well as to discover whatever "narrative overlap" might exist among them.

In moral conversation, how we talk about something is as important as what we talk about. Dr. Nash, the creator of moral conversation, has written and presented on the topic for the past 12 years. This collaborative effort is the latest version of this work.

I use the moral conversation in my interdisciplinary teaching across content areas at two distinctly different colleges. I use it with faculty, staff and student affairs practitioners. As an ethics scholar, I believe it is my ethical and moral responsibility to help spread the idea of moral conversation and the word on this groundbreaking book.

The Preface is a cogent and convincing call to action supported by three major arguments for moral conversation. First, there is a need for recommitment on the part of campus leaders to sustain "informed political and civil discourse" during a time when "the tone of academic debate has become increasingly polarized, and in some cases, we see attempts to silence, individuals, faculty and students alike, all with controversial views"(p. ix). Second, threats to academic freedom proliferate with "the recent rise in anti-Semitic incidents [and a] troubling increase in anti-Muslim and anti-Arab incidents." The key is to promote "open and honest dialogue... [in an] atmosphere of mutual respect, in which diversity is examined and seen in the context of a broader set of values" (p. x). Third, "promoting new scholarship and teaching about cultural

differences and religious pluralism, while supporting academic freedom requires a significant commitment at every level of the academic community... It is no longer adequate for student affairs staff to bear, largely alone, the responsibility for sponsoring and overseeing difficult dialogues" (p. x).

There are three parts to the book. In *Part I: Laying the Theoretical Groundwork for Moral Conversation* the authors give their rationale in a unified voice by advocating for "a culture of conversation, not a culture of contestation" (p. 4). The authors help us understand how to talk about hot button topics and the stakes if we don't. They review the conversational culture found on many college campuses. On pages 11-26 specific examples of hot topics on college campuses are detailed. Examples include religious intolerance, the war on evil, political correctness, god, morality, identity politics and social class. The authors explore key distinctions among such terms as tolerance, diversity, multi-culturalism and pluralism. They make the case that pluralism is a far more fitting background framework for moral conversation than the other three frequently used terms. These are just a few examples of the rich, salient instruction advice and stories the authors provide to both inspire and guide the reader.

*Part II: Practicing the Moral Conversation* is the heart of the book. The authors examine the concept of pluralism and how to ask pluralistic questions using the guidelines of moral conversation. Nash presents a "Faculty Member's View on Moral Conversation from the Classroom." Next Bradley offers an administrators view on moral conversation discussing student social class issues within a Division of Student Affairs. Bradley is a doctoral student at the University of Vermont and Associate Director of the Center for Student Ethics & Standards. The third view comes from Chickering as he reflects on his long accomplished career and makes instructive recommendations regarding systemic issues related to supporting and initiating the moral conversation across campuses. For example, he shares strategies for how to shift institutional culture to one that welcomes and nourishes difficult conversations (p. 133).

*Part III: Final Words on Moral Conversation* is extraordinarily well thought and laid out. It opens with a heated political scenario that took place recently on a college campus. Nash was asked to come to that campus to help facilitate conversation when civil discord around political difference caused animosity. Here we see students speaking of their experiences in this scenario. Next follows "A Letter to Our Colleagues and Students" bringing together all the points from the previous chapters giving detailed directions on how to prepare and participate in hot conversations.

The book ends with five Appendixes including a guide for facilitators and participants, a list of additional text references and Internet Resources, an article about Western stereotypes, a whole campus teaching and learning rationale for moral conversation, and a discussion of Naturalistic and Narrativistic Paradigms in Academia and what the implications are for moral conversation. Nash proposes narrativistic scholarship and moral conversation as powerful tools for learning our students' stories and making meaning on college campuses.

I believe this is brilliant, timely and instructive book, not only for educators, but one that reaches across disciplines and functions in higher education and beyond for anyone that wants to improve the outcomes of their conversations about controversial topics. Reading *Hot Topics* will improve both the quality and outcomes of conversations particularly conversations that tend to polarize rather than unite. It conveys the need to create spaces for these conversations on college campuses, but also instructs how to do it. Everything needed is provided aside from the courage and commitment to learn, practice, plan and initiate moral conversation.

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**Reviewed by Andrea Silva McManus, a faculty member at both The New England Culinary Institute and Champlian College.**

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**Parish, Robert, editor (2008). *Embracing Autism: Connecting And Communicating With Children In The Autism Spectrum*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 174    Price: 24.95    ISBN: 978-0-7879-9586-7**

Since many consider autism to be an epidemic (according to the CDC, an estimated 1 out of every 150 children are currently described as being on the autism "spectrum"), it is no wonder that books on the subject abound. Whether describing stories of "recovery" or detailing the latest "cure," most current literature is based on the assumption that autism is a problem that needs to be "fixed"; in short, the underlying message is that parents and teachers should strive towards achieving normalcy and typical-ness for their autistic children no matter what the cost. *Embracing Autism: Connecting and Communicating with Children in the Autism*

*Spectrum* is a refreshing departure from this trend.

The 14 essays encourage parents, teachers, and caregivers to work beyond merely coping with the challenges that an autistic child might present. Instead, they advocate working towards acceptance—and even celebration—of them. While acknowledging that this is often easier said than done, each author describes how they have managed to get past the feelings of depression, frustration, and sadness that often come with raising (or working with) an autistic child to ones of joy, optimism, and delight.

In essence, the authors each experienced their own personal paradigm shift as they went from viewing the autistic child in their life as a collection of deficits ("She can't talk or socialize with other children or...", etc.) to seeing the child as a collection of strengths which can (and should) be nurtured and cherished. For many, this notion of accepting an autistic child's quirks as they are rather than try to "fix" them will be a novel idea, especially since parents often spend incredible amounts of time, money, and energy trying to accomplish the latter. But as Cammie McGovern puts it, once she stopped trying to force her son to be more like a "regular" child and allowed him "the freedom to be odd," she found that she could connect with him in a completely different way by essentially placing herself in the spectrum right along with him (p. 100).

Yet while the authors have each managed to let go of their expectations, it does not mean that they have given up the "fight" altogether. They continue to advocate for classroom accommodations, to shuttle their children back and forth between therapy appointments, and to participate actively in the autism community, all in the hopes of improving their children's lives and prospects for the future. However, although the book features a sizable resources section (complete with lists of websites, books, and films pertaining to autism), some of the ideas suggested by the authors will not be new to anyone who is caring for an autistic child. For example, one special educator suggests that during class time autistic children—who often have sensory integration issues—bounce on a therapy ball or jump on a mini-trampoline, both of which are standard recommendations offered by occupational therapists. Regardless, the stories of the "breakthroughs" experienced by each author are by turns as tear-jerking and humorous as they are profound.

In sum, *Embracing Autism: Connecting and Communicating with Children in the Autism Spectrum* is not your typical book about autism. It neither details miracle recoveries nor describes groundbreaking scientific advances in biomedical research. It doesn't condemn vaccines or champion the gluten-free/casein-free diet. What it does do is offer the reader a new perspective on how to live life with an autistic child to the fullest extent. Arguing that letting go of expectations and getting to know the person beyond the diagnosis can foster meaningful connection and communication, the touching essays certainly help the reader to appreciate why shifting the focus of how autistic children are traditionally viewed is worth the effort both personally and professionally.

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**Reviewed by Karrin S. Lukacs, the mother of a four-year-old autistic son and an adjunct faculty member at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia.**

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**Ravet, Jackie (2007). *Are We Listening? Making Sense Of Classroom Behaviour With Pupils And Parents*. Stoke-on-Trent, England: Trentham Books.**

**Pages: 164    Price: £16.99 / €25.50    ISBN: 9781858563923**

In school, children are expected to listen, work, and concentrate. Yet, some children show a preference for playing, talking with others, daydreaming and other activities that clearly do not rhyme with good-learning behaviour. About 20% of the children shows school disengagement (Wilms, 2003), causing negative outcomes for pupils (e.g., poor academic performance), but also challenging situations for teachers (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). There are multiple influences on children's engagement, including child, teacher, and family factors and the solution to disengagement therefore seems to imply consideration of these three sources.

In *Are We Listening, Making Sense of Classroom Behaviour with Pupils and Parents*, Ravet discusses a study with which she aimed to gain insights into the perceptions of teachers, parents and children with respect to disengagement. In the study, named "Somerville Study," ten disengaging children, their parents and five teachers were asked as informants for this purpose. By presenting the results of the Somerville Study, Ravet successfully tries to replace the classical approach to disengagement (punishment of bad behaviour, rewards for good behaviour), with a more advanced approach that incorporates the multiple perspectives of children, teachers, and parents.

Ravet starts with an introduction to the topic of disengagement in the classroom, followed by a more in-depth description of disengagement described by the perceptions that teachers, parents and children have of disengagement behaviour, the feelings of the child, and the causes of the disengagement. Each of these perceptions (i.e., child, teacher, and parent perspectives) are further analysed and discussed in separate chapters and then integrated to come to an approach that emphasises awareness of all perspectives and collaboration in order to positively change the level of engagement in the child. In the final chapter, Ravet addresses potential obstacles and how they can be overcome in order to adopt the preferred inter-subjective approach.

It is impressive how Ravet convinces the reader of her message that multiple perspectives should be taken into account without giving the feeling that any of these perspectives is the true one or even that one perspective is better than another. Whereas the teacher perspective is the one many readers will be most familiar with, the child perspective and the parent perspective (that incorporates elements that reflect both teacher and child perceptions) are described in a clear and imaginable way. Most interestingly in this respect is the discrepancy between the teacher and the child in their explanations of disengagement. Whereas children often say they wish to find relief from uncomfortable learning experiences and feelings and try to find a way to have fun; teachers seem to think that self-factors, such as deficits in the child, explain the disengagement behaviour. By describing discrepancies such as these, Ravet makes it understandable why the measures taken by teachers do not always have sufficient effects.

The book as such is informative and convincing. By illustrating the text with many examples of real classroom situations, Ravet provides the reader with an "engaging" story. It is impressive how she analyses and discusses the findings from the Sommerville study. We do, however, have to keep in mind that the findings derive from only ten eight to nine year old children and their parents and even fewer teachers. In addition, the Sommerville study took place in a small town in northeast Scotland (thus not be confused with the 40 year longitudinal study by Snarey & Vaillant published in 1985 that was about the relationship between IQ and life success in 450 boys growing up in Somerville, MA). The reader should, therefore, be aware of the limitations with respect to generalizability of the findings. Children's perspectives, for instance, may be less self-reflective at younger ages and child-disengagement may be even more difficult to handle in larger cities than in small towns, depending on factors such as classroom size. The book nevertheless is helpful in providing a more advanced approach to child disengagement that could help tackling the problem.

For whom might this book be interesting to read? The book, with all its examples and explanations, is very easy readable. It is suitable for school psychologists, teachers, and even parents who are worried about school disengagement in their child. For scientists studying the topic of school disengagement, the book is interesting as well. Scientists, however, will probably be more reticent in accepting all conclusions presented in the book, as many important descriptions of the methods used in the study are not (clearly) described. For them, the book may be a stimulation for further research into this interesting topic.

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**Reviewed by Francine C. Jellesma, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam.**

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**Salwak, Dale (2008). *Teaching Life: Letters From A Life In Literature*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press.**

**Pages: 200    Price: \$22.50    ISBN: 978-1-58729-630-7**

Reading *Teaching Life* made me wish I was an English professor. Dale Salwak has provided a guidebook for teaching literature in university which can be a valuable learning tool for newly minted Ph.D.'s in English as well as professors in many other areas of teaching. The device of letters to a former student provides a useful and accessible vehicle to engage the reader, if rather darkly connected to her untimely passing in a tragic car accident five years previously. They are letters written as if in continued correspondence with a star student presuming she had gone on to complete a Ph.D. and become a professor of English. This allows the writer's voice to be personal and exceedingly readable, as well as instructive. Each chapter is a letter to the

former student, Kelly, in response to hypothetical questions she has asked her professor.

The topics of each chapter cover a wide range of issues with which any new or experienced professor must deal. Beginning with the transition from graduate student to teacher, including the need to make vital connections through your students ideas, the power of the novelist over the reader, the art of writing, scholarship, integrating marriage, Salwak addresses these and many other important topics in a heartfelt and encouraging way, as if he really were writing in response to her sincere questions.

Each chapter/ topic presents a complete piece, recognizing and validating first the question and issue addressed, providing always some personal experience or anecdote to draw the reader in, and often using actual quotations from many well-known writers to clarify the point. In fact one of the continuing highlights of the book is the value and power of many of these quotes, such as C.S. Lewis's words which lead us into the book, "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear,"(p. ix) or John le Carre's, on what attracts us to a writer's voice, " partly it has to do with trust, partly with the good or bad manners of the narrator, partly with his authority or lack of it. And a little also with beauty, though not as much as we might like to think" (p. 91). Each quote is well chosen and well used for its fresh language and insight on the topic at hand.

The continued emphasis on taking full responsibility for your role as a professor is uplifting at the same time as it is challenging, seeming to fly in the face of criticism of the profession, "Western society's prevailing and, for many of us, disturbing prejudice against this noble profession" (p. xi). Salwak cautions his student, "By staying focused on your work rather than on personality differences, Kelly, you'll find it easier to live graciously, to be tactful to everyone, and to avoid petty faculty disputes of temporary ill will" (p. 3). If there is any drawback to the completeness with which Salwak has written about his subject, it is that it is almost "too complete." Although he continues to value honesty, directness, and reflective thought for any professor, he sometimes leaves little room for the reader's own reflective thought. As an illustration consider this. Salwak writes, "If somehow I could have the good fortune to ask a world-class author one question, I would provide him or her two chapters of my best writing and inquire, 'What isn't there?' Then I'd sit back and listen" (p. 113).

Certainly this might lead to useful advice, but the characterization that the purpose of revision in any writing is to ensure that "nothing is missing" seems an understatement of the very act of creativity. He quotes Eudora Welty, "All serious daring begins within,"(p. 19) and Chesterton, "Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly," (p. 174), yet also seems to provide considerably more of his own personal life through anecdotes and his many experiences in teaching and writing than "taking oneself lightly" would suggest. Thankfully these experiences are always interesting, personal accounts of real learning experiences Salwak wishes to "share" with the younger colleague, always with the best and most laudable intentions. The stories of his exchanges and meetings with Kingsley Amis, the subject of his own dissertation, provide a constructive and insightful view into the painful challenge as well as exhilarating rewards of personal scholarship. He concludes, "And so, yes, absolutely: if they are still alive and you have the ambition, I encourage you to seek out the authors you admire and, when possible, to visit and correspond with them... and bring that first hand knowledge into class..." (p. 138).

The stories, experiences, quotes, and descriptions of the activities and challenges of any professor, and particularly an English professor, provides a powerful, personal, and valuable text from which any of us will benefit. I would recommend this book as a "must read" for any tenure-track professor, as well as anyone in higher education. Although you will come away from your reading with a warm and sad feeling for the student, Kelly, you will also gain a sense that this work grows out of her own real experience and all the possibility therein represented. As death is inevitable for each of us, this record in imagined letters to a professor, who could never be, is really a glowing tribute to the life and hopes, not only of Kelly, but also, for every one of us.

**Reviewed by Thomas A. Caron, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, East Carolina University**

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**Scott, Judith A.; Skobel, Bonnie J. & Wells, Jan (2008). *The Word-Conscious Classroom: Building the Vocabulary Readers and Writers Need*. New York: Scholastic.**

**Pages: 184 Price: \$23.99 ISBN: 9780439845663**

With more than 50 years of instructional experience, the authors of *The Word-Conscious Classroom: Building the Vocabulary Readers and Writers Need* offer in this book vocabulary instruction that is both deep and wide. The authors recognize that their approach may seem "daunting" (p. 5) but actually write the book with the purpose of "strip(ping) away some of the anxiety that teachers may feel when they think about teaching vocabulary" (p. 5). There are basic vocabulary instructions for beginning teachers but more in-depth vocabulary instructional techniques for those teachers who are ready to take vocabulary to the next level in their classrooms.

Word consciousness is the central theme of the text and is defined by the authors as "the metacognitive or metalinguistic knowledge that a learner brings to the task of word learning" (p. 7). As a teacher begins to think about vocabulary instruction in her classroom, the authors give three reasons to encourage a focus on vocabulary.

First, by reading the words of great and sometimes not-so-great writers, students learn to recognize the power of words. As students hear powerful words, with the support of their teacher they can then learn to incorporate powerful words into their own writing. The language that they read and then use to write will become more informed. An awareness of the true effectiveness of use of the right word will develop. This awareness will serve the student in his academic studies for years to come.

Secondly, by listening to the words of others in context, we add words to our usable vocabulary. The exposure to words again and again is how children learn words. Hearing the words in the context of exciting stories causes the child to deal with the word. Figuring out words in context not only adds to a child's vocabulary, but it also strengthens the child's skill in using context clues to guess the meaning of a word.

Thirdly, as students' vocabularies grow, so does their ability to communicate their own thoughts to others. Imitating the writing of others until the skill of writing becomes one's own is a scaffolded approach to learning how to communicate thoughts in writing.

The authors developed this vocabulary process with an end goal in mind: "We wanted students who were critical, thoughtful readers and powerful writers who could express their thoughts and ideas well" (p. 15). Through an increase of student exposure to rich language in the classroom, the establishment of classroom communities where talking about words was constant, a usage of proven activities that engage and motivate students, and an overall deep appreciation for language and using the right word at the right time, the authors created this vocabulary model and now share it in this text.

One particular process that is a part of this vocabulary framework and may possibly be unfamiliar to some teachers is the idea of creating a "bank of powerful language" (p. 20) from students' reading. Students are encouraged to "deposit" interesting and powerful words and phrases into the bank and then to "withdraw" contributions for use in their own writing. The authors address imitation vs. plagiarism in the text and also describe the mini lessons and logistics of creating this powerful vocabulary tool for the classroom.

A few of the vocabulary games and strategies included in the text are "old faithfuls," but there are many new and very creative ideas for teachers to employ in the implementation of vocabulary instruction. There is a very nice model for teacher thinking aloud with a vocabulary focus. In a brief chapter on assessment, there is a rubric for word consciousness and student responsibility. A lengthy bibliography of books that promote and support word consciousness is found at the end of the 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.**

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**Tabors, Patton O. (2008) *One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Early Childhood Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language*. Second edition. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

**Pages: 255    Price: \$29.95    ISBN: 978-1-55766-921-6**

There are a growing number of children who are English Language Learners (ELL) enrolled in early childhood program. In the book, *One Child, Two Languages*, Tabor argues that these numbers are important given the context of expanding programs for young children in Head Start, preschool, child care centers and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

The significance of Tabor's book and research is her recognition that in these various early childhood settings and programs, ELL children are not only learning and fine-tuning their first language, but they are also learning a second language. They are, as Tabor states, learning two languages. The essence of the book is to help early childhood educators understand the language development of ELL children in order for teachers to "plan effective classrooms that provide second-language learners with access to learning experiences" (p. xi).

The reality is that for many early childhood educators the process of providing learning experiences for second-language learners may not be part of their preservice curriculum. *One Child, Two Languages* is well organized and builds on concepts and theories of language acquisition that support the strategies for classroom planning and instruction. Tabor infuses empirical research conducted with ELL young children to support the methods outlined in the book. The goal of the book is clear: to inform early childhood educators



about first language development as well as the difference between first and second language acquisition in order to achieve optimal outcomes for second-language learners in early childhood settings.

The first five chapters of the book deal with second language learning tasks that confront a young child. The chapters are concise and easy to digest. The arguments put forth by Tabor are clear. She is able to drive home the notion that young ELL children face linguistic constraints. Equally important, Tabor, articulates how learning two languages often effects children socially as they move between home languages and nonverbal periods. Understanding the phases that children learning two languages pass through will support early childhood teachers in understanding when referrals for additional services might be warranted.

The last five chapters of the book discuss the teacher's role in early childhood classrooms. These chapters are well organized. The chapters build on concepts and theories of language acquisition posited in the first five chapters. Throughout the book, Tabor uses case studies to articulate classroom practices or examples of stages of language development. The case studies offer the reader an opportunity to create a visualization of the concept discussed.

Chapters 7 and 9 are particularly noteworthy. Chapter 7 is devoted to working with the parents of second language learners. Additionally, Tabor tackles the \$64,000 question: What language should be spoken at home? You will have to read the book to find out the answer.

Chapter 9 undertakes developmental assessment of young second-language learners. Tabor states, "Teachers working with young second-language learners need to think about how they will go about assessing those children's capabilities. This process can be divided into three steps: 1) deciding what should be assessed, 2) obtaining assessment information, and 3) using assessment information" (p. 146).

*One Child, Two Languages* is an informative, well written and practical book for early childhood educators. The book would be useful in early childhood teacher education programs in preservice as well as in professional development. And, as an added bonus, the book comes with a CD that includes reproducible forms along with a study guide and related articles.

As an Early Childhood Special Education educator, I found the book to be a worthy contribution to the field of early childhood. Tabor presents a well researched, concise, informative and timely book on a subject that needs much attention: young children who are learning two languages in early childhood programs.

**Reviewed by Janice Myck-Wayne (jmyck-wayne@fullerton.edu) Assistant professor at California State University, Fullerton.**

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## **Zepeda, Sally J. (2008) *Professional Development: What Works*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.**

**Pages: 344    Price: \$39.95    ISBN: 978-1-59667-086-0**

Sally Zepeda's *Professional Development: What Works* offers readers an attractive title, useful organization, and valuable information to assist education leaders to be "warriors of professional development" (p. 299). She suggests that professional development is an endless journey of continuous learning. The author desires that two things be remembered. The first is that professional development ought not to be viewed as simply a pull-out program. Best-practices must be embedded in daily work. Such development will improve individual and collective practices of teachers. Second, professional development must be coherent. "Professional development might very well be a way to achieve coherence with tackling local, state, and national expectations for student achievement" (p. 299). As educators know so well, student achievement is the principal goal in today's schooling systems.

Zepeda shares many ideas from a bevy of experts. Zepeda pulled information from a variety of sources, including a list of more than a dozen respected professional educators occupying various teaching and administrative positions in school districts and universities across the nation. Her willingness to acknowledge these individuals by name for their contributions lends credibility to her position as an honest collaborator with the best interests of educators and learners at heart. By so doing, Zepeda demonstrates the ability to use a critical friends group as described in chapter 9. The focus for Zepeda's critical friends group was to articulate best practices by the experts and to receive input about how to include the information in her book. For this reader, Zepeda and her cadre of helpers produced a fine book, worth the time of anyone interested in learning about how to make professional development sessions a success.

Zepeda includes a table on page 16 entitled "Lessons Learned from Key Research on Professional Development." Successful professional development uses multiple styles of learning for active engagement, is based on student performance data, promotes reflection, is relevant, and includes plans for follow-up. The

standards in this table are a guide for the chapters that follow.

A strength of this book is the inclusion of multiple matrices. These charts make topical information accessible and user-friendly. For example, Figure 2.8 represents an overview of methods used to collect data in evaluations. Readers can use Figure 2.9 for planning which information sources they will use for evaluation questions and what data will be collected.

Zepeda recognizes that not all educators are sold on the idea of professional development. Many educators feel that the sessions are just one more thing placed on an already full plate. Some ask if professional development sessions are worth the time and effort. Zepeda addresses basic concerns by devoting chapter one to preparation for teacher development sessions. She supports bringing out the best in teachers, focusing on student achievement, and linking professionalism and teacher quality to professional development.

This book lists the National Staff Development Council as the "standard-bearer for professional development" (p. 27). Zepeda's book recognizes recent paradigm shifts identified by this council such as concentration on individual and organizational development, job-embedded learning instead of training away from the job, and viewing staff development as an imperative rather than as a frill. Each chapter includes a succinct conclusion and a list of suggested readings. This can be very helpful to the reader who wishes to concentrate particularly on one area of professional development.

A highlight chapter is number 13 on portfolios. The use of professional portfolios is becoming en vogue. Sophisticated technology allows teachers to store copious amounts of information. The portfolio is a running record of selected artifacts, email conversations, student work, and teacher planning. The chapter encourages teachers to build and store portfolios on school homepages available for teachers and parents to view. The power of a portfolio, according to Zepeda, is in that the portfolio can be studied overtime as an accurate and immediate portrayal of the classroom (p. 293). The information is available for retrieval at any time wherever there is a computer. Another advantage of e-portfolios is the absence of a hard-copy document which can become cumbersome.

All in all, Zepeda accomplishes her goal of being able to show principals and professional development directors how to plan and implement programs which can promote teacher growth. Zepeda holds to the idea that student learning depends on teacher learning. Anyone with professional development responsibilities would benefit from this book. I recommend this volume for anyone who seeks to build a development framework, determine a district plan, or prepare to build the professional development skills of leaders within a school district.

**Reviewed by Barry Johnson, doctoral student in the Bilingual Education program, Texas A&M University-Kingsville.**



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