



Corson, David (1999) *Language Policy in Schools: A Resource for Teachers and Administrators*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

This book, directed primarily at K-12 educators, provides a blueprint for developing a language policy in an individual school. It provides actual and proposed language policies as well as questions for discussion at the end of each chapter. In the tradition of critical applied linguistics, Corson advocates forming a school language policy for social justice. Schools have become hegemonic institutions, where "the dominated become accomplices in their own domination" (p. 16). To remedy this, and to allow students to, in the words of Cummins, "negotiate their own identities" p. (16), schools must shift from controlling structures to collaborative notions of power. Inherent in this philosophy is a change in teacher behaviors and attitudes. Relationships between teacher and student are never neutral. The reference to Bourdieu's sociocultural reproduction theory here is appropriate; the institution itself is a participant in marginalizing minority cultures and languages when it disregards cultural capital differing from the dominant.

Chapter 3 outlines fact gathering as the beginning of language policy planning at the school level. Large-scale and small-scale approaches to fact gathering are addressed. Although most schools do not have the time or personnel to engage in large-scale fact gathering, it is helpful to be acquainted with large-scale research methods such as ethnography, transcribing, and triangulation, among others. Small-scale fact gathering is a less daunting task for many schools and includes the exploration of teacher attitudes and stereotypes, current teacher practices, staff opinions about language, and the analysis of the community itself. Corson notes that "schools rarely assemble this information in a systematic way" (p. 52). The fact gathering process is never complete due to dynamic shifts in community, power relations, and outside political attitudes. Schools should revisit the fact gathering stage often.

Chapter 4 is a response to the critical view of the devolution of power as structural rather than truly participatory. The author replies to Smyth's (1996) notion that the site-based movement tends to increase centralized control while maintaining the illusion of shared power. Corson believes that this devolution of power can help schools find "real emancipatory potential" (p. 60) even if the aims of the central power holders are less than democratic. A commonsense approach to policy writing is advocated here: policies should "say how we will do what we hope to do" (p. 61). With critical policymaking comes the

necessity for emancipatory leadership. Characteristics of emancipatory leaders include the removal of personal power in decision making to rely on the democratic consensus, referring to outside sources when the scope of their knowledge is limited, and removing themselves from center stage in the course of a decision. However, Corson notes that "this form of leadership asks for a lot of goodwill in an administrator" and that "emancipatory leadership is not really suited to routine administrative action" (p. 63) where administrators must often make decisions independently and unilaterally. The capacity for emancipatory leadership may be limited in many schools, for schools are rarely democratic institutions; rather they are structured as hierarchies. Bourdieu (1977, p. 153) stated that schools "[legitimize] the reproduction of the social hierarchies by transmuting them into academic hierarchies." This structure is reflective in the teacher-administrator dichotomy as well, and is thus deeply institutionalized in the school. On the other hand, Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, and Cusick (1986) pointed out that although teachers acquiesce to central authority, once their doors are closed, they are able to exercise great autonomy. The question of the power of emancipatory leadership is dependent on the micro-politics of the school. Corson does address this problem when he discusses changing administrative discourse in schools. He acknowledges that the patriarchy of schools is taken for granted and that schools are generally run with male values.

Chapter 5 discusses the notion of English as a first language in the curriculum. It emphasizes a "language for learning" policy (p. 89) and draws from the work of Vygotsky, Bruner, and Bakhtin that theorizes language as the instrument for thought and social interaction, central to the notion of learning. However, one of the biggest hurdles to providing a language policy for learning is to change and/or reconcile teacher attitudes about language and learning. Corson maintains that this can best be done through professional development activities. Again, this is not an easy task, considering the resistance to new ideas and deeply ingrained attitudes about the role of the teacher. Especially prevalent at the secondary level, where curriculum is compartmentalized and language is seen as the "English department's job," professional development activities that link language and learning must be carefully and gradually considered. A school language policy must include a prevalent professional development component, where teachers are encouraged to "own" their teaching. However, as Apple (1987) has noted, the trend in curriculum and instruction has been to see teachers as technicians of educational delivery systems rather than creators of pedagogy. Corson suggests that a strong professional development component written into a school language policy will help to counter this pressure.

Chapter 6 tackles the inclusion of critical language awareness in schools and curriculum. The first part of the chapter outlines nine areas by which teachers can help to extend their students' language awareness. Knowledge that there are different varieties within the same language, that values are a factor in judging appropriateness and

correctness of language use, that there are other languages used in their own society, and knowledge of the structural patterns of their language are a few of these areas. Corson moves to a discussion of Critical Language Awareness (CLA). Using discourse as an underlying factor, CLA attempts to enlighten students in terms of language as used in power and control. Corson highlights four main ideas that CLA tries to convey to students:

- People have the power to shape the conventions that underlie discourse, just as much as any other social practices.
- Although we accept the way language is, and the way discourses operate, they are changing all the time.
- Forms of discourse receive their value according to the positions of their users in systems of power relations.
- Struggles over the control of discourse are the main ways in which power is obtained and exercised in modern societies. (p. 144)

Several suggestions for classroom activities are given, such as a study of taboo words for adolescents as an examination of the culture of power that surrounds these words. For example, calling certain expressions "slang" implies a judgment about language, for one person's slang can be another person's everyday language. I would suggest that for teachers who are language policy novices, the activities marked for students would be a good place to begin in a professional development program and are complementary to the ideas outlined in Chapter 5.

Corson continues with a mandate that "criticizing the status quo is not enough for critical language awareness" (p. 151), that changes in discourse must be made to educate for social justice. Gender bias, sexism, labeling, language prejudice, rhetorical language, and discourse awareness in classrooms and mundane use are all addressed with some fascinating insights about how we convey messages without realizing we are doing so. Both educators and students can learn from Corson's well-positioned examples.

The end of Chapter 6 is a call for critical literacy and oracy in schools. A profound statement is found here:

Professionals working in schools have good reasons to think that they are giving students something that everybody needs. For much of the time, though, schools spend time giving students things they do not particularly want" (p. 163).

For example, some families greet school-type literacy with indifference, or perhaps even dislike and hostility. Often times, students are literate in their own way rather than the prescribed literacy (unique to the setting) of schools. Wagner (1991) suggested an "illiteracy of resistance" where students subtly revolt against the

hegemonic literacy found in schools by preferring to use spoken rather than written communication. For many students accepting the school's notion of literacy means rejecting facets of their culture. Corson advocates linking literacy and oracy into students' lives as much as possible.

Chapter 7 discusses the placement of ESL and minority languages in the curriculum. The research in minority language policy suggests that most existing policies see minority language as a problem; the students have a deficit and are culturally deficient. Corson advocates turning these perceptions around to see language and culture as an asset. His position is congruent with Tse (2001) as it advocates first language support and acceptance of minority culture. Chapter 8 is a summary and provides what a school-level language policy may contain.

This book contains a good combination of practical suggestion with a theoretical orientation. As a practitioner, I am encouraged that Corson chose to write a book on school-level language policy. It is a sign that the teacher, who is closest to the student, can be a powerful force, an "emancipatory leader," in educating for social justice through language policy development and critical language awareness.

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Pages: **252** Price: **\$29.95** ISBN: **0-80583-296-3**

Reviewed by Ann Dutton Ewbank, Cholla Middle School, Phoenix,

Arizona

Falk, John H. & Dierking, Lynn D. (2002). *Lessons Without Limit: How Free-Choice Learning is Transforming Education*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

John Falk and Lynn Dierking are co-founders of the Institute for Learning Innovation, (www.ilinet.org) a non-profit organization devoted to advocating free-choice learning as a model for lifelong learning. The Institute collaborates with a variety of institutions and organizations to encourage the growth of free-choice learning through the cultural and educational offerings of museums, libraries, community-based organizations, etc. *Lessons Without Limits* was written to spread the word to a wide audience about the possibilities of such free-choice learning opportunities and about the rewards that such learning can provide to families, individuals or groups interested in pursuing informal educational opportunities. The authors hope that through the adoption of free-choice learning, education in the United States can be transformed and extended throughout life. Their goal is to create a "learning society" where informal learning takes place continuously and continually.

The book is divided into three major sections:

- The Hows and Whys of Learning,
- Learning Over A Lifetime, and
- Transforming Education In America.

The four chapters in the "Hows and Whys of Learning" define free-choice learning as "self-directed, voluntary, and guided by individual needs and interests" (p. 9), taking place largely outside formal educational structures. The authors build a solid foundation for their advocacy of this lifelong learning, describing the rationale and motivation for free-choice learning and the environment in which such learning takes place as well as summarizing learning theories which support the benefits of informal, self-directed learning. The six chapters in the "Learning Over A Lifetime" section trace characteristics of learning from birth to old age, using a variety of examples to illustrate the ways in which informal learning can be effective, creative and fun. In the final section, "Transforming Education In America," the authors lay out their *Free-Choice Learner's Bill of Rights* and their recommendations for developing the learning society that they envision.

The authors' enthusiasm for their vision permeates the book. It is written in an engaging and popular style with many personal anecdotes and examples. They have written about learning outside the classroom (museums, field trips, or outdoor excursions), since the mid 1970's.

Their vision is based on considerable study. This is an inspirational and idealistic book, filled with wonderful examples of informal learning experiences and environments. The authors hope to inspire everyone to engage in free-choice learning and certainly succeed in getting the reader to think about all the possibilities beyond the school and beyond the school years where learning can take place.

While not a practical, how-to book, it fosters a way of thinking about learning that expands the educational horizon. For the teacher and student teacher, the book offers a panorama of possibilities for engaging students through activities outside the classroom. For home-schoolers, the book offers both support and inspiration. For anyone interested in lifelong learning, *Lessons Without Limit* offers an ideal toward which society can aspire.

Pages: **189** Price: **\$16.95** ISBN: **0-7591-0160-4**

Reviewed by Carla A.Hendrix, Plattsburgh State University of New York

Foster, Graham, Sawicki, Evelyn, Schaeffer, Hyacinth, & Zelinski, Victor (2002) *I Think Therefore I Learn!* Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, distributed by Stenhouse.

How can we get students thinking more about their learning? The authors of *I Think Therefore I Learn!* strongly believe that part of the answer may come from understanding and using the concept of metacognition. *Cognition* refers to how we come to know, *Meta* means beyond. So it means going beyond knowing and coming to understand how we learn best and control our learning.

Metacognitive students utilize skills that help them analyze what they have to do. This is at the heart of the book. There are numerous suggestions of how teachers can foster task analysis, teach students to know themselves, use learning strategies, etc.

Several testimonials present teachers who have tried a metacognitive approach with their students. All report a positive outcome, and some report surprising results such as a decrease in classroom management and disciplinary problems. There is also support to reflect that this process helps students to develop skills they will use in their future careers. It is always of benefit when we can see present and future application. There are ideas for activities in the Language Arts, Science, Math, etc. It is fascinating to see how metacognitive learning can serve as an integral thread across the curriculum. Throughout the book there are numerous student assessment and work/response pages. These will really be of help to a novice teacher trying to apply what we

know about metacognition to teaching and learning. Numerous helpful suggestions for developing and refining learning strategies are given.

One of the components that really stood out was a page called "A Parental Guide to Promoting Reflective Learning." This is so appropriate. Most parents want to know how they can support their child and the page offers excellent suggestions.

The authors lay claim that this approach is a skillbuilding one which will serve children throughout their curriculum studies and possibly throughout their lives.

Pages: **96** Price: **\$19.00** ISBN: **1-55138-148-6**

Reviewed by Dr. Kathleen E. Fite, Southwest Texas State University

Kohn, Alfie & Shannon, Patrick, eds. (2002) *Education, Inc: Turning Learning into a Business*. Revised edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Not convinced that corporate America has an influence on American education? Then you need to read *Education, Inc.: Turning Learning into a Business*, where the depth and breadth of corporate infiltration into the American learning process is clearly outlined. Editors Alfie Kohn, former teacher and current educational advocate, and Patrick Shannon, Professor of Education at Penn State University, make no apologies for their straight talk, "this book makes no pretense of offering a 'balanced' treatment of its subject" (p. 9).

At the heart of this small volume of essays, is the belief that education is more than turning out good employees who make the mark and thus increase the Gross National Product. Education, as defined here, strengthens democracy, promotes social justice and fosters the well being and development of students (p. 7).

According to these authors, there are three primary ways big business extends its reach into education. The first involves commercialism in the schools. Along with learning the three "Rs", student's attention is being sought through corporate sponsorship of not only projects and programs, but also curriculum. Pop machines in the hallways and advertising on Channel One are just a few examples of commercialism in American education as noted in the essays.

In section two, the essays examine how our schools now follow a market approach to learning where the bottom line is standardized test scores, which dominates the daily learning process. Even the vocabulary of our schools now follows the business approach, contends Kohn in his essay, "Student's Don't Work—They Learn". The other

five essays explore how the need for money gives corporate America sway over what is taught and how it is taught. This section also discusses how educational products, textbooks, for example, are governed by corporate causes.

Among the most controversial of the school reform efforts of the last few decades, privatization of schools is the focus of section three, where five essays investigate the impact of allowing corporations to take over the educational system. The implications of school choice and voucher system and the ramifications of for-profit schools are examined here, including a case study essay on school choice in Colorado that questions the achievements lauded by school choice advocates.

Education, Inc. isn't passive reading. The authors cut straight to the issues, ruffle many feathers and question common practices in educational institutions aimed at making students and schools more business like. This book is recommended reading for everyone interested in the American educational system. Most essays include a reference list and there is a helpful index.

Pages: 179 Price: \$19.00 ISBN: 0-325-00489-7

Reviewed by Stephanie D. Davis, Spring Arbor University

Swartz, Larry (2002) *New Dramathemes*. Third edition. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, distributed by Stenhouse.

Larry Swartz has revised and updated his remarkable book, *Dramathemes*, which enables teachers to bring drama into their classrooms. Larry Swartz has revised and updated his remarkable book, *Dramathemes*. The third edition, *The New Dramathemes*, provides more practical ideas and games for teachers to bring drama into their K-6 classrooms. Swartz's philosophy of integration of drama into the classroom is best reflected in the quote from Philip Taylor. "Drama is a collaborative group art form where people transform, act, and reflect upon the human condition." (p. 57) The *Dramathemes* books demonstrate how teachers and students can transform their understanding of the "human condition" by exploring different themes in society and culture.

Swartz divides the book into ten popular themes or "explorations": Humor, Mystery, Fantasy, Animals, Relationships, Folklore, Community, The Past, The Future, and Diversity and Equity. Each theme can be explored using an interesting assortment of games and various drama methods. Additional recommended sources are provided after each theme.

The overall goals for each theme are clearly stated, as are the overviews and objectives. The game portions focus on physical activity. Other suggested activities provide alternatives and extensions to each theme. Here again, each activity has clearly stated instructions. The drama exploration and drama structure sections follow the same format.

Each dramatheme is based on a different source material ("Animals" uses Karen Hesse's *The Music of Dolphins*). After each section there is a list of additional sources that could be helpful in further exploring the dramatheme. The final part of each dramatheme includes an assessment sheet. Each assessment is unique to the individual theme and focuses on student social interactions.

Swartz's thirty plus years of experience in drama education give him the authority and experience necessary when addressing student learning in a creative manner. The integration of the arts, literature, writing, social skills, and physical activities makes his book an excellent choice for teachers looking for ways to work across disciplines.

Pages: 160 Price: \$18.95 ISBN: 1-55138-141-9

Reviewed by Rita Kohrman, Grand Valley State University

Wilde, Sandra (2002). *Testing and Standards: A Brief Encyclopedia*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Testing and Standards is indeed a brief encyclopedia of 110 pages in small, pocketbook size format. Sandra Wilde, professor at the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University in Oregon and one of Heinemann's Professional Development program speakers, states in the Introduction that her "goal in writing this book is to help teachers, and by extension their students, to be less victimized by (indeed, to regain jurisdiction of their classrooms from) forces outside their control that are currently embodied in this standards and testing juggernaut" (p. ix). She goes on to enumerate two goals:

- understanding the concepts and vocabulary of testing and measurement, and
- understanding the wider context of standards and testing.

At the end of the Introduction, she describes her perspective on testing and standards. Her belief is that "many current testing and standards practices undermine rather than support these larger goals" (p. ix) of creating standards and expectations for teaching and student learning and fostering student learning while decreasing differences in student achievement.

Dr. Wilde appropriately describes the form of the book as a mini-encyclopedia. There are brief entries on approximately thirty-five topics arranged alphabetically and ranging from "accountability (consumers, taxpayers, and citizens)" to "where do we go from here?" As there is no index, finding information can be difficult. Most entries are broken into three parts:

- What It Means
- Example, and
- What You Need To Know About It.

As her background is in literacy, the majority of the examples are from that field. The entry length varies from one to three pages. The book also includes entries entitled "Essential Readings" and one on "Internet Resources." The Internet Resources section lists two quite standard resources, Education Week and the New York Times and the Web site for the National Education Writers Association, an educational journalists group. The advocacy sites support the author's beliefs regarding the testing and standards movement. The book concludes with an eight page bibliography and an appendix containing the AERA's *Position Statement Concerning High-Stakes Testing in PreK-12 Education*.

The first question that came to mind in perusing this small book was why would anyone buy this book? It is a difficult question to answer. It is not a book libraries would purchase for their reference collection. Much of the information can be found on the Web, along with more balanced presentations of the issues. The use of the word encyclopedia, in the title is misleading, as teachers and students generally assume both broader coverage and a more balanced perspective from an encyclopedia. As a primer for those interested in opposing the standards and testing movement, this could provide some useful advocacy information, but nothing in the title and little in the introduction provide any clues to the book's perspective, so that audience might never discover the book. At a time when the use of standards and tests daily confronts teachers, students and parents, it is unfortunate that this book does not deliver on the promise of its title.

Pages: **110** Price: **\$13.00** ISBN: **0-325-00360-2**

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