

Chandler, Kelly and the Mapleton Teacher-Research Group. (1999) *Spelling Inquiry: How One Elementary School Caught the Mnemonic Plague*. York, Maine: [Stenhouse Publications](#).

Readers who open *Spelling Inquiry* looking for specific recommendations of how to effectively teach spelling will be disappointed—while interested in updating teaching techniques for spelling, the authors do not focus on instructional methods. Instead, they present a very different, and perhaps, ultimately, more useful, approach to instruction. In *Spelling Inquiry*, they describe whole (and holistic) strategies for creating an environment that is "student-centered and inquiry based," and thus more conducive to effective learning and teaching of spelling.

Teachers at the Mapleton Elementary School, along with Kelly Chandler, then a doctoral student, organized a research group to both discuss issues that arose in their classrooms and find solutions to the questions they raised about teaching techniques, especially for teaching spelling. *Spelling Inquiry* details the group's development and evolution over the course of a few years and provides suggestions about how teachers in other schools could implement similar research groups. Included in each of the six chapters are very practical suggestions and recommendations on how to organize a group. Also included are "interludes," descriptions of how various teachers integrated what they had learned during their group discussions into the classroom. The authors emphasize the importance of talking with children and their parents about their expectations (the teachers distributed a survey about spelling to parents, the results influenced their teaching tremendously) and discuss ways of assessing and evaluating what children have learned.

The authors' emphasis on collaborative efforts, allowing time for reflection, observing how children really learn to spell and asking parents for input create a new paradigm for teaching spelling. Although it is very time intensive, this new way of approaching teaching, especially for a complicated subject such as spelling, offers teachers an alternative to more traditional techniques. Instructors interested in exploring other methods of teaching will want to read this book.

Pages: 163 Price: \$16.00 ISBN: 1-57110-303-1.20

Reviewed by Shellie Jeffries, Wayne State University

Fountas, Irene C. and Pinnell, Gay Su. (1999) *Matching Books to Readers: Using Leveled Books in Guided Reading, K-3*. Portsmouth: NH: [Heinemann](#).

Teachers responsible for developing the reading skills in K-3 classrooms face the monumental task of finding appropriate books to accommodate the various

reading levels and abilities found in any given class. The authors of *Matching Books to Readers* offer practical suggestions on how to address this issue. Building on the foundation laid in their 1996 book, *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children*, Fountas and Pinnell, have not only expanded and revised the book list of recommended titles, but also written instructions for implementing guided reading in primary classrooms.

In the first chapter, the authors carefully explain the reasoning behind the use of "leveled books," which they define as "books that have been analyzed in terms of how they support and challenge young readers as they learn how to read and that have been organized in a gradient of difficulty." In subsequent chapters, they explain the criteria for the different levels, describe the role of leveled books within an effective literacy program, and indicate how to integrate leveled reading into the curriculum. They go on to offer advice on creating a classroom collection of leveled books, including funding and purchasing the collection. The actual book lists, arranged by level and also by title, make up the remainder of the book.

Some teachers may chafe under the imposed structure of this guided reading approach to instruction. Others, will find it beneficial to adopt this well-thought out, easy-to-follow and easily implemented reading program that will help many students become successful, confident readers.

Pages: 424 Price: \$27.50 ISBN: 0-325-00193-6.

Reviewed by Shellie Jeffries, Wayne State University

Lipkin, Arthur (1999) *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools: A Text for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators*. Boulder, CO: [Westview Press](#).

Imagine the ideal book on homosexuality for educators. It would look at the issues in depth with historical and psychological perspectives. It would recognize that each person and each school approaches the issue from a different vantage point. It would offer practical suggestions as well as paradigm shifting discussions. It would be innovative without being prescriptive.

This ideal book would not limit itself to discussions of how to handle homosexuality in sex education classes. There would be information for homosexual teachers who must decide whether to come out to the school community. The special concerns of gay parents, members of conservative religious groups, and adolescents struggling with homosexuality would all be examined. There would be an excellent index and easily accessible suggestions for further reading.

Lipkin has not written the ideal book, but he has come far closer that I would have thought possible. This book is a treasure trove of information. It will serve as an excellent introduction for those unfamiliar with the issue, and as a current update for those revisiting it. There is no bibliography beyond the extensive "Notes" section (pp.369-483) and the index, while substantial, emphasizes proper

names rather than concepts. Despite the breadth of coverage there is depth in the discussions that goes beyond simply whetting the appetite. Lipkin takes a major taboo and disarms it admirably. Overall an excellent offering that deserves a wide audience.

Pages: **504** Price: **\$65.00 (cloth) \$18.95 (paper)** ISBN: **0-8133-2534-x (cloth) 0813325358 (paper)**

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

Owston, Ron. (1998) *Making the Link: Teacher Professional Development on the Internet*. Portsmouth NH: [Heinemann](#).

Most books on the Internet written for teachers focus on how to use the Internet in the classroom. Ron Owston takes a different approach to the Internet. Owston's unique book encourages teachers to utilize the Internet and exploit the many available free or low-cost resources in order take charge of their own professional development.

Teachers usually have to rely on brief seminars and workshops for their professional development. Even those opportunities may be few and far between when school finances are limited. Owston maps out a workable strategy for customizing a professional development plan using online resources. Owston's manual is not limited to what can be found on the World Wide Web. Starting with e-mail, he also includes chapters on using newsgroups, FTP and online conferences to maximize enrichment opportunities.

While he does include some Web sites which may be of use (and which are available on the book's companion Web page found at <http://www.edu.yorku.ca/MTL/>), the book goes beyond listing interesting Web sites and guides readers through how to utilize them in their professional development.²⁰

The book is of greatest use to the novice. Even those who have never used the Internet or e-mail could use this book to get started. More experienced users can skip over the "how-to" information on navigating the Web or setting up bookmarks and focus instead on the advice on actually utilizing these resources for personal learning and professional growth. Particularly useful are to the non-novice are Owston's explanations of how to develop an action plan and how to devise a research strategy for the Internet.

The Internet offers new opportunities for personal learning. Owston's book is a good guide for educators who would like to get more out of this tool.

Pages: **174** Price: **\$24.00** ISBN: **0325000778**

Reviewed by Darlene Nichols, University of Michigan



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