



**Batory, Joseph P. (2002) *“Yo! Joey!” A Book About School Leadership*. . [Unabridged republication of work first published in 1999] Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Education.**

Pages: 131 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 0-8108-4267-X

**Batory, Joseph P. (2002) *Joey’s Story: A Portrait of a School Leader*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Education.**

Pages: 109 Price: \$16.50 ISBN: 0-8108-4420-6

**Batory, Joseph P. (2003) *Joey Lets It All Hang Out: Reflections of an Award-Winning School Superintendent*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Education.**

Pages: 112 Price: \$17.95 ISBN: 0-8108-4718-3

Joseph Batory was superintendent of the Upper Darby School District in western Philadelphia from 1984 to 1999. In these three books he presents his philosophy of public education and administration in a brash, in-your-face, passionate style, reflecting his strongly-felt opinions, all the while equally-strongly supporting his students and teachers. Each contains very short, anecdotal chapters based on real incidents and people, in no particular chronological or thematic order, with a summary of the book’s ideas at the end, and a brief bibliography. They read as if they were one side of a conversation with someone who is enthusiastic about his job and about larger issues in public education, jumping from one topic to another, adding personal tidbits about students, teachers, board members, and childhood influences to show how he developed his ideas and why he often found himself not conforming during a time when public education was under attack locally and nationally.

“*Yo! Joey!*” tells of his childhood in the tough parochial schools of Philadelphia, his struggle to manage college and then teach English in Camden, New Jersey. From there he went into academic public relations, then into PR and administration in Upper Darby before finding himself superintendent in that diverse and growing system. Throughout his career he believed that a responsible person “stands up when he or she has to” (p. 61) and that “being a superintendent of schools should first and foremost be about moral high ground.” (p. 95) He describes encounters with the media, including the Howard Stern program, with Nazi sympathizers, misguided politicians, bomb threats,

weather problems, and teachers' unions, often with self-deprecating humor.

In *Joey's Story* he goes over much of the same ground, with more detail about his early career and the various influences on his educational philosophy. He managed to do a doctorate while working full time. He continued to speak out in support of public education while encouraging innovation and creativity from his staff in dealing with the myriad problems of inner city schools and their students, including a considerable and varied ethnic population and an increasingly difficult funding situation. He lambastes what he sees as an undeserved bashing of public schools by corporate and governmental leaders and he is equally unimpressed with the press's inadequate and simplistic coverage of education. He especially decries the over-emphasis on standardized testing which fails to allow for the diversity and variance among schools and their students.

In *Joey Lets It All Hang Out*, he again expands on some of the same biographical elements as in the first two books, but then turns more to educational philosophy matters and broader issues. When he became superintendent, he and his wife deliberately bought a home in the district and this is symptomatic of his putting personal action into support of his ideas. He berates corporate, governmental, and academic critics of public education who rarely have had any first-hand experience in the field. He speaks out against politicians who cut state support and then criticize public school systems for raising local property taxes and always wanting more money. At the same time, he honors members of local school boards who serve selflessly, celebrates the work of custodians, and praises the many teachers who labor to change the lives of students for the better.

The reader's first impression of Batory may be of self-promotion and ego, but that quickly changes to admiration for his honesty and bluntness. His willingness to stand up for what he believes, his courage in challenging the status quo and the powers that support it, and his personal interest in each student and teacher are all admirable qualities in anyone, not least in a school administrator. These books belong in every library serving school personnel and those preparing for school administration as well as in the personal libraries of superintendents. The "Summaries of the Messages" might well end up on the walls of superintendents all over the country where they should frequently be read

**Reviewed by Roland Person, emeritus, Southern Illinois University**

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**Gibbons, Maurice (2002) *The Self-Directed Learning Handbook: Challenging Adolescent Students to Excel*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

The stated intent of this book is to provide a tool for middle and high school teachers who want to help adolescents address fundamental issues that they face by empowering them to manage their own learning. Gibbons states that the handbook will provide the following:

- An explanation of self-directed learning (SDL)
- Description of how to develop an SDL program
- A guide to teaching techniques
- Tools required for helping students to become skilled in SDL.

Gibbons adheres closely to his plan chapter by chapter. He begins by defining both teacher-directed learning (TDL) and self-directed learning and provides step-by-step instructions for adapting this system by grade. Following his detailed instructions ensures a gradual but steady evolution toward an SDL program. Gibbons points out, however, that although the ideal would be total immersion in SDL, a shared program of SDL and TDL can also be quite effective.

He suggests five basic elements for getting started and states that defining course outcomes is the first step in creating an environment where SDL is possible. Next, Gibbons discusses rethinking the structure of learning and again provides the necessary steps for achieving a change in architecture that invites inquiry and initiative. He admits that SDL provides many challenges to the teacher accustomed to strictly teacher directed learning, but suggests that the rewards can far outweigh the inconveniences. Student engagement with the process is seen as critical and Gibbons devotes an entire chapter to "Negotiating Student Learning Agreements."

The handbook is filled with examples of learning guides, learning contracts and learning activities that demonstrate how SDL works. Tables and mapping provide visual explanations of the process. The inclusion of case studies of students as well as teachers demonstrates how experience, study and productivity are related to a process that teaches much more than content. This is a how-to book for adventurous teachers who understand that learning is an integral component of teaching.

Pages: **208** Price: **\$21.00** ISBN: **0-7879-5955-3**

**Reviewed by Adelaide Phelps, Oakland University**

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**Sizer, Nancy Faust (2002) *Crossing the Stage: Redesigning Senior Year*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

As any high school teacher knows, the senior year can be one of extremes. This final year of secondary school is fueled by high academic and athletic expectations which often dwindle to just "hanging on" by May and June. The anticipation of college acceptance

and the exciting realization that this is an important right of passage in their lives is tempered by the equally frightening fact that graduation will force many of the young people to assume more, if not all, of the responsibilities that accompany adulthood.

Although many important events do unfold during the 12th grade, most educators will admit that the positive academic aspects of the year dwindle rather rapidly when the first semester concludes and senioritis sets in. Unlike their counterparts in other countries, American students do not face a "make or break" test at the end of their high school careers that will determine if they continue on to the university or even get a diploma. College acceptance (or not) is based, for all but a handful of individuals, upon what has already been accomplished in the classroom.

The apathy, absenteeism, and wasted opportunity that mar a good portion of this final year do not have to be accepted with a resigned shrug by educators. A teacher with 25 years of classroom and counseling experience and also a member of a National Commission established in 2000 to investigate the widespread problems associated with the senior year, Nancy Faust Sizer believes it's time to redesign the final year of high school.

From her interviews of over 150 seniors attending 26 diverse high schools from California to the East Coast, Sizer walks the reader through a senior year. Using the students' own words she takes a chronological and thematic approach to defining the highs and lows of the ten months.

In the first part of the book, "The Challenge of Transition", three chapters look at the students' relationships with their teachers, friends, and parents. The following section, "Troubling Developments", investigates "Playing the College Game", "Grandstanding", and "Senioritis". When discussing "grandstanding", Sizer focuses on "the corrupting effect that pressure can have on extracurricular activities during the senior year" (p. 115).

This anecdotal approach based on a relative small sampling makes for interesting reading and, by-and-large, will confirm the knowledge most teachers already possess. Unfortunately, this is akin to "carrying coals to Newcastle". One doesn't spend year after year teaching seniors and not realize there's a problem; the academic intensity level goes into a nosedive from January on.

In the concluding section, Sizer finally gets around to what can be done to improve the situation. Alas, only 58 pages are devoted to the ideas that would constitute a solution to the senior year dilemma. Combating "senioritis" with a special seminar class, a senior project, internships, or a graduation portfolio/ oral presentation are not particularly original ideas.

Sizer gets high marks for making the reader aware of "the problem" but when it comes to new thinking or nitty-gritty solutions, don't expect much. Even the "redesigning" she advocates is not well spelled out, which means the serious advocates of change will have to go elsewhere for concrete suggestions on how to make it all work.

Pages: **244** Price: **\$23.00** ISBN: **0-325-00412-9**

**Reviewed by Robert F. Walch, Retired educator, Monterey, California**

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**Sutherland, Dawn & Sokal, Laura (2003) *Resiliency and Capacity Building in Inner- City Learning Communities*. Winnipeg, Manitoba, CA: Portage & Main Press.**

By highlighting rich Canadian experiences and research on resiliency and capacity building, this book offers a unique contribution that will be of interest to educators and students interested in urban education issues. It developed as a collaboration between faculty members at the University of Winnipeg and colleagues working in educational settings as teachers, principals, and program administrators.

Of particular interest are descriptions of projects aimed at assisting First Nations or indigenous students as well as immigrants and others living in poverty. Specific examples and stories about interventions enrich the text. Fundamental to the work described in this book is a core belief that a sense of care and belonging is key to understanding and supporting individual and community strengths. Topics covered include reclaiming youth from gangs, developing mentoring programs, teaching with authenticity, working in street schools, teaching science within mainstream and cultural contexts, involving grandparents and parents, and teaching writing. Relevant Canadian government policies and initiatives are also discussed.

While Canada is certainly facing the same challenges as the United States in the education of inner city and other youth, some Canadian policies and approaches differ from those in the U.S. In addition to appealing to a Canadian audience, this book offers a readable opportunity for those in the U.S. and other countries to learn from Canadian urban educators. Recommended for academic libraries serving teachers, pre-service teachers, administrators, and others concerned with urban issues.

Pages: **212** Price: **\$39.00 CN** ISBN: **1-895411-95-5**

**Reviewed by Laurel Haycock, Education Librarian at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis**

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**Watson, Marilyn & Ecken, Laura (2003) *Learning to Trust: Transforming Difficult Elementary Classrooms Through Developmental Discipline*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

*Learning to Trust* is a book about classroom management and discipline. There are many such texts, yet the majority ask, "How do we control students or make them obey?" (p. xiii) In this classroom discipline book, teachers are encouraged to perceive and think differently and ask, "What do difficult children need?" (p. xiii) Fitting perfectly with social/cultural learning theory's fundamental assumption that children are biologically wired to learn the skills and values of their communities, mistakes in behavior, like mistakes in academic learning, are opportunities for instruction not punishment. Thus, the authors make the case for first establishing trusting relationships with the most challenging of students and then providing them with explicit instruction in social and emotional skills within a community of caring "serious learners."

*Learning to Trust* should be required reading for any elementary or secondary school teacher who plans to teach for deeper understanding and high academic standards through the creation of a caring, learning community. Until now, teachers who wanted to promote academic excellence and social competence through constructivist and collaborative models of teaching and learning had only behavioral models of classroom discipline to guide classroom management decisions. Teachers, counselors, and administrators, skeptical of the value of rewards, punishments, and logical consequences had few options. Now, Marilyn Watson, an educational psychologist, and Laura Ecken, an elementary school teacher, give future and practicing educators a powerful alternative, *Developmental Discipline*.

*Developmental Discipline*, based on attachment theory, proposes that teachers promote academic growth and social/ethical development through the building of caring, trusting relationships with all students, especially the most challenging. *Learning to Trust* is a richly detailed case study of how an inner-city teacher and an educational psychologist collaborated to put attachment theory and developmental discipline into practice over a two year period. As Laura Ecken shares her struggles and successes, and Marilyn Watson describes and clarifies the assumptions and practice of developmental discipline, readers gain a deeper understanding of attachment theory; a compelling case is made for developmental discipline. The book provides educators with key conceptual knowledge and actual strategies that move the creation of caring, communities of learners from the teacher education professor's realm of the "what should be" to the practitioner's world of the "what can be."

Although teachers of young children are likely to find the greatest value in this text, teachers of upper elementary and secondary school

teachers will gain a deep understanding of attachment theory, "a new way at looking at children," from the many examples of actual classroom practice. The appendix of the book gives a thorough explanation of attachment theory and makes the case that even the humanitarian and positive discipline models such as Dreikurs logical consequences are not likely to work well with children who are not able to make the right choices. Insecurely attached children require collaboration with a trusted adult who can provide behavior scaffolding. How this plays out in secondary school classrooms is not addressed in this book. However, *Empowering Discipline* by Vicki Phillips, a book that addresses the needs of at-risk adolescent children would be an excellent companion book for teachers who must create trusting relationships with students who are in a very different developmental stage than Laura Ecken's young students.

### **Attachment Theory and Classroom Discipline**

In the book's introduction, Marilyn Watson explains that "children with a history of responsive and sensitive caregiving tend to be cooperative and prosocial" (p. 10). In the classroom, they do not need to be threatened with punishment or enticed through rewards. Although these children still need adult guidance as they develop social skills, generally they respond with empathy and care toward others; they want to be cooperative. However, for a variety of reasons, some caregivers are not able to provide their children with consistent, sensitive, and responsive care. Yet, such children still strive to develop and maintain relationships with their caregivers. But because they cannot rely on their caregivers to meet their needs, attachment relationships are built on mistrust. Consequently, as Watson explains, "These children have low self-esteem, little or no trust that others can be relied upon to care for them, and a belief that relationships are conflictual in nature. They are likely to be either anxious, withdrawn, and passive or angry, aggressive, and controlling as they strive to make their way in the world" (p. 11).

From the perspective of attachment theory, a teacher can assume that the majority of children have a cooperative and prosocial orientation. But children with a history of insecure attachment to their caregivers build "working models" of relationships as coercive and of themselves as unworthy of care. In classrooms, these children become the difficult ones. "These children are apt to withdraw from social relationships or become focused on satisfying their own needs through dependency, control, or aggression" (p. 11). According to attachment theory, trying to teach these children to be cooperative and prosocial through rewards and punishments only tends to affirm their view of relationships as coercive and encourage their tendency to be self-focused. Teachers who become angry or withdraw their affection, further reinforce their negative self-perceptions. Instead, as Watson explains, "The building of caring and trusting relationships becomes the most important goal in the socialization of these children. Of course, while we are building these relationships, we must find non-punitive ways to prevent the

children who are aggressive and controlling from harming others and to encourage self-reliance and confidence in those who are withdrawn or dependent" (p. 12).

It seems like an impossible quest, yet Laura Ecken shares with readers her daily struggles and experiences applying attachment theory and developmental discipline during a two-year period with one very challenging group of six, seven, and eight-year-olds. Most of her students were growing up in Louisville's largest and toughest housing project, all were poor, with 88 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. But student stories and classroom vignettes give readers very concrete and practical ideas and examples of how developmental discipline works. This book demonstrates that in the real world of the classroom, it is a slow and bumpy process but it is possible to transform the most difficult of elementary classrooms into a caring community of serious learners.

Laura's words and vignettes of her interaction with her students allow readers to truly see how developmental discipline works. At the end of every chapter are key points, or a guide for teachers who desire to implement developmental discipline. Part One: Building Trust focuses on the goal of building teacher-student relationships and teaching students how to be friends. Part Two: Managing the Classroom presents strategies for scaffolding appropriate behavior and meeting students' needs for competence and autonomy. It is not enough to create a classroom where students feel accepted and liked. Finally, Part Three: Putting It All Together powerfully makes the case that teachers should and can help students become successful and happy people as well as good and successful learners. Both the psychologist and teacher are white women who live in a world much different than the Louisville, Kentucky children. In the book's introduction the author acknowledges the tensions between Laura's vision for the classroom and the reality of her students' lives outside school. A difficult challenge that Laura faced was how to help her students create a peaceful and just classroom yet not deprive them of the skills to survive in a world she knew little about.

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