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Brief reviews for February 2010

Arthur, W. Brian. (2009). *The Nature of Technology: What It Is and How It Evolves*. New York: Free Press.

Pages: 256 Price: \$27.00 ISBN: 978-1-4165-4405-0

Ostensibly, *The Nature of Technology* is not a book that one would predict would be of high interest for educators. The author, W. Brian Arthur, is an economist and complexity scientist, and a quote in the biographic sketch on the dust jacket claims his ideas account for hundreds of millions of dollars worth of transactions daily. On closer look, however, the book should be read by those who seek to understand education as a human invention and also those who seek to use technology to transform pedagogy in any classroom.

Arthur begins with the observation that the rich literature describing the history of technology and the applications of technology to human society and culture is missing a general theory describing the origins and evolution of that technology. To help readers understand how humans create technologies in attempts to solve human problems, Arthur identifies three themes that are well-developed in the first several chapters: (a) technologies exist on different levels; (b) at each level, a technology is made of other technologies, so technology is recursive; and (c) technologies exploit natural phenomena. Further, Arthur differentiates conventional technologies (devices that are built by humans) from non-conventional technologies (such monetary systems). Both types of technologies are described in terms of the common elements of design for a human purpose that exploits phenomena in recursive elements.

Although Arthur mostly uses examples from conventional engineering to illustrate the principles of technology, the reflective reader will recognize education as a non-conventional technology. Different interpretations of education as a non-conventional technology can be supported, but education is designed for the purpose of preparing individuals for life in society and it is achieved by designing environments in which learning can occur (the details and success of those environments is debated) and those environments are designed on many levels with recursive elements. Educators' reluctance to perceive their craft as a technology may be one reason this book will not end up on the reading lists of many educators.

In the second part of the book, Arthur explains how technologies originate and how technologies can become building blocks for what he describes as "structural deepening" that leads to "adaptive stretching" and "revolutions and redomining." These phrases may be another reason this book does not make the reading lists of educators, but Arthur gives readable and reasoned explanations with equally readable and interesting examples. Despite this, the two chapters dealing with economics almost made me put the book away before I reached the end, but the last chapter brings importance of the book for educators into full light.

In the final chapter, Arthur considers the question "Where do we stand with this creation of ours?" and he recognizes the stress that technology can cause for individuals, institutions, and society. In the final paragraph, Arthur argues that humans must be proponents of technology that supports interaction that gives meaning and purpose to life, as opposed to technology that only contributes to economic life. It is important that educators understand this conclusion and Arthur's view of technology supporting this conclusion. The impact of modern technology on education is inevitable, and many are questioning the relevance of educators who ignore technology. Arthur gives us a reasoned framework for understanding our practice as a technology and for redesigning our practice as a technology. He also gives us a much-needed humane view of technology.

Reviewed by Gary L. Ackerman, PhD in education and who has extensive K-12 experience

Balmuth, Miriam. (2009). *The Roots of Phonics: A Historical Introduction Revised Edition*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 237 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 139781598570366

This is the third edition of Miriam Balmuth's *The Roots of Phonics: A Historical Introduction*, which first appeared in 1982 and was released in a second edition in 1992. Balmuth, Professor Emeritus at Hunter College of the City University of New York, indicates in the introduction that the book functions as a source of information for those who teach phonics. The third edition provides a series of exercises for those instructors who wish to use the book as a text. Otherwise this work does not differ from previous editions.

It is important to put the three editions of this book into context within the research on reading. Two important scholarly publications appeared in 1967 which challenged the Look and Say approach that had been used since the 1930s (e.g. the Dick and Jane basal readers). Bond and Dykstra (1967) published the results of a large experimental cooperative study of first grade instruction. The study indicated that supplementing basal readers with other instruction methods improved reading success. The instruction methods researched covered a range of approaches and seemed to indicate that a variety of approaches were useful. That same year Jeanne Chall published *Learning How to Read: The Great Debate* (1967), a critical analysis of existing research. Chall, who wrote the foreword to *The Roots of Phonics*, was highly influential in bringing about a return to phonics teaching in US classrooms during the late 1960s to the early 1980s. The first edition appeared during a time when teachers and researchers were very interested in phonics.

The reading scene had changed when the second edition appeared in 1992. Although Chall's (1967) book had a more immediate influence, the effects of Bond and Dykstra's (1967) study led to the rise of other reading pedagogies, such as the whole language movement. This movement was based by psycholinguistic research which focused on reading as a language process rather than a decoding process (Goodman, 1969). One of the characteristics of the whole language movement was that the use of phonics training was discouraged. The role of phonics in reading instruction became a source of conflict. The tumultuous years during the late 1980s and the 1990s have been referred to as the Reading Wars (see Pearson, 2004 for a discussion of this topic.)

The third edition has arrived during the compliance and reaction to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), which mandates adequate yearly progress on standardized reading test results for Title I schools and restricts K-3 reading grants to schools using programs based on scientifically based research. This has led to an increased interest in phonics for both teachers and researchers.

Balmuth's book contains twenty seven chapters. It is helpful to think of this work as having four parts. The first part (chapters one through seven) documents the development of the history of writing systems in general and the history of the English writing system in particular. The second part (chapters eight through fifteen) covers the development of spoken English from Indo-European to modern English. The third part (chapters sixteen to twenty three) deals with the history of English spelling and its relation reading. The fourth part (chapters twenty four to twenty seven) discusses methods of instruction that do not focus on an alphabetic/phonetic approach to reading.

The whole language movement will undoubtedly object to Balmuth's characterization of whole language as a logographic approach to reading. However, since the focus of her work is limited to the representation of words, this characterization is not incorrect. Balmuth's work remains an excellent source of background information on the history of the English sound system and its representation in an alphabetic writing system.

This book should be required reading for all teachers and researchers of reading in English. Libraries who do not own previous editions will want to purchase this one.

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Brenneman, Richard J. (2009). *Fuller's Earth: A Day with Buckminster Fuller and the Kids*. New York: The New Press.

Pages: 256 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 1595584056

Progressive education has a history of extending the boundaries in framing how we conceptualize learning and the educative process. This continued widening of dialogue has brought more of the world into the pedagogic circle, embracing generative metaphors for suggesting new paths to understanding. This move towards systemic inclusion and interrelation is nowhere more evident than in the work of Buckminster Fuller, a thinker who sought, much like Gregory Bateson, what the latter termed "the pattern that connects" (2002). The scope of Fuller's thought and the degree to which it fundamentally upsets notions regularly perpetuated in schools are clearly portrayed in a slim book by Richard J. Brenneman titled *Fuller's Earth: A Day with Buckminster Fuller and the Kids*. This book is part of the *Classics in Progressive Education* series edited by educator Herbert Kohl, and significantly broadens the domain. The book is structured around three sessions that Fuller, or "Bucky" as he is affectionately called, had with three students, two twelve year-old boys and a ten-year old girl. The sessions, which took place over a period of two years, are followed by short reflective pieces by the students. Brenneman, the reporter who arranged the meeting, briefed the children in advance of their initial encounter with Bucky by describing Fuller and his world, showing them footage of interviews and books, and explaining Fuller's models.

Fuller took knowledge very seriously, as a life and death matter. In his forward, Brenneman recounts Fuller's decision to devote his life to scientific inquiry instead of committing suicide, a critical moment that shaped his notions of learning. In the spirit of Descartes' radical skepticism, Fuller decided that he would not simply accept the lessons he had been taught, but determine whether they were valid or not using his intellect alone.

As an engineer, Bucky's raw materials were geometry and physics. His vision, however, was one of ecological sustainability. In order to optimize structural stability, he reconceived basic mathematical assumptions on cubic relations instead of squared relations. Fuller grounds this paradigm shift in a carefully articulated geometry that considers the triangle to be the fundamental unit. He presents a hands-on demonstration of its inherent stability that provides the base for the children to move onto complex, interdisciplinary thought, moving from mathematics, to physics, cosmology and ecology. These are conceptually rich materials to work with, and open up the broad realms of Bucky's unique concerns and thought processes.

These are made clear in his idiosyncratic use of language. Bucky tells the children to forsake basic notions of "up" and "down" as these do not reflect 3-dimensional reality. Such false notions, he tells them, have been perpetuated by an ill-conceived educational system. According to Fuller, these are to be replaced with "in" and "out," a shift that sees convergence and divergence as the way nature operates, with humans at the center. "[A] lack of specialization, coupled with the mind gives man the ability to confront and solve problems, because he is free to move in any direction; he is not overspecialized, out on some biological limb," he says (p. 108). This orientation to Universe is one of many basic concepts Bucky wants to place into question.

That being said, the book doesn't represent any new perspectives on teaching, and its inclusion in a series on progressive education may be largely ascribed to the charismatic nature of the teacher, the simplified manner in which he ties large, abstract issues to readily ascertainable principles, and the radical stance he takes toward education itself—how it can be as much a vehicle for mis-education. Bucky exhorts the students to think for themselves, using his own experiences to illustrate, yet these only gain real significance if the reader is aware that this transformation came as a result of his decision not to commit suicide and his own intellectual achievements. Regrettably, it is the format of the text that obscures the dialogic flow of the encounter. The students were asked to bring Fuller questions in advance, questions that he set aside during his lesson. As a result, there is little inquiry closely tied with the specifics of his lesson—they cover many topics and, while Bucky is both encouraging and enthusiastic, they come off as rather disjointed. In another light, this could be considered a plus, inspiring thought on many levels, but as a reader I had hoped to see Fuller and the students explore together. This lack of concern may be evident in Fuller's comment to Brenneman at the end of the first session: "Don't worry if they don't seem to get it all now. They'll find it for themselves when the time is right" (p. 136).

Fuller does come to life as a congenial, sensitive teacher and, above all, a brilliant thinker, but he does not (in the sessions transcribed) ask many questions that solicit the students' own views in any substantive form. The descriptions that the students provide at the end of the book indicate how positively they regarded their encounter. Bucky did manage to pass on his dynamic sense of learning, as made clear in a comment made by one of the students in a reflection piece: "[Bucky] greatly encouraged questions and that was how he became what he was" (p. 131). Considering the profound nature of the material, this in itself could be considered quite an accomplishment. Yet the reader may be left wondering what to bring from the book to their own teaching, especially if their situation does not allow for such supportive, one might say privileged, surroundings. Fuller felt that "the red schoolhouse" was a thing of the past and put a lot of faith in TV and computers as choice educational media, forms of instruction that would take over the "educational metabolics" (2001, p.107). Mapping out the terrain in a similar way as he had when constructing his Dymaxion domes to rehouse humanity, Fuller placed considered much of education to be environmental design. He argued that, "given the right environment and thoughtful answers to his questions, *children have everything they need educationally right from birth*" (1966, p.70, italics in original). Forty years later, we can see how hopeful this fundamental, Rousseauian assumption remains, and marvel at the conceptual clarity, originality and enthusiasm with which Fuller was able to build upon it.

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Reviewed by David Ross, McGill University.

Causton-Theoharis, Julie. (2009). *The Paraprofessional's Handbook for Effective Support in Inclusive Classrooms*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 128 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-1-55766-899-8

Why should teachers and administrators care about this book? Let me count the ways! First, the author is a seasoned professional who (a) has extensive experiences in teaching with paraprofessionals in inclusive classrooms herself, (b) is a teacher educator who has coached and supported preservice and inservice teachers to work more effectively with paraprofessionals, and (c) seeks to discover new relationships regarding paraprofessionals as evidenced by research she has conducted and published articles in peer reviewed journals. Readers, in other words, can believe her! She walks the talk instead of just talking the talk.

Second, the book is written to speak directly to a wide range of readers. Paraprofessionals themselves will appreciate the readability quotient of the text; administrators and supervisors of paraprofessionals will appreciate the easily accessible content; and those who work with paraprofessionals (special educators, general educators, speech language therapists, counselors, etc.) will appreciate the scaffolding of ideas that the author provides. In a discussion of what *disability* means within a social constructivist perspective, she introduces the notion that people create disability categories, those categories are not static, and "medical professionals, teachers, and researchers along with the federal government have created these categories" (p. 14). In other words, the physical presence (or medical name) for the condition often dominates the interpretation and perspectives of what the individual can or cannot do. Moreover, not only does Causton-Theoharis include legal definitions of the federal categories of disability, she anchors the definitions in verbatim quotes from people *with* the disabilities. In fact, by including the voices of those with disabilities, she helps all readers gain a deep appreciation for their individuality.

Third, the book is organized for easy referencing. The first four chapters set the context by describing the role of paraprofessionals (including a useful history that shows how paraprofessionals moved from being caretakers to instructional assistants), the role of special education (including a succinct history of the legislation), the role of general educators in inclusive education (including a valuable list of indicators of inclusive classrooms). Chapter 5 represents one of the most compelling chapters in the book, titled, "Rethinking Students: Presuming Competence." Causton-Theoharis recommends several new ways of interacting with students with disabilities (e.g., begin with strengths, avoid labels, consider multiple ways of showing intelligence, focus on the person).

In this way, the reader is primed for the remaining four chapters which focus on strategies that paraprofessionals use when supporting students with disabilities. Social support is discussed in chapter 6 and includes five ways to provide support naturally (pp. 65-67); six ways to facilitate peer relationships (pp. 67-69); how to support during non-structured time such as recess and lunch (pp. 9-71), and how to support during instructional time (p. 72). The most frequently illustrated is to "stand back," especially so as to not interfere with the development of meaningful peer relationships. Chapter 7 covers academic including a wealth of ideas, and an important caveat: "As a paraprofessional, you will not decide which modifications, adaptations, assistive technology, or data collection procedures are used" (p. 92). Paraprofessionals depend on coaching and supervision from the members of the teaching team. This is also true with paraprofessionals implementing procedures to provide behavioral support as discussed in chapter 8. Most of all, paraprofessionals may appreciate chapter 9's ideas on self care.

Fourth, the book is a goldmine of nuggets of information that many readers will refer to again and again. For example, the section in which Causton-Theoharis demystifies Individual Education Plans (pp. 34-55) helps all of us remember not be intimidated by the legal jargon. Another section describes the roles and responsibilities of various members of the teaching team (pp. 40-43)—an often unspoken yet pervasively expected role for paraprofessionals (including eight steps to handling conflicts on p. 47).

There is one possible detractor that might offset the positive attributes of this book. The inclusion of cartoons relies on the expectation that readers will find them humorous. Although some readers may laugh, others may be offended, and still others may decide not to "go there." All of the cartoons depict caricatures of people, and the majority caricature students with various disabilities in various situations (such as gaining access to a school building), with captions. Consider the reactions of gelotophobes, as reported in the Science News article by Gaidos (2009):

Most people fear being laughed at to some degree and do their best to avoid embarrassment. One thing that sets gelotophobes apart is their inability to distinguish ridicule from playful teasing. For them, all laughter is aggressive, and a harmless joke may come across as a mean-spirited assault. (Para 5)

However, the believability of the book is enhanced because Causton-Theoharis promotes strategies and perspectives that have a strong basis in research. For example, subsequent to the publication of this book, Liston, Nevin, and Malian (2009) published the results of a national survey of paraprofessionals. They featured the voices of paraprofessionals themselves, echoing Causton-Theoharis' voices, notably Sue (p. 2), Ted (p. 40), Chantel (p. 52), and Meghan (p. 56). It is this personal touch that allows the reader to step into the shoes of the paraprofessionals, knowing that what is contained in Causton-Theoharis' book is based on evidenced based practices.

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Reviewed by Ann Nevin, Professor Emerita, Arizona State University, and Adjunct Professor, College of Educational Studies, Chapman University in Orange CA.

Columba, Lynn, Kim, Cathy Y., & Moe, Alden J. (2009). *The Power of Picture Books in Teaching Math, Science, and Social Studies*. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway.

Pages: 278 Price: \$28.00 ISBN: 978-1-890871-92-5

Lynn Columba, Cathy Y. Kim, and Alden J. Moe have produced their second edition of *The Power of Picture Books in Teaching Math, Science, and Social Studies*, with the purpose of discussing multiple aspects of using literature to teach content area subjects in grades Pre-K through 8th. Inspired by the ideas of major theorists (e.g., Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner), the three authors situate their book around the cognitive dimensions of schema theory, the developmental stages of children's learning, and the views of constructivists (i.e., learning involves the learner in a process of constructing meaning). The authors also situate their book around Rosenblatt's transactional theory (i.e., meaning is transacted between the reader and the text in a give context). By situating the content of this book around these theories, the authors were able to produce more than 50 lessons, all of which promote students to be "active thinkers".

In order to ensure that their lessons promote active thinking, Columba, Kim, and apply the following six guidelines created by Van de Walle, Karp, and Bay-Williams (2009) for promoting active thinking: (a) create an environment that promotes problem-solving, (b) incorporate hands-on materials, (c) encourage student interaction, (d) use cooperative learning groups, (e) require justification of responses, and (f) insist on students to listen actively. Evidence of these guidelines can be found throughout all the lessons presented in this book.

Additionally, the lessons in this book were built to reflect academic standards that have been created by a variety of national organizations such as: the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the International Reading Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

The organization of this book is very user friendly. The following components are included in each lesson: (a) a brief summary of the picture book to be used; (b) the mathematics, science, and/or social studies standards addressed; (c) the objective of the lesson; (d) the applicable language arts experiences; (e) the literacy and arts connections; (f) the key concepts addressed; (g) the materials needed; (h) the teaching procedures; and (i) possible assessment activities. At the end of each lesson, the authors provide a list of additional books that can be used with the lesson, and a list of websites that can be used to support student learning.

In all, I found the lessons in this book to be age appropriate. In addition, the lessons promote active thinking and connect math, science, and social studies to exceptional picture books. I was pleased to find that authors selected either award winning picture books or picture books that have remained popular with young readers over time. I believe that this book is a handy teaching tool for teachers whom teach any grade between Pre-K and 8th.

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Dr. Stephanie Grote-Garcia is a Visiting Assistant Professor for the College of Education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Kapalka, George. (2009). *8 Steps to Classroom Management Success: A Guide for Teachers of Challenging Students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Pages: 170 Price: \$31.95 ISBN: 978-1-4129-6944-4

Most practitioners who have taught a group of particularly challenging students will have felt the frustration of seeing methods of behaviour management that help them control the majority of their classes fail. When recognising that there are problems, the reflective teacher will try different approaches, seek counsel from colleagues and engage with the latest literature on behaviour management. The latter will give an up-to-date, research informed approach but it is all too easy to become bogged down by a deluge of material that at times offers contradictory responses to problems that have at one time or another been experienced by all educators. Where Kapalka's *8 Steps to Classroom Management Success* differs from most other books on this topic is in offering a detailed, stepped programme to developing effective behaviour management, as opposed to an overview of different methodologies with only a limited focus on practical application. This approach does pose some problems--there is comparatively scant reference to the literature that informs Kapalka's response and the reader is often not introduced to the debates that surround different aspects of classroom management. However, this is a deliberate omission. The strategies that Kapalka outlines are based on his extensive work in this field. The bibliography contains references for those wishing to engage in more detail with the theory that underpins each of the steps discussed.

In avoiding lengthy literature reviews, the book is of particular value to those educators who wish to improve their classroom management practice, but have little interest in negotiating the theory that underpins this.

The most notable point about *8 Steps to Classroom Management Success* is that the reader is advised not to use it like a normal book. Instead after two brief chapters discussing the reasons why students misbehave and managing your emotional reaction when engaging with a difficult group, Kapalka asks the reader to see each chapter as a step in a programme. The reader is encouraged not to go through the book cover-to-cover, but instead to progress through each step, spending one or two weeks of teaching time consolidating the approach outlined before moving on. This ensures that the reader is never overwhelmed with too much information and only needs to work on very particular aspects at any one time. Furthermore, to ensure that the reader stays focussed for each step, Kapalka provides a handy checklist that summarises the main points and can be photocopied as a reminder for how particular issues should be handled.

The different steps of Kapalka's programme place teacher responses to issues in the classroom as central to managing behaviour and the programme has as a clear aim to teach students to make the right behavioural choices. Step 1 involves developing the ability to give effective single-action commands, centring on ensuring you have the student's attention before delivering a command, following which a single, clear command is given in a firm but polite manner, then the teacher looks at the student until the task is complete. Step 2 offers guidelines about giving effective warnings in the event step 1 was not successful (and for this reason it is essential step 1 is mastered before moving on). Having repeated step 1 again the teacher then issues a clear warning, in the event that non-compliance continues a consequence is then immediately administered. Step 3 concerns handling temper tantrums, giving particular advice on how time-out spots should be created and used. Alongside this more punitive approach, step 4 offers advice on developing a behavioural contract wherein the teacher and student agree positive and negative consequences for particular behaviour. This enables the student to "save" for rewards, most of which Kapalka is keen to note should be free. Steps 5 and 6 give methods for dealing with those students for whom transitions between activities are a problem and who frequently interrupt in class, both of which centre on giving clear consequences (positive and negative) for the student's behaviour. The final two steps concern behaviour in out-of-class settings, either within the school (such as during break time) or the completion of homework. As before, the strategies involve developing clear consequences for positive behaviour and negative consequences for inappropriate behaviour.

As is always the case, this book will not suit everyone. If you are searching for the final word on classroom management, or a meticulously detailed text that explores different approaches and the theory informing current understandings then this book is clearly not suitable. However, it is of particular value for those who want practical help with managing difficult groups of students. In proceeding in accessible steps, supported by brief checklists, the reader is never overwhelmed, while each step is discussed in a comprehensive manner ensuring that a variety of eventualities are covered along with ways in which a particular step can be adjusted to suit adolescents or younger learners. Kapalka's discussion of each step is succinct and clear and the examples he provides help illustrate how they should be used in the classroom setting. As a result, *8 Steps to Classroom Management* is a valuable tool that provides busy practitioners with an informed programme to improve their classroom management.

Reviewed by Dr Geoff Baker, Senior Academic Advisor, Centre for Integrative Learning, University of Nottingham, UK

Kerr, Barbara A. (Ed). (2009). *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Pages: 1112 Price: \$375.00 ISBN: 978-1412949712

The Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent accomplishes an ambitious goal on a grand scale, reaching out beyond the world of gifted education. The encyclopedia, a comprehensive reference tome, includes two volumes of research findings on the nature of intelligence, innovation, giftedness, talent, and creativity, and their effects on education. Deep insights and fundamental information from the fields of education, psychology, sociology, and the arts fill this dense encyclopedia. Nearly three hundred authors, all experts in their fields, wrote more than four hundred entries, an extensive and inclusive listing of topics.

The two volumes are organized in the fashion of a typical encyclopedia with an alphabetical listing of entries and a combined 1,112 pages. Volume 1 includes entries A-K, and Volume 2 holds L-W. A reader's guide organizes the entries by key themes:

- Assessment and Identification
- Creativity Studies
- Cultural Issues
- Education
- Eminent People
- Exceptionalities
- Intelligence
- Neuroscience and Genetics
- Populations
- Programs and Interventions
- Psychological Issues
- Talent Domains

- Theories and Models

The Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent is traditional in its structure, while brilliant in its simplicity. The entries cover the major facets of the field of gifted education. The reader immediately realizes the innovativeness of the editor and her editorial team in the coordination, synthesis, and presentation of common themes from a global perspective. In selecting relevant topics and headwords, the editors reviewed journals, conference schedules, and dissertations for word frequency. Categories include: achievement, motivation, artistic ability, creative personality, emotional intelligence, gender differences, genius, intelligence testing, learning styles, minority underrepresentation, multiple intelligences, musical ability, prodigies, scientists, self actualization, thinking skills, and more. The primary authors were also invited to submit headword entries. The credibility of this resource rests upon an extensive editing process conducted by eminent names in the field of gifted education. Ultimately, a volume such as this stands or falls by the quality of its individual articles. These are outstanding, as the contributors represent recognized experts in the field; the articles are unbiased, learned, and above all, readable.

The content presents a lively discussion of current issues with Dr. Kerr's adventurous exploration of both familiar and uncommon topics, providing a balanced and critical discussion of the controversies that have animated research and theory making. Topics one expects to see—identification, talent development and programming options—join areas that challenge prevailing mindsets such as, criminal gifted, the meaning of life, anti-intellectualism, and concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. Popular categories of policymaking and teacher preparation are supplemented by recently emerging areas such as world views, eminent women, and creativity and mental illness. Together, they encompass and expand the field. These two volumes present a unique addition to the library of resources in gifted education. The content challenges the reader to move beyond universal understandings to explore fresh perceptions and make connections across domains. The broad range of content considered for various audiences compensates for the relative brevity of a few of the scores of entries.

The encyclopedia serves varied audiences and many purposes. For practitioners, it can assist in making informed decisions about identification procedures, programming options, and curriculum models that best meet their students' needs. The work clarifies which grouping and instructional strategies promote the best outcomes in achievement and social/emotional development of gifted children. It also evaluates policies that have helped and hindered gifted children's progress and makes a persuasive case for appropriately challenging and differentiating education. For academia, the encyclopedia examines how giftedness, creativity, and talent were defined in the past and how current meanings have emerged. Professors and instructors of education can use this resource to study the evolution of system, theories, and methodology. *The Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent* represents a pedagogical delivery of the progression of ideas, ideals and practices in the field of gifted education.

We highly recommend *The Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent* as an encyclopedic resource for a traditional researcher and the general practitioner. It is beneficial for government leaders, teachers, psychologists, instructors, school administrators, counselors, students, families, and other stakeholders because it covers such a broad spectrum of creativity, giftedness and talent. This encyclopedia is a must-have resource for all academic and public libraries. The numerous concepts and views shared in the book can serve as a springboard for those pursuing continued study in gifted education. Barbara Kerr's *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent* deserves a place on every educational institution's bookshelf.

Reviewed by Kimberly A. Lansdowne, PhD, Director of Gifted Services, Scottsdale (AZ) Unified School District, and Dr. Dina Brulles, the Director of Gifted Education in Paradise Valley (AZ) School District, former President of Arizona Association of Gifted and Talented .

Konopasek, Dean E. (Ed.). (2010). *Medication Fact Sheets: A Behavioral Medication Reference for Educators* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Pages: 129 Price: \$39.95 ISBN: 978-0878226184

Medication Fact Sheets is designed to provide teachers, counselors, and other educational service providers a brief overview of medications used to treat psychiatric and behavioral conditions. The author notes that the medical and nonmedical professions are "confronted daily with the ongoing challenge of remaining knowledgeable regarding the wide variety of psychotropic drugs now available" (p. 1). The rationale behind the creation of this text is that the widespread use of psychopharmacology has 3 major implications for medical professionals as well as nonmedical human service professionals and educators. First, all of these professionals need to have some basic understanding of the various classes of psychotropic medications, their mechanism of action, and their primary effects, as well as common side effects. Second, since teachers, counselors, and human service professionals have ongoing, day-to-day contact with students and clients, they have the ability to observe for any changes in behavior that may be due to intended drug effects or side effects. Third, because the settings for classrooms and clients are often well-controlled, it seems to follow that any changes in behavior that occur over time may be attributed fairly reliably to the effects of the medication(s).

The role that educators have to play in the guidance and development of students is multi-faceted and the best situation for any student is to have their teacher(s) and parent(s) engaged in an ongoing and pro-active partnership. An analysis of the three primary reasons for creating this book, and even a review of the literature related to teachers and the use of psychotropic medications among students, introduces a new dynamic to this partnership: the role, and potential relationship, between the teacher and the student's physician or the medical regimen they have prescribed.

The assertion is made that because teachers have prolonged, almost daily contact with students and can easily observe student's behavior or changes in behavior, they need to have some basic understanding of the pharmacological mechanisms and side effects of some of the commonly used psychotropic medications. This way, they would be able to recognize potential side effects or behaviors that indicate a need for dosage adjustment and report this back to either the parents, or, as some of the research states, to even forward this information on to the prescribing physician (Gadow, 1986; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008). In instances where parents actively seek input from teachers, and even invite the teacher to concurrently provide input to the physician, this argument is logical and self-evident.

But what about instances where parents choose not to disclose, either as an active decision or by passive omission of communication? How would those teachers even know if a student were on medication? If they were to ask the student or parents directly, would this not constitute a major violation of the right to privacy? And would it be ethical to ask either the student or parents given the inherent power differential between students and teachers? How does a teacher ask and not make the student feel some level of coercion to disclose the information? What if the student volunteers the information but informs the teacher that they violated instructions from their parents in doing so, as their parents did not want this information to be shared with anyone else? How would the teacher be able to approach the parents without betraying the student? Even if the teacher observes behavior they suspect is associated with the medication being used, do they have the right to confront the parents about it? If they were to contact the provider, the physician would not be allowed, under federal law, to discuss any information or components of the inquiry with them unless the parents legally authorized such discussions. If an inquiry to the parents about medication use is made, but the question is neither confirmed nor denied, then how would information about psychotropic medications and their indications and risks be of any help to the teacher?

While teachers, counselors, and human service professionals have almost daily contact with students for defined time periods, and they might be able to observe for changes in behavior that result from intended drug effects or side effects, is it reasonable to ask them to perform this observational assessment as an ongoing background activity to their primary efforts? And if it is reasonable, then does this expand their scope of responsibility to include awareness and identification of medical events related to psychotropic medication usage? Do we really want to start to expect educational professionals to now be medication monitors for students?

Changes in behavior may be as straightforward as an adverse or even expected drug effect but most commonly, they are manifestations of a complicated and labyrinthine series of events that may include the initiation of or changes to a medical regimen. In instances where parents choose to disclose prescription drug usage to teachers, it would be reasonable for parents to inform the teachers what sorts of symptoms may appear in the event of over or under dosing, or known side effects of that regimen. For parents who do not disclose, teachers should still report changes in behavior they observe that are impacting the student or those around them; this may simply need to be a descriptive list of behaviors the parents should be aware of. Clearly, if a student or client has a significant adverse reaction, emergency services should be called or the parents should be notified immediately.

In instances where there is open discussion between parents and teachers about the medical conditions and treatments a student is receiving, this text would serve as a rapid reference resource. However, as even the author notes, there is a wide variety of psychotropic drugs now available and new drugs are constantly be introduced (p. 1). Therefore, the most up to date reference sources may be on the Internet.

In cases where there is no disclosure and teachers are left wondering if a student is on medication, and if so, what kind, the book may satisfy some curiosity to do some research and investigation. The teacher may even be able to surmise, from the information in the text, what medication(s) the student is on, and perhaps even make an educated guess as to the diagnosis the patient has. Alternatively, the student may not be on any medication and the teacher's investigation may result in a misinterpretation of what illness(es) the patient is being treated for. This lack of complete information and possible misinterpretation may color attitudes, assessments, and judgments on the part of the teacher or other professionals.

It is clearly stated throughout the text that it is not intended to be used for prescribing medications or in lieu of medical advice. The fact that the intended audience is not a health professional audience does not obviate the text's underlying assertion that it is reasonable to expect some level of medical or pharmacological skill and expertise from teachers and educators. This is a thesis that is probably not commonly shared and only indirectly gets to the real issue at hand: under what circumstances, if any, are parents obligated to share medical information with teachers and how should this information be used by teachers to help create an optimal partnership with both the parents and the student?

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Reviewed by Michele G. Curtis, MD, MPH, Associate Professor at the University of Texas—Houston Medical School.

Oczkus, Lori. (2009). *Interactive Think-Aloud Lessons*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 144 Price: \$25.95 ISBN: 978-0-545-10279-7

In this era of high-stakes testing, are you looking for new ways to make learning fun and deepen student comprehension? In her book, *Interactive Think-Aloud Lessons*, Oczkus sums up the reason for writing it, "I'd noticed over the past five years a dramatic decrease in joyful learning and teaching. My mission is not only to show teachers how to improve and deepen comprehension for all students, but also to help teachers rediscover the joy and fun of teaching" (p. 7). You already teach comprehension strategies so why not try these interactive think-alouds that the author has classroom-tested. Oczkus has experience with Title 1 schools, English language learners, and students who are from high-poverty areas.

In part one, the author lays the foundation of the text by reminding the reader of the comprehension strategies and provides research on the many problems that students face with reading comprehension. Then, Oczkus displays an interactive comprehension strategy lesson framework, question/answers on think alouds, and practical tips for differentiating instruction. Other chapter topics in part one cover ways to incorporate great books, props, drama and music in support of the strategies. Part two has easy and specific interactive think aloud lessons for the super six strategies. Extras include a DVD which is organized a little differently than the book. The four sections of the DVD are play program, chapters, forms (such as a DVD viewing guide which can be used for an individual or whole school along with graphic organizers and classroom posters) and a question/answer section.

Two of my favorite interactive think alouds were Oczkus' creative lessons on the evaluating comprehension strategy. I particularly enjoyed "judge it, score it, award it" as students "gave awards to characters, illustrators, and the authors" (p. 136). The author provides sample ribbons that students can use when they evaluate a text. My other favorite lesson was "that's good, that's bad" as students are given thumbs up and thumbs down cards to use as they work with a partner to evaluate a text.

When teaching reading, I found it difficult to match trade books with the specific comprehension strategies; therefore, I relied too much on the textbook. Oczkus makes it easy as she devotes several pages to sharing her suggestions on trade books to use when teaching a comprehension lesson. You are sure to have some of these author's books in your classroom: Alikei, Rylant, Simon, Bunting, Van Allsburg, Pilkey and Polacco.

If you need a shot in the arm with some new teaching strategies, this might just be the book for you.

Reviewed by Darryn Diuguid, assistant professor, McKendree University. He teaches children's literature and methods of teaching language arts. Previously, he taught 2nd grade in a high poverty school district.

Overmeyer, Mark. (2009). *What Student Writing Teaches Us; Formative Assessment in the Writing Workshop*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Pages: 120 Price: \$17.50 ISBN: 978-157110-713-8

In the first years of being a teacher, educators learn they are joining forces with Sisyphus. A few years later, they may happen upon the artwork of Richard Stine, like I did, and realize they are actually mad men and women trying to empty the ocean with a spoon. Teaching writing is, indeed, grueling, crazy work--the boulders we push uphill are like giant, sauced-covered meatballs and it can be a messy process. Teaching writing can also be like emptying the sea with a fork. This is exactly why Mark Overmeyer's text, *What Student Writing Teaches Us: Formative Assessment In The Writing Workshop* is a GREAT addition to K-12 writing programs. His analysis of teaching writing, his shrewd attention to defining formative assessment, his description of classroom writing events, his models of student written work, and his true confessions of being a writing instructor (and Martha Graham wanna-be-dancer) makes for an important, much needed text for all of us encouraging a classroom of writers.

In the foreword of *What Student Writing Teaches Us*, Jeff Anderson defines formative assessment as "assessment for learning versus assessment of learning" (p. ix). Overmeyer's book teaches us how to embrace the writing process rather than to obsess over final written products. At a 120 pages, the text is divided into six, approachable chapters:

1. Defining Assessment in the Writing Workshop
2. Formative Assessment in Action: Setting the Stage for Success
3. Feedback as Formative Assessment
4. Self-Assessment
5. Grades
- 6) Keeping Records, Keeping Track

Overmeyer's work also provides an appendix of ready-to-use templates: writing checklists, reflection sheets, record-keeping spreadsheets and charts to use with students. His book is useful for teacher book clubs, for university instruction, for district mapping and for curriculum planning.

The availability of student work in the text is what I found most valuable in *What Student Writing Teaches Us*. Through samples of student writing, Overmeyer encourages teachers to learn from the many stages of the writing process as a way to inform the instruction students should receive next. His text is an excellent companion to Blythe, Allen and Powell's (2007) *Looking at Student Work* because it integrates assessment methodology for what their creations teach us. From

looking at student writing, a teacher is able to learn a great deal about the direction their instruction should take to improve writing skills. Although Overmeyer's text focuses on elementary and middle school classrooms, I feel it is relevant for high school educators, as well—especially those who are familiar with Newkirk & Kent's (2007) *Teaching the Neglected "R": Rethinking Writing Instruction in Secondary Schools* and Gallagher's (2006) *Teaching Adolescent Writers*.

Overmeyer writes, "We should use assessment data to learn how to grow" (p. 4) instead of as a means to judge a final product. Formative assessment helps an educator monitor student progress *within* the writing process rather than *at* the final product. *What Student Writing Teaches Us* highlights that assessment needs to be more than grading a one-draft script; it should be deliberate practice used to understand the writing progress of each and every student:

Assessment, when used correctly in a formative way, can empower students and teachers not only to improve but, better yet, to *believe* in themselves as writers and teachers of writing. And once students believe they *are* writers and you believe you *are* a teacher of writing, any barrier, no matter how imposing, begins to crumble. (p. 7)

Formative assessment teaches the writer *and not* the writing. For curriculum specialists and building administrators, Overmeyer models how local, state and national standards can be considered during the planning of a new year and he demonstrates how formative assessment aligns itself well with NCTE and IRA Standards for writing instruction.

Overmeyer presents three ways departments might think about addressing their writing curriculum: (a) Time, (b) Topic Choice and (c) Talk. Any teacher knows that hours on the clock are a mob of ravenous monsters who constantly chase at lesson plans, assessments, professional development, and instruction—there simply isn't enough time, ever, when running from such ghouls. Overmeyer, though, asks his readers to address their schedules and to be smart about their practice. He emphasizes that choice matters for student writing, but he also recognizes too much choice can be overwhelming. He suggests conversations are important to a writing classroom and through talk—dialogue—students are given opportunities to develop thinking, to hear alternative views, and to gain experience in how one should communicate. A primary goal for writing instructors, he emphasizes, should be to foster an ability in students to be able to communicate about themselves as writers.

Pushing student voices to the forefront of instruction is a primary theme of Overmeyer's writing and he encourages the practice of listening to students about the instruction they need most. Addressing the rubric-generation of teaching, he interrogates how a young man used numerical scoring to remain a developing writer. The young man liked being a "2" on a four point scale, which Mark Overmeyer used to demonstrate how rubrics also have the potential of limiting the ways a student thinks about themselves as a writer. He notes if teachers don't challenge the rubrics they create, they may teach students to disown the processes of being a writer: "This student seemed to be saying that as long as he didn't get a 1, he was fine with how his writing was progressing..." (p. 32). Educators should think about rubrics as a means of formative assessment rather than summative: "Rubrics should be used flexibly as tools for instruction – not just as hammers for placing students in one permanent place." (p. 37)

I appreciated the way Overmeyer writes about formative assessment in relationship to real classrooms, real teachers and real students. His involvement in the field of writing instruction is obvious and through several narratives of classroom experiences, his readers are allowed descriptive snapshots of what formative assessment looks like in a classroom. He does a remarkable job of helping his audience gain a sense of what a formative-savvy assessor does. This demonstration is achieved through deliberate narration and samples of student work to provide context for the assessment issues he addresses. He shares writing conferences with students, discusses ways teachers have been successful, and educates his readers on how to make their students reflective, self-evaluators of their own writing.

Chapter 4, in fact, is devoted entirely to creating a classroom of self-assessing, writing students. Once students are brought to a place of such independence with their writing, a classroom teacher is allowed to experience a new role in the room. When students see themselves as writers who work with one another in a writing community, an educator can use instructional time more efficiently. Designing goals for writing instruction depends on a teacher's knowledge of their students as writers. When students are able to gage their own writing practice, teachers are better informed about the instruction that is needed. No two students learn exactly the same way nor do any two writers approach a task through a set of absolute rules mandated by any one authority. Instead, the best writing teachers make themselves and their students self-aware of the multiple processes writers use to become better composers, so individuals in every class can navigate writing processes for what works best for them.

How does a reflective, writing classroom occur? With intentional design of writing instruction planned by teachers who become aware of their students as engaged and reflective writers. *What Student Writing Teaches Us* offers this precise design. Even though writing is an art and consequently subjective, it can be taught. Formative assessments help student writers become artists with what they write. Assessing student writing should not be a task of "error hunting" (p. 84). Instead, formative assessment should be a method of creating intelligent, young writers. Overmeyer writes, "If the talk is consistently about writing and the qualities of good writing, then our message to students is about quality, not grades" (p. 91). A practice of formative assessment, then, is a classroom where teachers look at student work as demonstrative of what students can do. It encourages the respect of student writers as individuals and uses the writing process as a way for teachers to best know the instruction needed next. Mark Overmeyer models formative assessment in a superb way and teachers will find his advice very useful.

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Gallagher, K. (2006). *Teaching adolescent writers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Newkirk, T. & Kent, R. (eds.) (2007). *Teaching the neglected "R": Rethinking writing instruction in secondary classrooms*. New Hampshire: Heinemann Press.

Reviewed by Bryan Ripley Crandall, a Ph.D. student in English Education at Syracuse University. Crandall taught high school English at the J. Graham Brown School in Louisville, Kentucky, where he was an active member of the Louisville Writing Project, a member of the State Writing Advisory Council and a recipient of a Kentucky Bread Loaf School of English fellowship.

Wolff, Daniel. (2009). *How Lincoln Learned to Read: Twelve Great Americans and the Educations That Made Them*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Pages: 276 Price: \$26.00 ISBN: 978-1-59691-290-8

This book delivers what it promises, an engaging story about twelve great Americans and their educations. The story of these twelve Americans begins with Benjamin Franklin in colonial times, and skips forward by approximately 20 years for each subsequent story. However, those looking for a paean to the formal American system of education will be disappointed. What Wolff explores is education writ large – an education that ranges from Benjamin Franklin's autodidacticism--"a boy finding his own way, skipping meals and sneaking time to pore over books" (p. 17) to Henry Ford's worship of practical education--"An educated man is not one whose memory is trained to carry a few dates in history...he is one who can accomplish things" (p. 151)-- to W.E.B. DuBois's struggle to succeed by following the formal path--"He became the model high school student, taking its rules seriously and playing to win" (p. 175-6)--and eventually to Elvis Presley's education in music--"I just landed upon it accidentally...More or less. I'm a pretty close follower of religious quartets, and they do a lot of rockin' spirituals. And so that's where I got the idea from, is religious quartets" (p. 273).

The author weaves the stories together artfully. Throughout the book, themes recur. One of the recurring themes hearkens to America's idealistic, bucolic past. "The farm, the farm is the right school" is a phrase taken from a Ralph Waldo Emerson essay and is introduced to compare or contrast with the rural or urban experience of each of the characters' educations. Another recurring theme is the Boston Latin School as the ideal of 18th and 19th century secondary education and an almost essential prerequisite to entry at Harvard. The heroes in this book either aspired to this ideal or ran away from it. Most ran away.

The author also ties together the stories of all the protagonists in an interesting and engaging way. Benjamin Franklin's and "Nabby's" experiences intersect. Lincoln reads Franklin's *Autobiography*. Henry Ford attends a one room schoolhouse comparable to that of Nabby Smith or Abraham Lincoln (p. 143). Helen Keller wants to follow Willie Du Bois' example and "use the educational system to prove she can succeed in the 'normal' world" (p. 201). Franklin and Lincoln offer lessons for Elvis' experience (p. 265). Elvis's ancestors fought along with Andy Jackson.

The author is also a crafty storyteller. Some of the characters' true identities are hidden until the story's denouement (Nabby, Belle, Thocmetry). Others, such as Andrew Jackson or Henry Ford are revealed in the initial paragraphs of their stories. Even so, we learn surprising things about them.

The book offers valuable lessons, but are we to consider the book as history, or as text offering lessons for educational theory and practice?

As history, it offers several intriguing lessons. The first lesson is that one model of education is not sufficient for nurturing the diverse talents chronicled in this book. The second lesson is that great people seem to possess an innate sense of what they need, educationally, and gravitate toward that. The third lesson is a confirmation of constructivism as an educational model, at least for these special people. All of the people chronicled in this book were constructivist learners, deriving lessons from experience and varying levels of "book learning."

As an education text, it fails to illuminate quite so brightly. Yes, history's great men and women seemed to have an innate sense for where they were going, and were able to direct their own educational energies to take advantage of it. But what about the rest of us who are not so greatly endowed? In this sense, the book seems to advance a kind of *anthropic principle* of education – that since these great Americans were able to succeed, the educations they gained are therefore useful for the rest of us to model our education by.

The constructivist lessons are similarly attuned to the experiences of these twelve great Americans, who doubtlessly had the intellectual wherewithal to construct meaning from their life experiences, both in classrooms and in the world. But, caught up in the story, one forgets that most school dropouts do not become Benjamin Franklins or Henry Fords. Many students possess neither an innate sense of where their education is leading, nor the right path to get them there.

Some comments of the main and supporting characters are worth noting for what they bring to the discussion of American education. For example, Annie Sullivan (Helen Keller's teacher) opines that "something is 'radically wrong' with American schooling: the system 'spoils' the enthusiasm 'dormant in every human being'" (p. 202). Henry Ford felt that "Modern industry...requires a degree of ability and skill which neither early quitting of school nor long continuance at school provides" (p. 151). Young Willie DuBois offers the bootstrap argument: "The poor, on the whole, were themselves to be blamed" (p. 171) for not taking full advantage of public educational opportunities--a perspective he changes radically later in life, when he writes "the average Negro undergraduate has swallowed hook, line, and sinker the dead bait of the white undergraduate who,

born in an industrial machine, does not have to think, and does not think” (p. 181) and that “what America lacked was ‘that sort of public education which will create the intelligent basis of a real democracy’” (p. 182)

The greatest contribution of the book is in the questions it causes the reader to ask about American education: its structure, educational freedom and questioning, the pragmatic vs. theoretical, how much of the educational system should be a product of the times, and how much should be enduring and unchanging.

How Lincoln Learned to Read is highly recommended. It would be good to see a second volume of this book, as the reader’s curiosity is merely whetted by the stories of the twelve.

Reviewed by Clark Capshaw, PhD, a 2007 graduate of the Higher Education Leadership and Policy program at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Currently, Dr. Capshaw works as an evaluator of aerial intelligence systems for the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command in Alexandria, VA, and as an online instructor for the University of Phoenix.



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