



Clyde, Jean Anne & Condon, Mark W. F. (2000). *Get Real: Bringing Kids' Learning Lives Into The Classroom*. York, ME: [Stenhouse](#).

Clyde and Condon, professors of literacy education at the University of Louisville, believe that teachers can help their students to be more successful learners if teachers become better observers and utilizers of children's personal learning strategies. In particular, they believe that children's out-of-school learning is not only sophisticated and complex, but also necessary to active, engaged learning in the classroom.

The first two-thirds of Clyde and Condon's book is taken up with a discussion and demonstration of how teachers can learn more about children's natural learning strategies through "kidwatching." Clyde and Condon explain the nature of kidwatching and share their own kidwatching observation stories. Teachers are invited to observe and "run along side" Clyde and Condon, who guide them in looking for children's natural learning techniques of engagement, connection making, anomaly questioning, risk taking, experimentation, and demonstration.

The final third of the book is dedicated to showing teachers how to integrate what they have learned about the out-of-school learning of their students into their classrooms. Curriculum design, teaching techniques (especially constructivist approaches), and professional development are covered in some detail. A case study of one teacher who successfully implemented natural learning into her classroom supports Clyde and Condon's belief that natural learning can result in a flourishing, engaged, learner-centered classroom.

Those interested in creating or improving learner-centered classrooms will find this book a rewarding read. Condon and Clyde write clearly and provide the real-world examples, theories, and practical strategies and techniques necessary for readers to identify and utilize children's natural learning strategies to everyone's advantage.

Pages: **234** Price: **\$19.50** ISBN: **1-57110-056-3**

Reviewed by Jeneen LaSee-Willemsen, University of Wisconsin-Superior

Johnston, Peter H. (2000) *Running Records: A Self-Tutoring Guide*. York: ME: [Stenhouse Publishers](#).

Guiding the development of reading skills in children in the lower elementary grades is certainly one of the most challenging tasks facing the lower-elementary teacher. The responsibility of documenting the child's reading processes, and assessing his progress, is no less daunting. The author of *Running Records: A Self-Tutoring Guide* expresses the belief that the taking of a running record of a child's oral reading is the single most useful technique for documenting early reading processes.

This book, with its accompanying cassette tape, is intended as a method for the informed (i.e. trained professional) teacher to instruct him or herself not only in the shorthand recording of a child's reading errors, but in the analysis of the child's acquisition of reading skills. The book is divided into two parts. In the first, negative perceptions of oral reading are immediately addressed, as well as the idea that listening to a child read is simply not enough; a graphic record of the child's reading is essential. >From there, the author explains how to record oral reading, such as words read correctly, omissions, insertions, self-corrections, etc. The tape, which consists of numbered sample readings by several different children, is referred to after each type of error discussed in the book. The text read by the child on the tape is provided, followed by a depiction of what the completed running record should have looked like. The second part of the book devotes itself to the analysis and interpretation of the reading record. Commentary is given on each child's miscues, including what the teacher may be able to interpret from the types of miscues a child makes. Appendix A and B provide both a generic running record form and a further sample of children's readings (accompanying the tape) for practice.

While the step-by-step progress of the instruction may seem tedious to some, this book in fact provides a very thorough walk through the process of taking and analyzing a running record. The discussions as to why a child may be making a particular type of miscue are very valuable. The tape is easy to hear, and the children are quite engaging as they read. Especially delightful are some of the side comments made by children as they react to what they read; even these are analyzed as to the quality of the child's engagement with the text. This book and tape would be very useful to the novice teacher, but even the seasoned professional will glean some valuable insights as to what is happening in the mind of the young child as he reads.

Pages: 53 + 40-min. audiotape Price: \$22.50 ISBN: 1-57110-321-X

Reviewed by Jennifer Keith, Cornell Elementary School, Okemos, MI

Kohn, Alfie. (2000). *The Case Against Standardized Testing: Raising the Scores, Ruining the Schools*. Portsmouth, NH: [Heinemann](#).

Much of the material in *The Case Against Standardized Testing: Raising the Scores, Ruining the Schools* was adapted from Kohn's seventh book *The Schools Our Children Deserve: Moving Beyond Traditional Classrooms and "Tougher Standards"* (1999). Kohn is well known in educational circles for his views on intrinsic vs. extrinsic student motivation and for his opposition to standardized testing. He has also gained some notoriety for an article published in the April 1998 *Phi Delta Kappan*, "Only for My Kid: How Privileged Parents Are Undermining School Reform." As the white, middle-class parent of two honor students--typical of the parent Kohn refers to as "robber barons" in this article--I will confess to a bias against certain of his views.

In his newest book, Kohn focuses primarily on attacking the failure of

standardized testing. His goal is to give teachers the arguments and evidence they need to respond when administrators and parents foist standardized testing into their classrooms. The format is in the form of questions and answers. Questions are raised, and Kohn provides the responses. At his best, Kohn presents very compelling arguments, arguing convincingly that the tests not only do not do what they are supposed to do--measure and increase student learning--but that they actually undermine true education. Kohn is less successful when proposing what should be used in their place. I suspect that his suggestions will be viewed as exactly the type of constructivist nonsense that proponents of standardized testing are fighting against.

The book is also something of a call to arms for teachers. In the last section of the book, "Fighting the Tests," Kohn gives specific suggestions about what teachers can do. He holds up as an example one teacher who refused to administer a test, even though he risked losing his job. Suggestions for teachers include speaking out at every opportunity: "in line at the supermarket, in the dentist's waiting room, on airplanes, at the hairdressers and the playgrounds, at dinner parties and children's birthday parties." He also includes a letter protesting the use of standardized tests that teachers can give to parents to send to administrators and board members.

Given the modest price of this book and Kohn's reputation, it is a good choice for small libraries with limited budgets and for teacher resource collections. Many academic libraries will already own Kohn's books, but standardized testing is a hot topic, and I noticed that most of our books are currently charged. Although researchers and graduate students will need to use *The Schools Our Children Deserve*, this title will be useful for undergraduates, parents, or persons who do not need the depth of information provided in the longer book.

Pages: 94 Price: \$10.00 ISBN: 0 325 00325 4

Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University

McDonnell Lorraine M., Timpane, P. Michael, & Benjamin, Roger. (2000). *Rediscovering the Democratic Purposes of Education*. Lawrence, KS : [University Press of Kansas](#).

Americans are increasingly disengaging from their public lives: declining political participation, an emphasis on private rather than public purposes in education and leisure activities, and the growing diversity of the population all lead to the sense that political socialization is no longer a high priority for schools. In this series of invited essays, prominent scholars voice their views on these concerns.

The book begins with an historic overview both of the development of the U.S. education system and also of democratic education. Amy Gutman discusses the importance of education for citizenship while Pamela Johnston Conover and Donald D. Searing discuss results of a recent study that suggests students understand their rights better than their responsibilities. Terry Moe talks about

stakeholders and how their level of organization can affect their impact on policy. James March and Johan Olsen discuss the centrality of the concept of democracy. Students must have a deep understanding of what it means to be a citizen of a democracy before they will see themselves as trustees of the political process. The book concludes with essays that tie the various chapter themes together and discuss education reform as one way that an increased emphasis on democratic education will help schools.

Perhaps because it is an invited series of essays rather than a collection of extant papers, this book holds together better than most edited volumes. Chapter 8, where Lorraine M. McDonnell and M. Stephen Weatherford pull together many of the ideas of the previous chapters, helps make it easy to find the connecting theme between essays. It is also a readable book. For those who have not explored the subject before and for those who would like an integration of ideas from various viewpoints, this volume is recommended reading.

Pages: **280** Price: **\$40.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper** ISBN: **0-7006-1026-x cloth, 0-7006-1027-8 paper**

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University



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