Brief Reviews for April 2010

Beane, Allan L. (2009). *Bullying Prevention for Schools: A Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing a Successful Anti-Bullying Program*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 289   ISBN: 978-0-470-40701

Bullying is not a new problem but solving the problem is in a constant state of construction. Dr. Beane lays out a carefully crafted plan that school administrators can use effectively to reduce the number of bullying incidents. Using a methodology similar to Dr. W. Edwards Deming's Plan, Do, Study, Act model, the book identifies the steps and sequence for appropriate action to curb the problem. We recognize that the problem may never be fully eliminated; therefore, this book provides guidance for capturing the causes and statistically reducing the occurrences.

The first step of training school staff is identified and Beane provides a time line for expectations of the training until the program is placed into action and becomes fully operational. Suggested programs are included in the initial step to inform students and their parents--a vital step in the communication of the plan. The bullying prevention network includes a mission statement, brand, and slogan. This provides the plan with a sense of identity and framework rather than giving it the appearance of an after-thought.

Communication of the plan includes all of the customers of the school: parents, teachers, students, community, and businesses. The plan and policies are made readily available to all of the constituents as well as the policies of the program from inception to evaluation. The plan comes with a rubric to set the standards of operation and provide a system to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the prevention program.

Training of school personnel and volunteers is given and includes all the policies, procedures, strategies, and plans in dealing with volatile situations. All parties who could be potentially affected by a bullying episode are met with and trained. This would include first of all the student body, and then is extended to community members and parents.

One of the many strengths of this book is in the providing of an evaluation method used to study the effect of the plan which allows the school to make course corrections for continuous improvement of the methods. In addition, the book provides excellent resources that will serve as templates to construct documents that fit the culture of each individual school. The detail to which the book is written provides school leaders with a carefully, well planned document that simply needs to be tailored to the needs of each individual school.

Reviewed by James K. Hawkins, Ph.D., Cameron University, Lawton, OK; and Dr. Sherry Labyer, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools, Duncan Public Schools, Duncan, OK.

Benjamin, Amy and Crow, John T. (2010). *Vocabulary at the Center*. Largemont, NY: Eye on Education.

Pages: 124   ISBN: 978-1-59667-124-9

Oftentimes when educators think about vocabulary instruction in the secondary setting, we are concerned with the quantity of words that students need to learn. We give a list of ten vocabulary words on Monday, give an assessment on Friday--often fill in the blank, matching, or multiple choice--move on to another ten words the following week, and assess the entire body of words students have learned in a cumulative final test. Yet, we are dismayed when we realize on the cumulative test, or for that matter the test on Friday, that students confuse words that are not remotely related to one another. Students sometimes will even ask us what a particular word means that they have supposedly "learned" from an earlier vocabulary list given that semester. Obviously, something is not working and there is a breakdown in our vocabulary instruction. "How can I effectively teach vocabulary?" is the central question addressed by Amy Benjamin and John T. Crow in their book Vocabulary at the Center.

The authors introduce their argument against rote memorization of a word plus its definition by describing the daunting, vast networks of knowledge

associated with actually "knowing" a word that native speakers are mostly unaware of until pointed out to them. We tend to think, according to the authors, that knowledge of a word consists of knowing its meaning, pronunciation, and spelling. While this is true, this is only the tip of the iceberg of vocabulary acquisition: below the surface is a massive foundation of knowledge that allows individuals to comfortably use a particular word in written and spoken communication. We are not only aware of these basic three components of words we actually "know," but we also possess knowledge concerning the derivations of these words, collocations (words that fit with each other such as "on TV" or "in the movies" instead of "in TV" and "on the movies"), connotations, register (what words are appropriate for what audience), idioms, opposites, gender (whether a word is used mainly by males or females), and intentions (such as through changing intonation for words to indicate different meanings). While the authors point out that they do not intend for us to teach all of this background information about vocabulary acquisition to our students, they do afford us this trip into what they call "Vocabulary Land" to highlight the inaccuracy of the belief that students know a word when they have merely memorized its definition.

Benjamin and Crow further develop their argument against rote memorization of a word plus its definition by addressing the way the "learning brain" stores information. They paint a metaphor of memories and learning functioning as an elaborate root system: the more roots that intertwine with other networks of knowledge, the more efficiently we can reach stored information. The "footprint" left by rote memorization uses relatively few synapses in the brain, and retrieval is limited to only one neural pathway when a particular word has been taught independent of context; consequently, limited neural pathways result in prohibiting obtained knowledge to organize itself into the cluster of concepts stored in our brains, making retrieval of this information largely inefficient.

Educators are also concerned with the words that they should teach to students. The authors address this topic by stating that oftentimes teachers, especially literature teachers, reason that students need to know every single word in a text in order to accurately understand the text's meaning; however, while such words tend to be valuable gems in the literary tradition of our past, they are not frequently used today and are rarely heard in other courses associated with the student's academic life. Benjamin and Crow propose to teach students words used repeatedly in all classes and serious discourses in order to benefit their overall academic life. The authors develop what they refer to as the Generic Academic Vocabulary (GAV), organized into twelve areas of meaning such as "words about systems" and "words about time and order." Words contained in the GAV are words such as assemble, substantial, continuum, unless, and so forth. Though they will often be

familiar with these words, students do not have a good understanding of what these words mean as they are not regularly exposed to them outside of an academic setting. Written expression may be hindered as well because students do not have the vocabulary to better express the relationships of ideas they are attempting to relate. By teaching such words to students, the authors assert that students will possess a greater ability to communicate with more precision while also developing their critical thinking skills.

So how then can the teacher incorporate effective vocabulary instruction into the classroom? Benjamin and Crow offer many strategies, graphic organizers, and forms of assessment, both formative and summative, for use in the classroom. They touch on strategies to help students with spelling and the use of contextual clues while reading. Vocabulary journals, concept mapping, words walls, word banks, scaffolding techniques, and modeling strategies are all discussed in detail. The authors are also aware of the concern many teachers have that they do not have enough time to teach vocabulary in addition to other course components; thus, the authors suggest combining vocabulary and other instruction together by regularly using new vocabulary words during instruction and requiring students to use new vocabulary words in their writing about classroom studies that teachers are reading anyway.

In sum, the authors do not want educators to view teaching vocabulary as adding words to students' knowledge; instead, they want teachers to view teaching vocabulary as facilitating the incorporation of new vocabulary words into students' already existing body of vocabulary knowledge. They encourage educators to continually expose students to new words in different contexts, teach students to pronounce these words, allow students to hear the words in our own "teacher talk," and require that students practice using the words in their own speech and writing. In this way, students begin to integrate new words into their already existing knowledge of words, allowing them to truly learn a word.

This book is well worth one's investment of time and money. Its non-traditional look at teaching vocabulary is supported by research and current best-practice that will satisfy the teacher concerned with the results of an instructional attitude toward vocabulary valuing quantity over quality. The time the authors spend on providing readers with background knowledge concerning the learning brain and what it means to truly know a word allows the teacher to understand the necessity of incorporating strategies and assessments discussed in the book into his or her own classroom. With the help provided by Benjamin and Crow, educators are better equipped to close the ever-widening achievement gap and prepare students to become independent learners through effective vocabulary instruction.

Reviewed by Julie Baker, English, Boyd County High School, Ashland, KY.

Eliot, Lise . (2009). *Pink Brain Blue Brain: How Small Differences Grow into Troublesome Gaps-and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt .

Pages: 419   ISBN: 978-0-618-39311-4

With the lifting of restrictions imposed in Title IX in 2006 (p. 304) educators and parents have had a renewed interest in single gender education. Based on data published by Leonard Sax and other proponents of gender specific education, single gender classrooms have sprouted up in many communities touting that they have found the solution to our educational maladies. In these classrooms, boys are given a physically active learning environment while girls are placed in a more calm and subdued learning environment. Educators are buying into this teaching philosophy without investing the time to fully research all of the data. The move to segregate boys and girls in the classroom could have long lasting and far reaching negative effects on both sexes.

Pink Brain, Blue Brain, by Lise Eliot, is a comprehensive look at the similarities and differences in males and females in chronological order from conception through adulthood. Lise Eliot, a neuroscientist, has poured over many research studies to confidently state that there is little difference in the prenatal brain between boys and girls. This lack of differentiation between the two sexes is also found in newborns. It is only when children are exposed to societal influences, which starts at birth, do they formulate specific gender characteristics. Dr. Eliot also posits that the plasticity of the human brain compensates for any deficiencies that may occur during the prenatal period, after a child is born, and through out the lifetime of an individual. Dr. Eliot uses her personal experiences, fears, and feelings to bring the reader to a safe space that promotes an open mind, self-reflection, and willingness to let loose of a thought process that has been cemented in the human psyche since the beginning of human kind.

Both parents and educators can benefit by embracing conclusions found in this book. Parents will be able to gain an understanding of how their child developed from a fertilized egg with specific DNA to a gendered infant.

They will also be made aware of societal demands and expectations of their children. Educators have a responsibility to have high and similar expectations from both male and female students. This book will show how their view of gender roles in a student's life can affect self-efficacy, self-esteem, and life choices. To further add to the functionality of this book, chapters two through eight give suggestions to parents and educators on how boys and girls can benefit from focusing on alternative gender choices that can range from toys to activities.

Dr. Eliot uses chapter one to explain scientifically how boys and girls are made. She explains the hormonal similarities and differences that create the specific genital organs. Using studies of androgen insensitivity syndrome, Dr. Eliot cites the importance of prenatal hormones and how they determine gender roles in individuals. The case of David Reimer speaks to the importance of gender and how self-perception determined by gender is crucial to a successful, well-adjusted human being. David was a twin of a male sibling, suffered from a botched circumcision and was raised as a female from the age of two (p. 33). His inability to fully connect with either gender led him to finally commit suicide after a long and tormented life. Dr. Eliot also discusses specific physical features and brain growth of male and female fetuses and their small differences while reminding the reader of the brain's plasticity.

Chapter two further discusses the physical, sensory, motor skills, and language similarities and differences in infants beginning at birth. During this time in a child's development, parental input is an added influence to the child's gender identity. Dr. Eliot gives an interesting example of how mothers treat their boy and girl infants differently. The experiment was set up with a sloped walkway where mothers could determine the degree of the slope. Mothers with male infants consistently allowed their children to attempt the walkway with a larger degree of slope while the opposite was true of mothers with female babies. In reality, female infants were able to maneuver down the larger sloped walkway easier than the male infants. This revealing look at parent's perception of their children's abilities based on gender shows how children can be steered into behaviors, character traits, and identity of self.

Chapter three describes gender development through preschool. During this time children begin the process of identifying their own gender traits and assessing the differences between the genders. Dr. Eliot gives details of how playtime and toys start the differentiation process. She cites studies that show both nature and nurture as causes for types of play and choice of toys. There are genetic and hormonal influences that may cause boys to play with trucks and girls to play with dolls, but according to Dr. Eliot, this cannot be

the sole reason for this phenomenon. Parents and educators contribute a large portion of the child's view of how certain characteristics are associated with specific genders (p. 105).

Chapters four, five, and six would be of special interest to educators, educational curriculum and schools in relationship to gender and cognitive abilities. Gender differences in the subject of language and literacy are addressed by disproving some current studies such as that women use significantly more words per day than men while establishing the validity of other studies such as the fact that boys, internationally, are less competent in the skills of language and literacy (p. 185). Bringing up such issues as school readiness and redshirting of kindergarteners, and dyslexia, Dr. Eliot points out how boys and girls are saddled with different gender expectations. She admits that, in today's classroom, girls are out performing boys (p. 160). For this reason, she gives suggestions on how to create a classroom that is boy-friendly which will also benefit girls. Dr. Eliot evaluates the gender differences in the subjects of math and science. She determines that the differences start around adolescence and the gap continues to widen as boys and girls advance in their academic careers. Spatial skills, item memory, and navigational skills along with cultural bias are topics addressed as reasons for any cognitive gaps in acquiring comprehension of math and science.

In chapter seven, the concepts of gender differences in emotional expression, aggression, empathy, and competition are discussed with surprising conclusions. One such conclusion assesses aggression in boys and girls. Studies have shown that the amount of aggression in both genders is the same, although they do display it differently (p. 264). Dr. Eliot reiterates with each concept, the small neural differences between the genders and again puts the focus of stereotypical attributes of specific genders on societal influences.

The last chapter is aptly titled, "Truce Time." Dr. Eliot specifically addresses single gender instruction and warns about such programs and the reasoning fueling their implementation. She points out that although there may be substantial reasons for these programs, gender differences in brains and hormones cannot be used as a valid rationale (p. 395). Advocating for a harmonious classroom where students are challenged based on their individual needs and are enriched by a gender diverse environment, Dr. Eliot seeks to enhance the learning experiences of both boys and girls.

This book gives a research-based analysis into the gender differences in regards to cognitive and emotional development. Parents and educators can gain a new perspective on the hardwiring of each gender and how they can improve the learning environment by avoiding the gender stereotypes that

pigeonhole children. The important lessons that should be taken from this book are, "mental and emotional abilities are not fixed" and "they are not strongly determined by gender" (p. 301). Dr. Eliot provides an innovative view of gender and how boys and girls are capable of attaining any goals regardless of their gender.

Reviewed by Beth Hammes, University of South Carolina

Lindsey, Delores B.; Jungwirth, Linda D.; Pahl, Jarvis V.N.C.; & Lindsey, Randall B. (2009). *Culturally Proficient Learning Communities: Confronting Inequities Through Collaborative Curiosity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Pages: 148   ISBN: 978-1-4129-7228-**4**

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are prevalent in many schools and organizations in the form of grade-level teams, subject-matter departments, managerial teams, and collaborative projects. While PLCs exist in many forms, this book analyzes the idea of creating culturally proficient learning communities for all levels of education that not only serve a common purpose, but also address the changing needs of students with diverse backgrounds, income levels, and learning disabilities. In the foreword, the authors outline the importance of these culturally proficient learning communities and how there is minimal research on them.

From the start, the authors let the reader know that this is a book of questions, not answers. The most effective way to approach diversity is by questioning one's own personal views and values, and asking questions that make an individual see multiple perspectives. In Culturally Proficient Learning Communities, the authors provide stories, tools, and strategies to help transform one's thinking. Transforming the way an individual thinks in a community of learners is ultimately important for the success of the students that he or she may serve. The authors' goals are to provide protocol, activities, and rubrics for creating dialogue in learning communities that focus on race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation and identity, faith, and ableness with the inconsistencies in student success.

Culturally Proficient Learning Communities is divided into three parts: "Getting Centered," "Voices from the Field," and "Call to Action: Disturb the System through Curiosity and Inquiry." The authors start by asking individuals to give up their certainties and rely on curiosity and disturbance.

Effective professional learning communities with culturally proficient members are aware of the inclusive nature of the community but rely on the diversity of individuals to create and share the vision, mission, and goal of the community. The authors' purpose is to present the "Tools of Cultural Proficiency" (p. 3) and use them as a framework for communities of learners. The authors achieve this by providing vignettes that challenge the reader's views and provoke reflection, analyze the inside-outapproach, provide tables for framework, and introduce the four tools of cultural proficiency. The first tool is overcoming barriers, and includes a guiding question of: "What gets in the way of doing our learning community work in a culturally proficient manner?" (p. 12). The book includes a set of barriers and reflection activities that a community can effectively approach together. The second tool is guiding principles and asks the question: "Are we who we say we are as a learning community?" (p. 14). Following this tool is continuum and probes: "How do we assess ourselves as individuals and as members of our learning community?" (p. 16). The authors include a table to assess one's cultural proficiency: from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency. The final tool is five essential elements: assessing cultural knowledge, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. Similar to the last question, the authors ask: "Do our actions align with who we say we are as a learning community?" (p. 18). Each tool meets the goals that the authors established in the preface: asking questions that provoke reflection, curiosity, and disturbance.

Culturally Proficient Learning Communities also explores the history of diversity. Continuing with its theme of questioning, this book guides the reader in understanding the mistakes and challenges of the past and how it influences our present. The authors analyze such key concepts as segregation, integration, equity, or diversity, civil rights movement, and multiculturalism. History is also explored within learning communities, primarily on education reform, reculturalization, and theories about learning communities from Senge, Wenger, Louis and Kruse, Hord, DuFour and Eaker, and Oxley.

The second part of the book provides a more in-depth look at real-world scenarios, assessment techniques, shared values, differences through collaboration, shared conditions, and collective learning. Part two significantly achieves the goals of the authors by providing an abundant amount of activities, reflections, tables, and techniques for individual and community growth. The reader will gain real perspectives from real-world communities such as the Maple View School District, a community that is focused on student success through cultural proficient strategies and tools.

Part three, "Call to Action," is an appropriate way to end this journey of cultural proficiency. The authors effectively move the reader through three

stages throughout the book that lead to success: personal reflection, real-world experiences, and applying theory to practice. "Call to Action" helps the reader connect his or her thoughts and beliefs to action, assess current initiatives, and implement new curriculum and programs.

The flow of the book was consistent throughout. There was no change in the format from the first part of the book to the end. This flow made the book an easy read and effective in building a framework to study. In all areas there is room for application of tools to better one's knowledge in working with students, parents and people of different cultures, and also how to better manage the classroom, meetings, and any other ways in which one would interact. Culturally Proficient Learning Communities is a valuable tool for teachers and administrators to create effective communities focused on student success.

Reviewed by Leslie Martinez, Graduate Assistant with a Living-Learning Community, University of South Florida, Tampa and Lindsey Hurst, Graduate Assistant with Housing and Residential Education, University of South Florida, Tampa.

Nichols, Maria. (2009). *Expanding Comprehension with Multigenre Text Sets*. New York: Scholastic.

ISBN: 9780545105675

This slim volume by Maria Nichols is a practical guide designed to take teachers through the process of using text sets in elementary classrooms. Nichols, who currently works as a literacy staff developer, is an award-winning teacher with 20 years of classroom experience. She is best known as one of the group authors for Teaching Literacy in First Grade (Ladd, Flood, Moore, & Nichols, 2005). Nichols has a special interest in the role guided conversations play in increasing comprehension. She previously explored the general role conversation plays in reading comprehension in Comprehension Through Conversation: The Power of Purposeful Talk in the Reading Workshop (Nichols, 2006). In her current book, Nichols focuses on the role of conversation plays in the comprehension of multigenre text sets. She covers all aspects of this topic from selection of the text sets to scaffolding children as they integrate information from different source types.

Nichols begins her book with an excellent illustration showing that children already use multiple genres to learn about their world. She recounts a

classroom conversation about 9/11, during which children discuss the different sources (e.g. television, newspaper) they used to learn about this tragic event. Nichols' book uses many conversation snippets, both to draw in her audience and to illustrate the conversational potential of students in the elementary years. Her ideas, which are based on a combination of practice and theory, will appeal to many teachers as a means of using conversation to teach cognitive strategies to young readers. Teachers will particularly appreciate the tables in which she provides information and suggestions for incorporating specific genres (e.g. biography, informational, realistic fiction) and formats (e.g. graphic novel, newspaper article, web sites) into a text set.

Although Nichols does not specify a grade range in her book, Scholastic has labeled the book as being appropriate for grades 2-5. While an examination of the children's literature cited supports this characterization, the ideas could be used or modified for older children as well. This book is well-written and will be valued by both pre-service teachers and those already in the field.

References

Lapp, D., Flood, J., Moore, K. & Nichols, M. (2005). Teaching literacy in first grade. New York: Guilford Press.

Nichols, M. (2006). Comprehension through conversation: The power of purposeful talk in the reading workshop. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Reviewed by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Subject Specialist at the University of Maine. In addition to her M.S. in Library Studies from Florida State University, she has an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida with a specialization in language acquisition. She is currently pursuing an advanced degree in literacy at the University of Maine.

Sanders-Smith, Gail. (2009). *Non-fiction Text Structures for Better Comprehension and Response for Grades 4-8*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Gail Sanders-Smith has authored copious non-fiction picture books and has held a position as consultant editor to many more non-fiction titles. So the motivation to addNon-fiction Text Structures for Better Comprehension and Response to the numerous professional resources Sanders-Smith has produced embraces a natural purpose. The purpose of Non-fiction Text Structures for Better Comprehension and Response is to clearly assist classroom teachers to incorporate teachable moments with nonfiction text making teaching content easier. Kristo and Bamford (2004) have discussed the unique organization of nonfiction text structure as compared to its counterpart of fiction. They defend the necessity of nonfiction as they comment: "Because of the early emphasis on fiction, students become familiar with how it sounds, how to read it, and how to write it. It stands to reason that learning how to read and write nonfiction deserves the same emphasis" (pp. 13-14). And this is exactly what Sanders-Smith has achieved by compiling a collection with a rich array of practical strategies that compliment the five main nonfiction text structures: compare/contrast, cause/effect, sequence/procedure, question/answer, and exemplification.

Gail Saunders-Smith has formatted her text into six chapters which build upon the previous chapter and flow logically beginning with descriptions, text and student examples plus charts of key signal words of each of the five main text structures and ending with 5 sets of 3 day lesson plans that are explicit and teacher friendly that also includes differentiation suggestions. She applies Bloom's Taxonomy to each of the five structures and Vygotsky's scaffolding instruction beginning with whole-group awareness then small-group direct teaching/guided practice to independent practice with feedback. Chapter 3 is devoted to teaching students study skills/note taking, something that is difficult for many students. This leads smoothly into the next chapter, taking the notes and turning that information into clear and coherent responses. Worksheets are not the focus, nor are they presented. Instead a myriad of response types are explained and modeled by student products. Finally a range of assessment ideas or styles are presented along with sample checklists that can easily be modified to fit an individual teacher's classroom needs.

I do need to point out that there are a few editing errors found within the text that need to be addressed; however these errors do not mar the overall quality of the text and will probably be corrected in a second publishing. In all, I found this text to be of professional value for the 4-8th grade classroom teacher. The presentation is straightforward and the examples used proved clarity of the procedures in order to teach students about nonfiction text structure. Gail Saunders-Smith also included lists of picture books that would fall into each of the 5 text structure categories along suggested professional resources and leveled book sources.

Reference

Kristo, J.V. & Bamford, R.A. (2004). Nonfiction in focus: A comprehensive framework for helping students become independent readers and writers of nonfiction, K-6. New York: Scholastic.

Reviewed by Roberta Simnacher Pate, a teaching assistant for the College of Education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Schaeffer, Lola M. (2009). *Writing Lessons for the Overhead: Responding to Literature*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 96   ISBN: 0-545-05403-6

Teachers and students will appreciate Schaeffer's "how it could look" offerings in Writing Lessons for the Overhead: Responding to Literature by Lola M. Schaeffer. Targeting a grade 3-8 audience, Schaeffer presents detailed lessons and composite models of sample literature responses based upon her many years of classroom, consultant, and professional development experience. At the heart of this teaching resource is the recognition and development of independent critical thinking skills, the intertwining of reading and writing and the belief that students need to be responding to literature as a regular learning experience in their classrooms.

Schaeffer's explicit lesson format allows both the novice and the experienced teacher to find the teachable moment in each detailed lesson. While Schaeffer makes it clear that teachers should not require a literature response for everything students read, she explains that it is highly beneficial to model and discuss specific characteristics of literature responses when introducing new material. Utilizing familiar text choices, Schaeffer guides teachers and students through text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world connections, and story element responses that seamlessly scaffold the writing response process.

Throughout this multi-leveled resource, Schaeffer offers her "think-alouds" to stand as a running commentary throughout. Teachers will appreciate the explicit transparency examples presented as a "sidebar" alongside of the lessons. Sample rubrics are provided for evaluation and grading purposes. Peer feedback scenarios are outlined for students to both give and receive feedback to guide their writing development. The real gem of this resource is

the collection of twenty overhead transparencies to support teachers as they work alongside their students. With the support of these exemplar transparencies as a common literature response for reference, teachers will be able to think aloud and discuss these models alongside of their students. Teachers and students can reference a sample literature response model to explicitly identify and discuss how these models of writing are focused and purposeful to a specific type or genre of literature response.

Schaeffer's goal is to encourage both teachers and students to know that thinking and planning are integral and purposeful acts to the writing process. Teachers, in this response model, work to craft literature responses with their students that will enable students to become stronger readers and writers. In Writing Lessons for the Overhead: Responding to Literature, Schaeffer offers a teaching and learning resource where teachers can "pick and choose" (p. 8) teaching and learning experiences that work to complement the unique needs of language arts classrooms.

Reviewed by Jan E. Blake, Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. She taught K-12 for over 20 years in the public schools system before joining the College of Education in Reading. Her PhD examined the consequential effects of high-stakes testing on teacher identity, pedagogy, and practice. Current research interests primarily concern improving university teaching and specific aspects and characteristics of learning for struggling learners.

Serafini, Frank. (2009). *Interactive Comprehension Strategies: Fostering Meaningful Talk About Text*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 112   ISBN: 978-0-545-08318-8

Frank Serafini's new book reminds teachers of the important role classroom talk plays in a student's comprehension. Talk and comprehension have a cyclical relationship. The more students talk, the more they understand and extend their comprehension; the more they understand, the more they have to offer in discussion. Classroom teachers should talk about talk in their classrooms and with their students as the basis of literacy instruction. Serafini cautions that classroom talk should not be dominated by literal facts and details. Conversations about text should stretch beyond the literal to

encourage a much deeper understanding and personal connection.

Serafini designed Interactive Comprehension Strategies to be a micro look at his macro work The Reading Workshop which helped teachers design a reading workshop approach to classroom literacy instruction. In his latest book he takes a micro view of language and how oral language is used to conduct comprehension lessons. Serafini specifically attends to the nuances that various forms of talk play in the comprehension process. He thoughtfully enters into discourse analysis of actual classroom events and allows teachers a look inside.

Serafini's latest work is grounded in his definition of comprehension and in his observations of the power of classroom talk. He defines comprehension as knowing, considering what is known, and examining how we come to know. Comprehending involves what counts as knowledge and how we demonstrate this knowledge. It is an active process of constructing meaning in transaction with texts and it takes place in a particular social context. This active process is heavily influenced by the type and amount of classroom talk taking place because it is through language that students create their identities and find their place in the world.

In terms of classroom talk, not much has changed in the past thirty years. Teacher talk continues to dominate classrooms. Schools have even now moved to using scripted programs that tell teachers exactly what to say and allow for limited instructional decision-making. Teacher talk is often authoritarian and usually takes the form of an Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) cycle. In an IRE interaction, the teacher initiates a discussion topic and expects students to respond. Teachers offer an evaluation of the student response. The teacher takes turns speaking whenever they wish, decides on what is important, selects who will talk, controls the amount of talk, and interjects their own responses and interpretations. Serafini suggests that this dominance of teacher talk has become institutionalized as teachers work on pacing of lessons that focus on a single main idea. Teachers have been apprenticed into an authoritarian model of talk. It's what new teachers experienced as students and have seen modeled by mentors. Teachers often lack experience with content they are teaching so they rely on teacher dominated talk as a form of control. Teacher dominated talk can also prove most comfortable for maintaining overall classroom management.

Authoritarian teacher talk poses many problems. It often reduces comprehension to simple literal recall and focuses on reaching consensus on one correct response thus limiting new possibilities. The teacher is central and active, students remain secondary and passive. Because of these concerns, Serafini calls for what he terms his "preferred vision" of classroom

interactions and calls teachers to critically examine their current practices based upon expectations for the future. Studies of effective teachers have revealed that these teachers actively engage students and that they frequently step back and reflect upon classroom discourse. Educators need to consider effective teaching and move to a way of talking that goes beyond simple recitation and asks students to engage and extend their thinking in a supportive environment. Instead of teacher talk, teachers should employ collaborative talk in their classrooms where students assume an active role, demonstrate active listening, share ideas openly, and clarify conclusions. In collaborative talk, teachers must set expectations for students of being honest, listening well, thinking deeply, actively engaging, sharing and welcoming tentative ideas, and being willing to reconsider one's own perspective and conclusions.

In order to encourage and facilitate collaborative talk in classrooms, Serafini offers a glimpse inside actual classroom discourse by including many examples of transcripts of discussions to illustrate various types of talk. The reader can conduct a personal discourse analysis of the event and then read on to explore Serafini's reactions to this same event. Along with these transcripts Serafini includes "Try This!" activities in each chapter designed for easy and practical classroom application for beginning to build a more collaborative approach to talk.

The last four chapters of Interactive Comprehension Strategies offer practical detailed classroom activities that will help teachers develop a more student-centered approach to discussion. Serafini begins with suggestions for gently nudging students past "I liked this book" to finding their voice and demonstrating emotional engagement. He discusses ways of monitoring and encouraging participation, ways to arrange the physical space of the classroom, and ways to keep pace and flow in student-led discussions. He tells us that teachers should listen to classroom talk and strive for chained utterances as students comment one by one without teacher comment. Students should be leading and driving the discussion with minimal facilitation from the teacher.

Serafini refers to teachable moments in classrooms as "critical junctures" in discussions. It is in this space of possibility that effective teachers can realize the potential of what students have to offer. Teachers face numerous decisions about ways to proceed every moment of a discussion. It is important that they look for comments and interpretations from students that move the discussion beyond the literal.

In Interactive Comprehension Strategies, Frank Serafini has provided classroom teachers with a theoretical basis to support the use of student-

centered classroom talk. He then provides teachers with practical pedagogical strategies to facilitate the shift from teacher dominated talk to collaborative talk. He reminds teachers that this is important because it is at the level of talk and interaction that they make the most significant changes in instruction. He encourages teachers to be reflective and to analyze the discourse taking place within the walls of their classrooms. Then he provides the tools to be able to make significant changes. He includes a bibliography of children's literature cited to aid teachers in using strategies as well as an impressive list of professional references that can serve as avenues for further reading and learning for teachers.

This book appears to be most appropriate for teachers of intermediate and middle school grades. The classroom strategies are geared toward this age group. This does not limit its use and effectiveness. It is a thoughtful look at classroom talk and the fundamental ideas apply to any classroom at any level. Teachers are mediators between the student and the text at all levels of learning. Teacher's responses to students emphasize importance and teach them how to participate in discussion as an active learner. Facilitating more student led collaborative discussion will benefit students of all ages.

Perhaps most important is Serafini's caution that collaborative talk can only richly occur in classrooms with a sense of community and respect among students. He reminds teachers that students need to feel safe and valued if they are to be active participants in their classrooms.

Interactive Comprehension Strategies provides the reader with a thoughtful look at classroom talk. It allows the reader to be reflective and ask who is dominating discourse in their classroom. It asks teachers to examine the central goal of discussion and challenges them to make practical changes. It is a very manageable read for today's busy teacher and it provides practical suggestions that can be easily implemented. Teachers interested in moving toward student centered classrooms will enjoy this book and will want it on their desk for regular reference.

Reference

Serafini, F. (2001). The reading workshop: Creating space for readers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Reviewed by Amy Spiker, doctoral student in Literacy Education at the University of Wyoming. She is also a member of the faculty at the University of Wyoming as an Academic Professional Lecturer, teaching methods courses and supervising student

teaching experiences. Prior to her university experiences she was a reading teacher and elementary classroom teacher for 18 years.

Winkle-Wagner, Rachelle. (2009). *The Unchosen Me: Race, Gender, and Identity Among Black Women in College*. New York: Johns Hopkins University Press.

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There is a paucity of research on African American women in college even though race, gender, and identity continue to be hot topics in America's global society. They came to the forefront during the 2009 presidential campaign when Barrack Obama, an African American man, ran successfully against Hilary Clinton, a white woman. Race surfaced again in the news during the Beer Submit when Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., police Sgt. James Crowley, and President Obama met to discuss an incident involving the arrest of Gates by Crowley for breaking into his own home and disorderly conduct. The Unchosen Me: Race, Gender, and Identity Among Black Women In College by Rachelle Winkle-Wagner is an ambitious doctoral dissertation turned book which attempts to contribute to the literature on imposed identity as theorized by George Herbert Mead and the concept of double consciousness as described by W.E.B. Du Bois.

The study of women reacting to the university environment is conducted at Midwestern University, a predominately White university set in a town called Brady. The setting's description is limited (p. 21). It is unknown if the town and its surrounding areas have a history of racist incidents. The nature of racial relations at the university is not mentioned. The number of minority and faculty administrators is not given. These are important details needed to understand the environment that the women in the study were currently living in as compared to their home environments. As indicated by their accounts, the women are reacting to the university environment that they were placed in and the treatment that they were receiving.

The Unchosen Me claims to examine how certain aspects of identity are imposed on African American women and the process that race and gender are created in higher education (p. 4). However, imposed identities are not being created or re-created as Winkle-Wagner asserted, instead the book describes pre-existing prejudices and stereotypes that African American women face while attending college (p. 7). Based on the quotes given by the women in the book, the research that was gathered is about reactions to the

unspoken "r" word, racism. The study was lacking in depth because it focused on the responses of the African American women who were victimized and not the aggressors (p. 10). The reasons why their white peers were holding on to their racist beliefs and stereotypes when presented with alternatives were not explored. The exposure to diversity had failed to promote intercultural maturity within the white students and faculty. It is time to turn the spotlight on the school, white students, faculty, and administrators to determine how racism continues to persist. To continue to look at African Americans' coping mechanisms and reactions as means of studying race without examining the institutions and perpetuators of racism, is like curing a symptom while the disease continues spread.

The researcher seems to discount the experiences reported by the women in the study by using words such as "feeling" or "sense" as preludes to their accounts (pp. 69, 74, 78). This is their reality: white students did not want to be around them; that they are racially outnumbered in their classes; and that their professors learned their names because they stood out (pp. 69, 74, 78). Observation, interview, and university statistics can be used as additional documentation when in doubt of the truthfulness of the participants' responses.

Moreover, the quotes from the participants could be used to write an entirely different study depending on the researcher's lens. For example, Winkle-Wagner stated that class was not a factor in her study (p. 20). Class is mentioned by participants through the use of the word, "ghetto" which Winkle-Wagner interprets to mean "too black" (p. 105-107). Ghetto is used in the African American community to denote a lower class distinction. In another example, the author interprets the slang word for sarcasm which is "smart," as being intelligent or acting white (p. 120). In this quote, "They think I'm smart and they don't like it. But a lot of the times I [was] playing. It's just that they really don't like it, so they take it seriously." Smart can mean having a sharp tongue or a sarcastic demeanor and is not used to denote intelligence hence the sentence which follows, "I [was] playing" (p. 120). Finally, the use of the word, "bold" is defined by Winkle-Wagner to mean assertive or not passive but in the African American community, it can also mean to speak without tact or restraint (p. 120-121). Again the interpretation of these quotes and phrases depend on the person, region, and generation as slang is not universal.

I would not recommend this book to anyone wishing to study gender as it is used interchangeably with sex throughout the book or identity among Black women in college as the book has unsubstantiated statements (pp. 20, 31, 34, 38). The "Learning to Be a Good Woman" chapter had less to do with university environment and is more related to family values, cultural norms,

and personal animosities (pp. 127-128). I would recommend this book for anyone interested in studying racism and how it manifests itself on a college campus. Rather than suggesting new resources to promote diversity at Midwestern University as Winkle-Wagner recommends, I believe that it would be a worthwhile investment of time and money for administrators to examine why the existing university programs and efforts to promote diversity are not working.

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Wormeli, Rick. (2009). *Metaphors & Analogies: Power Tools for Teaching Any Subject*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

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The subtitle of Rick Wormeli's latest book gives the reader a reason why anyone other than an English teacher would be interested in reading about metaphors and analogies. Wormeli's inclusion of a metaphor in his book's subtitle adds a clever and persuasive visual component to his argument that all teachers need to be aware of the links between figurative language and teaching if they are going to provide the best possible instruction for each student. This is a highly engaging and thoughtful book that challenges both new and experienced teachers to think about what they are saying when they teach. The author urges teachers to reflect on the words they use to present ideas, to consciously create metaphors and analogies that will assist students to better understand difficult concepts, and to teach and encourage their students to both create and to deconstruct metaphors as methods of constructing meaning. Metaphors & Analogies is ultimately a book about the power of language, and it reminds the reader that every word is worth thinking about when we teach, because every word carries a message. Wormeli offers teachers practical strategies for how to use metaphorical language successfully in teaching, and he helpfully provides multiple examples of metaphors and analogies that do (or do not) work for teachers who want to supplement (or reconsider) their current repertoire of teaching tools. This is a book that could only have been written by a teacher with years of classroom experience, and its value lies in the ability of the author to

push the reader to consider some of the complexities of teaching within the context of very real classroom scenarios. Wormeli succeeds brilliantly here in helping teachers to make "unfamiliar concepts clear" (p. 3).

For those who begin reading this book with only a vague idea of what analogies and metaphors are, Wormeli provides an extensive list of "Metaphorical Terms and Devices" in "Appendix A", with easy-to-understand definitions for allegory, conceit, irony, paradox, and other commonly used figures of speech. In "Appendix B" various teachers describe metaphors they have successfully used in their teaching--in several different school subjects--making it clear how metaphors can often be very personal and may work best for a teacher when the comparison grows out of their own imaginative thinking about a subject. These appendices are followed by "Additional Resources" about metaphors and a list of "References". Teachers will appreciate the inclusion of free Internet resources and recent articles in both of these lists. A comprehensive index as well as helpfully descriptive chapter headings will help guide the reader to sections of the text that answer particular questions.

For those new to thinking about the conscious use of metaphorical language in teaching, though, a read straight through this book will be well worth the effort. Wormeli has taken the time to carefully structure this book so that it moves from reasons why metaphors are important beyond English class, to how to identify high quality metaphors, to cautions about ensuring that we are connecting metaphors with our students' current knowledge, to how to develop new metaphors, how to take apart metaphors, and finally to a look at the metaphors that we use to describe our teaching. Along the way, Wormeli considers at what grade level teachers could begin introducing metaphors into instruction (he provides a convincing example of a Grade 1 class conversation that indicates an understanding of metaphor) and he devotes a chapter to strategies for integrating metaphor and analogy into the teaching of English language learners. In a chapter on the visual metaphor, Wormeli notes that "we've become a primarily visual and graphic-oriented society" and that "today's students are well served by teachers' journeys into the mind's eye" (p. 96). Wormeli argues that "we represent ideas and items in our mind primarily through visual means" (p. 79). Graphic organizers are presented as a type of metaphor and as ways to "manage, interpret, and repackage…knowledge" (p. 90).

The author's overall premise in this book is that "little in education has as much influence on students' academic and personal success as the metaphors and analogies teachers use to make unfamiliar concepts clear" (p. 2-3). When teachers make concepts experiential and/or visual through the use of metaphors, Wormeli argues that we help our students to create meaning.

One of his big cautions, though, is that students will not have the chance to create meaning if teachers always do the work of metaphor creation for them. So part of the teacher's role is to help students learn to create metaphorical connections for themselves. Wormeli offers teachers many strategies for encouraging students to make meaning on their own – from ensuring that students have the required background knowledge to make comparisons to using drama prompts, charades, visualization, categorization, and concrete spelling to assist with creating visual representations for ideas.

One of my favorite parts of this book is a section where Wormeli tells the story of a teacher who realized that her young student had not understood the concept she was teaching because the student misunderstood the metaphor she used to explain the concept. Instead of clarifying the concept, she almost confused the student, but in the end, because she knew her student well, she came up with a metaphor that she knew would make more sense to the young boy. It is this level of individual but familiar example that makes this book so immensely helpful. If you, like Wormeli, believe in the "purposeful pursuit of metaphors and analogies in our teaching" (p. 4) then this book will soon be a favorite source of teaching ideas. This book is recommended for all teachers who want to bring stories into their teaching, from elementary school to high school.

Reviewed by Brenda Reed, Learning & Research Services Librarian at the Education Library, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

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