



**Buis, Kellie (2004) *Writing Every Day: Reading, Writing, and Conferencing Using Student-Led Language Experiences*.
Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, distributed by
Stenhouse.**

This book uses the concept of sharing stories among students primarily in grades K- 8. Practical examples are well explained and illustrated in the book and are in general easy to follow. The concept of sharing stories in the classroom to motivate students to learn is reflective of Williams and Burden's (1997) Social Constructivist Model of language learning. Williams and Burden identify four key factors which influence the learning process – *teachers, learners, tasks* and *context*. They note that these factors do not exist in isolation but are in a dynamic equilibrium. Buis uses a similar concept in her strategies to motivate students to read. The activities and strategies suggested by Buis would require students, rather than teachers, to play an important role contributing to their learning. As argued by Nunan (1996), listening to the 'voices' of learners is more likely to allow for a learning experience that is dynamic and active. The idea is that sharing stories in the classroom would allow students to be more interactive and more importantly perceive that they play an important part in their learning. This allows the teacher to take the role of a facilitator rather than an authority figure in the classroom.

Other than two pages in Chapter 3, Buis does not emphasize the use of this book for ESL students. I am of the opinion that this book would be appropriate for teachers of ESL in a country where English is not the first language. Adult learners of ESL would also benefit as their level of command of English would be similar to that of the students this book is targeting. Buis's suggestions for using poetry with ESL students (p.69) may be too challenging, as their command of the language and vocabulary may not be adequate to help them with rhyming when writing poetry. An additional consideration, poetry may be difficult for individuals who are not audio or verbal learners. Buis offers suggestions for at-risk students and students with reading problems. The strategies are usable and could be practically implemented in the classroom but are limited by the fact that Buis does not consider learning styles.

Chapter 2 clearly explains the methodology of using the Daily Letter routine. The approach, used by Buis to "prepare the reader to enter into conversation with the author" (p. 33) is an interesting one. Teachers most often assume students are able to read without difficulties until proven otherwise but this chapter specifically encourages the teacher to

read to students to help them with word recognition. The visual aspect advocated by Buis is also interesting as this would appeal to learners and allow them to be creative and draw what they have learned.

Chapter 3 seems to advocate the idea of mediation suggested by Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky's approach suggests that meaningful learning can be brought about by significant others like teachers, parents and other students. This is similar to what Buis proposes. She takes it further, proposing the use of shared responsibility among a community of learners in order to gain mastery of reading and writing. Lave and Wenger (1991) also propose a similar idea with their legitimate peripheral learning where the student is viewed as constantly taking part in his or her own learning which is constantly guided by a 'master'. Although Buis's strategy is commendable, she makes the assumption that all students come from ideal families where parents are eager to take an active role in their children's learning. It is important to ask what would happen if some of these students did not have such supportive parents and they were given some of the assignments suggested in the book.

Chapter 6 offers strategies to teach writing. The use of think-aloud strategies seems to be a structured form of brainstorming. Again these strategies require the participation of parents to help their children along. The good writer chart provides some pointers about helping students develop skills to become better writers. However, the part on the coding of the daily letter is a bit confusing, as some of the symbols used to represent the various letter sounds from words do not seem to be linked.

Although motivation of students is well addressed, one point that is missing from this book is a discussion on how the attitudes and perceptions of students could influence their like or dislike for writing. It is left for readers to figure this out for themselves. I do not teach in the classroom anymore but I train teachers. A question often asked by teachers is how they could improve the attitudes of students in their classroom.

Buis's book presents some usable ideas for the classroom, but is lacking in strategies to help teachers with students of different learning styles. It also conveys the idea to the reader that if the strategies suggested are used, teachers will be successful in getting students to read and write. This may not be so, especially in schools where technical and parental support is not strong. The book is suitable for teachers with some years of experience under their belts as resource material, but a novice teacher may be disappointed with some of the activities suggested, especially the ones where parental participation is required and technical support needed.

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Pages: **160** Price: **\$18.00(s), \$21.95(Canadian)** ISBN: **1-55138-169-9**

Reviewed by S. Chee Choy, Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Perak Branch Campus, Perak, Malaysia. I am currently the Head of the Perak Branch Campus and I also train teachers for the College as well. I had previously taught high school in North Carolina, USA. My area of interest is in Education Psychology, specifically in the area of attitudes and perceptions of students when learning a second language.

Burke, Jim (2004) *School Smarts: The Four C's of Academic Success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using the "been-there-done-that" approach, Jim Burke opens with a mercifully short account of his own years as an "indifferent student", which highlights a full page display of his high school transcript. Once he's charted his own academic voyage from secondary school to junior college, college, and the Peace Corps, Burke gets down to the nitty-gritty. He asks what can be done for students like himself to move them from the disorientation they feel in the school environment, where they barely keep their heads above water, to a new orientation that will allow them to succeed academically.

The four C's that Burke suggests will create this transformation are commitment, content, competencies, and capacity. If they sound familiar, of course they are. There's nothing here that hasn't been said before, although Burke's "packaging" is a little different.

Commitment here means the extent to which students care about the work and maintain consistency in their attempt to succeed. Burke discusses a number of factors, such as identity, allies, and engagement, which can influence a student's commitment.

Content refers to information or processes students must know to complete a task or succeed on an assignment. A good way to enhance the way a student goes about managing information on the secondary school level is to offer an incoming 9th grader an essential tools and life skills class. Burke offers an outline of what the essential elements

of such a seminar should be.

Competencies are the skills a student will need to be able to complete an assignment or succeed at some task. Ranging from reading and writing proficiency to being able to summarize and classify material, once again the author provides a cursory list of what these skills entail. Most educators are well aware of these things already, so they need not be spelled out in great detail.

Capacities account for the quantifiable aspects of performance or the ability to employ the skills a person possesses. How one fosters confidence, resiliency, and dexterity (multitasking), plus the other qualities Burke lists under this heading, is a bit akin to "a tangled ball of yarn we must somehow sort out while doing other things at the same time" (p. 124). He does suggest some strategies, though, for accomplishing this task as well.

In "A Practical Postscript," Burke concludes the book by applying the four C's to administrators and teachers. For example, he shows how administrators will show commitment by listing areas that need to be addressed, like professional development and strategic planning. Teachers will show their commitment by how they foster student access and being involved in school activities that go beyond the classroom.

Burke summarizes and refers to a lot of research that bears on his topic (seven pages of material cited by the author appear in the book's Appendix A). Although he does mention ways of actually achieving the goal of transforming indifferent students into more enthusiastic and capable learners, the bulk of what one finds in this relatively short volume makes a case for the four Cs' relevance. I don't think too many educators really need convincing that these things are important.

Pages: **160** Price: **\$18.50** ISBN: **0-325-00632-6**

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

Carnie, Fiona (2003) *Alternative Approaches to Education: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

“What is education for? Is it about lighting a fire or filling a bucket? Is it about personal development or providing fodder for the economic markets? Is it about keeping children off the streets or installing in them the knowledge, skills and attitudes to create a fairer and more sustainable world?” (p.1).

So begins Fiona Carnie's *Alternative Approaches to Education*, the

subtitle of which pitches itself as “a guide for parents and teachers.” It is to parents, in Great Britain, seeking alternatives to public, religious, and elite preparatory schools that this work most directly speaks. Parents outside of the UK will find this less useful, though many of the formal options described here are present in (say) the cities of North America. It is a descriptive catalog, including personal testimony by students, parents, and teachers, of alternative schools that adhere in significant part to the philosophy of “human scale education.”

The elaborated principles of human scale education are: 1) positive relationships, 2) a holistic approach to learning, 3) democratic participation, 4) partnership with parents and the local community, 5) environmental sustainability, and 6) small structures (which the author defines and explains in pp. 17-21). The core thesis of human scale education is that large comprehensive schools fail to meet the needs of many of their students, and that “a smaller scale,” smaller-sized and more personal environments, is better-suited to accomplish this. Carnie briefly mentions American research that attests to the effectiveness of smaller schools (p. 176). Besides praising American research and experimentation with smaller-scale schools (particularly the Coalition of Essential Schools, pp. 173-185, and see Sizer, 1996) she commends the openness of American curriculum. The British National Curriculum is brought under frequent criticism, and alternative schools are portrayed as an escape from this imposition. With *No Child Left Behind* and its concomitant craze for testing, however, American students and teachers are facing the prospect of a similar straightjacket.

Carnie is not a disinterested observer. As the back cover of the book notes, “for over ten years she has been working for Human Scale Education” (www.hse.org.uk). This non-profit organization coordinates the efforts of the schools presented in the “Small Alternative Schools” chapter (Chapter 2). Her work gives her a close understanding of, and passion for, alternative schools in the UK. There is, however, no critique in this book. The reader gets little insight into how a particular alternative school may not be ideal for particular children or a particular social context. This lack of critique must be counted as a deficit.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 talk about older alternative educational philosophies and schools that cleave to them. Here we find Montessori, Steiner Waldorf, and democratic schools (particularly Summerhill). Chapter 6 brings in an international perspective, discussing the Jenaplan schools in the Netherlands, Freinet’s socialist influence in France, the Reggio Emilia phenomenon in Italy, and Dewey-based schools in the United States. Carnie believes that the ideas behind these alternatives offer insights applicable in British schools.

This section (Chapters 2 through 6) forms the core of the catalog of alternatives to state schools. The next (Chapters 7 through 9) discusses homeschooling, but in a refreshingly atypical way. Carnie’s concern is with bringing people—parents, students, teachers, and the community

—together, rather than in facilitating their functioning in complete isolation. These chapters contain a great deal of “how-to” insight for those looking to homeschool, to join with several other families to form a small “learning center,” or to have their children attend public school only part-time. Since much of this section concerns navigating the British institutional and legal context in order to accomplish one of these goals, it will be of limited usefulness to parents and students in other countries. It is, however, useful to be aware of a greater range of options than the either-or choice of public schooling versus homeschooling.

Besides parents, this work will be useful to two (not necessarily distinct) groups of scholar-practitioners. One group consists of comparativists who are interested in responses in various countries to the hegemony of state-run schools. The other group consists of philosophers of education, to whom the options described here can suggest different ways of understanding the ways a school can be from the public schools most of us are most familiar with. The hegemony of state-run schools is under attack in the US, the UK, and elsewhere. Carnie’s work provides an inspiring, if unbalanced, picture of what the future may hold. Unlike thoroughly school-critical work such as that of John Gatto (2002), John Holt (1981, 1990, etc.), or Ivan Illich (1971), Carnie presents an affirmative, if transformed, vision of the social learning context called school. Her final chapter calls upon parents to be involved in the lives of school, whether mainstream or alternative, for the betterment of their children and their society.

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Sizer, T. (1996). *Horace’s Hope: What Works for the American High-School*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Pages: **197** Price: **\$32.95** ISBN: **0-415-24817-5**

Reviewed by Brian Burt, a PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh. His primary interests are the role of education in political theory and the philosophy of educational research.

Culham, Ruth & Wheeler, Amanda (2003) 40
Reproducible Forms for the Writing Traits Classroom:

Checklists, Graphic Organizers, Rubrics and Scoring Sheets, and More to Boost Students' Writing Skills in All Seven Traits. New York: Scholastic.

Ruth Culham and Amanda Wheeler have combined with Scholastic Teaching Resources to produce 40 Reproducible Forms for the Writing Traits Classroom: Checklists, Graphic Organizers, Rubrics and Scoring Sheets, and More to Boost Students' Writing Skills in All Seven Traits. The workbook, designed for teachers of students in grades three and up, has tear out forms (with reproduction privileges), and includes checklists, graphic organizers, rubrics, rubric scoring sheets, as well as tips and suggestions for using the forms in a classroom. The authors have expanded the traditional six writing traits (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions) to a 6 +1 model through the addition of presentation as the seventh trait. They claim that through the use of these materials student writing skills will be boosted.

The text includes a brief introduction to the use of six plus one traits as a teaching and learning tool in the writing classroom. In addition to a description of the traits, the authors describe a "powerful relationship" between the six trait writing process and multiple modes of writing. According to the authors, six trait writing can be used successfully with narrative, expository, persuasive, descriptive and imaginative writing and should be used at all levels of the writing process. The resources are presented in two major divisions, section one includes "Reproducible Forms for Teaching the Writing Traits" while section two includes "Reproducible Forms for Teaching the Writing Modes". Pages are clearly numbered and the contents thoroughly outlined.

In the first section, the authors provide rubrics that can be used by both teachers and students with a 4, 5, and/or 6 point scoring system. The rubrics are complete and user friendly, yet they lack a place to tally the overall score (average or total). The student sample scoring sheets are an important tool for student reflection on their own or their peers' work. The parent communication subsection that follows provides valuable tools for parent-student communication about writing and the subsequent lesson planning support is of good quality. However, both of these subsections would be better placed if located prior to all other tools in the first section.

The reproducible forms for teaching the traits are clearly described with actual pictures of the forms and specific page references. In addition, the authors suggest how to use the specific tear-out sheets and provide teaching tips for using the forms in classrooms. Some of the forms designed specifically for students may be too juvenile beyond the junior high classroom using the writing traits model.

Section two comprises one-third of the total text and provides for application of the writing traits to a variety of modes of writing

(including narrative, expository, persuasive, descriptive and imaginative). The format is similar to section one, yet unlike the previous section, it starts with forms designed to increase parent communication regarding the writing process. This is followed by checklists and then quick references and graphic organizers. The checklists and quick reference pages give students good guidance and tips for writing in each mode.

The authors present practical tools for using 6 + 1 trait writing in the classroom. The workbook is inexpensive, clearly notated, and easy to use. Teachers who use this tool may be more effective with prior training in the 6-trait process, even though the authors do provide background information for those unfamiliar with the use of writing traits.

The authors claim that student writing in all seven traits will be boosted through the use of the materials in this book. While this claim is difficult to support without any student data, it is true that the organized presentation of reproducible material for teachers, students, and parents will be an efficient and valuable tool in the writing traits classroom. Teaching writing traits is indeed appropriate and effective for both a variety of different grade levels and a variety of writing modes, however a majority of the student reproducible forms found in *40 Reproducible Forms for the Writing Traits Classroom* seem best suited for use with students in grades three through eight.

Pages: **64** Price: **\$11.99** ISBN: **0-439-55684-8**

Reviewed by Kristin K. Stang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Special Education, College of Education, at California State University, Fullerton.

Culham, Ruth, & Wheeler, Amanda (2003) *Writing to Prompts in the Trait-Based Classroom: Content Areas*. New York: Scholastic.

Culham, Ruth, & Wheeler, Amanda (2003) *Writing to Prompts in the Trait-Based Classroom: Literature Response*. New York: Scholastic.

These two titles by Culham and Wheeler offer teachers of Grades 3 to 8 ways to encourage their students to write well. Both books mainly consist of writing prompts that teachers can photocopy for immediate use in the classroom, but both books also provide teachers with a method for creating their own writing prompts, following the style used by the authors.

The writing prompts that Culham and Wheeler present here are based

on the "6 + 1 traits of writing" that Culham has written more extensively about in *6 + 1 Traits of Writing : The Complete Guide* (Scholastic, 2003). These writing traits are the characteristics of good writing, as identified by a group of teachers in the mid-1980s, and include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation (pp. 7-8, *Literature Response*; pp. 7-8 *Content Areas*). Culham and Wheeler have devised a tidy writing prompt format for creating writing assignments that encourage students to include the desirable writing traits in their written work. The Culham and Wheeler writing prompt always includes five elements: a role, an audience, a specific format, a topic, and a strong verb that suggests a tone for the writing. Referred to as R.A.F.T.S. prompts, these writing assignments require students to write from a particular perspective (Role), to write for a particular person or group (Audience), to organize their writing within a particular structure (Format), to write on a particular subject (Topic), and to write with a particular purpose in mind (the Strong verb). In both books teachers are encouraged to create writing prompts by first identifying the components of the R.A.F.T.S. prompt on a grid, and then to transfer the prompt to paragraph form. The authors suggest underlining and identifying the R.A.F.T.S. components for the students' information, although some teachers may find this identification of the prompt components unnecessary, depending on the writing levels of their students. Certainly the identification of the assignment pieces assures that the students have clear directions for their writing.

In the *Literature Response* book Culham and Wheeler offer R.A.F.T.S. prompts for 19 "Realistic Fiction" titles, 12 "Historical Fiction" titles, and 14 "Fantasy Fiction" titles. The novels are popular titles, including several Newbery award winners. Teachers of the middle grades will certainly recognize most of the titles and will find, too, that the Culham and Wheeler method of creating these writing prompts makes creating your own prompts for other novels a less daunting task that in it may otherwise seem. The inclusion of a page of "Formats to Consider When Creating Your Own Prompts" and "Strong Verbs to Consider When Creating Your Own Prompts" is helpful for teachers who want to prepare writing assignments based on the literature studied in their classrooms.

In the *Content Areas* book Culham and Wheeler offer many R.A.F.T.S. prompts for Social Science, Math, and Science classrooms, with an emphasis on the national standards in each discipline. For teachers who want to promote writing across the curriculum as an effective way of learning, this book will provide excellent ideas for integrating writing into the content areas. A page of formats and strong verbs is again helpfully included at the end of this book, along with clear instructions for teachers on how to create their own R.A.F.T.S. prompts.

These two teacher resource books offer elementary and middle school teachers many ready-to-use writing prompts and a straightforward method for creating their own clear and imaginative writing

assignments. Teachers of Grades 3-8 literature, science, math, and social studies who are looking for new ways to encourage their students to write will find these well-organized books a helpful source of curriculum-related writing ideas. Both titles are recommended for all teacher resource centers and especially for teachers who want new ideas for writing prompts.

Content Areas book

Pages: **80** Price: **\$12.99** ISBN: **0-439-55685-6**

Literature Response book

Pages: **80** Price: **\$12.99** ISBN: **0-439-55683-X**

Reviewed by Brenda Reed, Queen's University, Canada

Dew-Hughes, Denise (2004) *Educating Children with Fragile X Syndrome: A Multi-Professional View*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

During a teaching career many teachers will have opportunities to work with students with Fragile X Syndrome in mainstream classes. In depth knowledge of the features of the syndrome and appropriate instructional strategies will help teachers work successfully and compassionately with this group of students.

Fragile X Syndrome is a common inherited disability previously known as a type of "mental retardation". The specific genetic mechanism producing this disability was identified in the early 1990's. Many individuals with this syndrome experience life-long learning and other disabilities.

Educating Children with Fragile X Syndrome was written for classroom teachers, and other educators. It was edited by a British educator in association with the Fragile X Society. Included are 24 chapters by international authors representing a variety of disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach is likely to be of value to a teacher wanting to learn more about the instructional implications of this syndrome.

The contributors aim to help teachers learn about the syndrome and then differentiate their instruction to attend to the specific learning needs and disabilities of these students. For example, social anxiety is a common characteristic for children with Fragile X and certain types of learning environments are likely to increase anxiety and trigger problematic reactions. Knowing this, teachers can intervene.

Much research has been done on Fragile X Syndrome and the empirically based content of this book is a strength. While the research results may be found in the journal literature, it is more accessible to

teachers and others when collected into an edited monograph such as this one.

Attention to gender differences and life span developmental issues in the manifestation of the syndrome are additional strengths of the book as is the use of affirming language and tone in the text. In contrast, given that the audience for the book is teachers, the use of more case examples to illustrate features of the syndrome in the classroom context would enhance the book. Some content, for example, that referring to education legislation and policy is specific to England, and readers elsewhere will need to consult other sources for material relevant to their own country.

This book is recommended for academic libraries serving teacher preparation programs, education practitioners, and others wanting to learn about the syndrome.

Pages: 196 Price: \$47.95 ISBN: 0415314887

Reviewed by Laurel Haycock, Librarian for Education, Psychology, & Speech-Hearing- Language Science, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Fidler, Brian & Atton, Tessa (2004) *The Headship Game: The Challenges of Contemporary School Leadership*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

In all fairness, I probably anticipated reading *The Headship Game* with unreasonably high hopes. For years I have studied school leadership, with particular emphasis on headship. Much of this study was self-serving, as I have pondered my own career path. Thus, I grew excited when Fidler and Atton state early on,

We hope that aspiring heads will gain an understanding of the contributions of their learning and experience through a series of posts in school and more formal qualifications before headship. It should also make them more aware of the demands on heads and the pitfalls. We hope that this does not discourage them but makes them more realistic and determined to be well prepared (p. 4).

They also wish to help educate those who work with heads on professional issues and governors/trustees. Admirable goals, indeed. Unfortunately, at least for me, the book does not meet them. It falls short in both content and style.

I am one of those readers who sits with pen in hand, marking and starring passages that grab my attention. A provocative idea, some new information, a well-written section—I highlight anything that I may

want to refer to later. After the introduction, I found myself marking little in *The Headship Game*. Much of the material was very basic information on leadership and education. And while on the surface Fidler and Atton deserve credit for their research—they cite many studies and have a long list of references—they seem to cite their own work much more frequently than any other.

The book also remains much too conceptual. It included plenty of theory about school headship, as it must; but the case studies seem almost afterthoughts. In fact, they are presented in separate shaded boxes, with only rather superficial analysis and commentary. To make the book work better, Fidler and Atton should have developed the cases in greater depth and used them to introduce the theories and concepts that they wished to explore. Doing so would have made school heads seem fuller as people and thus better as real-life lessons.

The heavy majority of the case studies also seemed to dwell on the pitfalls of the job: problems with boards; poor accreditation reviews; sticky personnel issues; all the demands on one's life. In many ways, the book supported the notion that heads are hired only to be eventually fired. While Fidler and Atton certainly want to make their readers fully aware of the job's overwhelming and often precarious nature, they only make some general references to the rewards and pleasures. I know many heads who, despite the pressures of the game, crave no other role.

So, while I admit that my expectations and awareness may have made me the wrong audience for *The Headship Game*, I also would not recommend it to anyone just beginning to consider a headship. Despite their goals quoted above, I can see the book scaring potential heads away rather than nurturing their interest and talents. We need more young educators rising to the challenges of serving as a school head. After all, headship should not be a game, but a calling.

Pages: 248 Price: \$39.95 ISBN: 0-415-27781-7

Reviewed by Mark Crotty, Director of Curricular Programs PreK-12, Greenhill School, Addison, TX

Galey, Paula (2004) *Keep Cool! Strategies for Managing Anger at School*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, distributed by Stenhouse.

This book is directed to teachers and specifically, in my opinion, to middle school teachers, to help them offer children positive ways to manage their anger in school. There are teaching suggestions, and both strategies and hands-on activities to use with children to manage or channel their anger into non-aggressive, non-violent behaviours that are more socially acceptable. The author mentions several times that these strategies are also useful for the teacher to use to manager her/his own

anger.

This short easy-to-read book is divided into seven chapters, starting with an introduction. The first chapter introduces anger, then describes a useful “hassle log” – a reproducible sheet to help students document and reflect on their own behaviour when they get angry. To raise the awareness of the students, the suggestion is to start with an “anger control game” – a game intended to have the players experience the feeling of anger. Another activity has students complete a Johari-like window (Luft, unreferenced by Galey) about themselves, where they identify things, time, people, or actions that make them angry. Several more suggestions are provided to help students display anger in themselves as an identified reaction to something that occurred, such as putting up pieces of paper that look like bricks on a classroom wall to explain one’s present state of anger. Some of the activities lead students to understand why they are angry. Some of the activities are more academic ways of identifying one’s anger; however, the final activity is a physical activity – students keep colored balloons in the air by hitting them as a way to release their pent-up anger.

Each of next five chapters has a similar format starting with Key Ideas. This is followed by Starting Off Ideas (activities that introduce the topic), Let’s Talk about Habits (our good and bad habits), Let’s Talk about Rules, and Let’s Talk about Behavior Rules. Chapter 1, “Where does my anger come from?” discusses just that. I like how the focus is on “me,” rather than the impersonal ‘you’ or ‘one.’ Following these sections are more reproducible handouts to reinforce the points learned about habits, rules, and behavior rules. I particularly like the saying at the end of this chapter: “Anger is only one letter away from Danger,” to reiterate the concern that while people can be and are angry, they must avoid hurting themselves, others, or property.

Chapter 2 is entitled “I’m boiling over,” and includes feelings of anger, excess baggage, and finally triggering anger in others. Each of these topics has a work sheet, with “permission to copy for classroom use.” Simplistic pictures help to convey the intention or meaning of each of the worksheets.

Chapter 3, “Focus on the Physical,” introduces the key idea of how our bodies respond when we are angry, and how we can respond so as not to harm others or ourselves. As before, there are “starting off ideas,” (the lesson motivator), our physical reactions, ways to keep calm, and ending with a section on the strategy of time out in order to cool out. The work sheets are in an unexpected order following these ideas: first, there are several work sheets on time outs; the work sheets next are on the physical reactions to anger, following by ways of keeping/maintaining calm, then ending with a work sheet of an anger thermometer where students are to name and draw their degree/level of anger. The work sheets are in a different order than the topics presented in this section, making it somewhat confusing for the reader. Moreover, they provide unnecessary detail and prescription. Surely students can

brainstorm different ways that they remain “cool, calm, and collected,” as an example of an unnecessary work sheet. After reading this chapter, I am surprised that the balloon activity was detailed in the introductory chapter, and not put here. Moreover, there are many other physical ways not provided here that are well known to help eradicate anger – such as making faces, yelling outside, pounding a pillow, etc.

Chapter 4 is entitled “Focus on Thoughts,” and explores the power of our thoughts for: remaining positive, putting things in perspective, thinking ahead and recognizing the consequences of one’s actions. It suggests anticipating situations by working through anger scenarios. Each of the issues in this chapter is accompanied by a straightforward work sheet. I consider this to be one of the more important chapters in this book; here, I contend, is where more work sheets would be beneficial.

The next chapter, “Powerful Words,” should really be titled “Managing Conflict Effectively.” It very briefly underscores the importance of talking things through with others, and discusses how to negotiate. The author provides the “I feel” words on how to talk and explicitly express what is bothering a person. Again, as the author states, interpersonal communications is a very important concept. I would add that it is a very sophisticated form of interacting. As with the previous chapter on thoughts, I do not think that the topic can be so easily addressed.

The final chapter reviews the unit on anger management, and offers more handouts that students can use when feeling angry and to help them remember what to do when one is angry (time outs, calming down, positive thinking). I am doubtful as to whether these reproducibles should be handouts, or if they might be better used as signs put up around the classroom, to remind the students about the strategies they have learned for managing their anger. I do like the last reproducible however; it is the certificate that teachers can give to students who “know the skills for how to keep cool!”

This book is a useful book, for both teachers and students. It does, more or less, what the author purports it does – provides some strategies to help students control their anger and manage it effectively (i.e., so as not to hurt themselves, others or property). Its content, approach, and reproducibles vary, however, in effectiveness; at times, the book seems to be addressing younger children; at other times, it addresses more mature children (i.e., those in middle school). In particular chapters 4 and 5 contain much more sophisticated content than the previous chapters. Even the drawings on the handouts vary in substance and quality: very simple black and white sketches of the same girl and boy throughout, animals, and more cartoon-like characters.

I want to end by thanking the author for providing all those handouts (albeit too many) and giving explicit permission for them to be copied for classroom use. After all, this book was written for its utility; in that,

it has accomplished its objective.

References

Luft, J. (1969). *Of Human Interaction*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press.

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**Reviewed by Reviewed by Ruth Rees, PhD, Associate Professor,
Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario,
Canada**

Graves, Donald H. (2004) *Teaching Day by Day: 180 Stories to Help You Along the Way*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The utility of stories for educating young children cannot be understated. As Neil Postman wrote in *Atlantic*, human beings require stories to give meaning to the fact of their existence. To answer simple and complex questions that children raise about their existence requires more than just information; it requires stories through which facts can assume meanings. Stories provide the context to the imagination and a structure to our perceptions of the self and of the 'other'.

Stories provide normative theories about how the world and life work. They arrange the information that a child uses to make sense of the things around her and also to reorganize what can be regarded as information in the first place. Once children form perceptions of their own self they often change stories and come up with their own.

Donald Graves' *Teaching Day by Day: 180 Stories to Help You Along the Way* is a collection of stories from various facets of his life. The usefulness of Graves' collection not only lies in that it provides teachers with a ready to use anthology but also in the fact that this collection of stories is an extremely useful guide for authentic teaching. The 180 stories in the volume are arranged in 9 sections. Stories in each section pertain to the author's experiences as a person, as a family man, as a teacher and as a learner.

Graves combines autobiography, thick qualitative description, anecdotes, narratives and touching stories from the inner landscape of a caring teacher to come up with 180 vignettes (roughly one for each day of the average school calendar) that can be used in many teaching situations. Teachers can use these stories to not only for teaching writing but for a multitude of teaching and learning activities at various levels of education. They can also use these stories to explore their inner landscapes, inspect their emotional and intellectual baggage and bring out their authenticity.

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Postman, N. (1989). Learning By Story. *The Atlantic*, 264(6), 119-124.

Pages: **204** Price: **\$18.50** ISBN: **0-325-00598-2**

Reviewed by Muhammad Ayaz Naseem, McGill University, Montreal

Hamm, Barbara (2004) *Media Center Discovery: 180 Ready-to-Use Activities for Language Arts, Grades 5- 8.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Barbara Hamm presents us with a new offering in the realm of guiding upper primary and middle school students through activities and lessons designed to promote effective use of libraries in writing tasks. This 48 lesson book is structured to meet the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Education Communications and Technology (ACET) joint guidelines which established nine Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning in 1988.

The eleven Units have from one to nine lessons each, arranged in general categories (Using Reference Resources, Dewey Decimal System, Fiction, Electronic Materials, etc.). Each lesson has activities for students, while most also have transparencies and worksheets. Some also have ideas for playing games, which research shows increases the engagement of students in their learning.

The strengths of this work are that many of the elements of the various lessons include explicit instruction to guide teachers in teaching students the areas, genres, resources, layout, and applications for the resources in a library. Hamm's extensive experience as a classroom teacher and library media specialist is evident. Her use of activities, games, worksheets, and transparencies supports student learning. The transparencies and worksheets she provides are designed to be photocopied right out of the book, making it easy to select and develop a lesson quickly. She also provides recommendations, based on her experience, for the approximate grade level of difficulty the activities represent. These guidelines would be helpful in designing differentiated lessons for students at varying levels of readiness for library skills.

One limitation of the book is the numbering system used to identify parts of lessons across units. The transparencies, activities, worksheets, and games are numbered sequentially within a unit, but span several lessons, making identification of which one goes with which lesson somewhat tedious. A few of the games suggested lack some of the details necessary to envision the structure for the games, or how students would understand defining success in the game. (e.g.: p.121,

“Encyclopedia” – results are a guess of common topic, without description of how teams “win” or define success or how to deal with close but not exact guesses—much teacher discretion in design required.) Some minor distractions occur as the author refers to home reference libraries (p. xxiv), indicating that yearly updates of encyclopedias are a large investment. While this may be true for paper versions, CD-ROM versions of Encyclopedia Britannica are available for under \$10. In addition, much emphasis is placed on lessons focused on traditional card catalogs (five lessons) while two are designed to teach electronic retrieval. As we move through the technological revolution in schools, the balance of attention might be better allocated to additional attention in the area of electronic catalog searching.

In this era of accountability and standards-based instruction, this book presents an entire curriculum on the use of libraries tied to a nationally established set of standards. For a library/media center specialist or a teacher who has considerable available time to spend with students in familiarizing them with the library, many of the activities recommended would do well in serving the purpose of enhancing students’ understanding of what is in a library and how to find it.

Pages: **360** Price: **\$29.95** ISBN: **0-7879-6960-5**

Reviewed by Karen S. Romito, Educational Consultant (Curriculum Management Systems, Inc., Phi Delta Kappa, Association of California School Administrators, Consortium on Reading Excellence) and doctoral student, St. Mary’s College of California.

Kelly, Jennifer (2004) *Borrowed Identities*. New York: Peter Lang.

As educators we come into constant contact with children from various backgrounds who adhere to a wide range of values, interests and styles. Quite often, with minority groups in particular, we tend to educate ourselves in the differences that cross the abundance of cultures but disregard behavior that we see as having more to do with urban street culture than race or ethnicity.

Borrowed Identities looks at the impact the technology of the 21st century has had on African-Canadian youth and the way they view themselves in relation to other students, blacks, Canadians and Africans. In a search for both, meaning and interconnectedness, this qualitative study rests on the narratives of black Canadian high school students. In it they share their views on a host of topics ranging from national identity to music and clothing.

Kelly’s basic premise is this: due to the pervasive and dominating presence of U.S. media in Canada (and the world) along with its

accompanying commodification and push for consumption, black youth from Canada create, or rather borrow, an “Imaginary blackness.... upon visibility, icons, [and] images” (p. 147, quoted from Gilroy, 2000) transmitted via electronic and print media from urban America. At the heart of the book are three chapters in which an “indication of how representation works intertextually to contour meaning through racialized regimes of representation” (p. 59) are characterized through music, magazines, television and film.

The hypermasculine attitude, style of dress, walk, argot and slang as imitated in school hallways were first portrayed by U.S. hip-hop music and films like *Boyz N the Hood*, and are adopted as universally symbolic of the black experience. The application to those of us who reside and teach in the U.S. is this: the Canadian youth who take upon themselves this Hollywood persona are no farther removed from this ultra-urban image being marketed to them as authentic, than are black youth living in rural or suburban America. Until we recognize “the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black,’ that is the recognition that ‘black’ is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories” (p. 191, as quoted from Hall, 1988) we will be faced with students who subscribe to an artificial youth culture to fill the gap in their search for who they really are.

Kelly does a marvelous job of addressing the issue of the African diaspora as it relates to black collective consciousness in a white-dominated society. Here we see the youth “articulate a discourse of ‘blackness’ and ‘belonging’ that crosses geographic borders” (p. 32). Coming from a U.S., politically-correct environment in which we use the reference African-American, I was amazed to read that these Canadian youth identified more with the label of Black. None of them seemed to distinguish themselves as Canadian even though they may have been born there. Nor was there much of a connection with Africa, many recognized specific countries, like Jamaica and the West Indies, as the origin of their roots. As one boy put it:

Saaka: I don’t like when people say... they are African. ‘What country in Africa are you from?’ When people ask me if I am African, I go ‘No, I am Nigerian.’ They ask, ‘Where is that?’ ‘Africa.’ They go ‘Oooh.’ No one knows anything about Africa because it’s never taught. [Nigeria is the biggest] country in Africa and no one can find it on a map. It’s like Americans [laugh] Americans don’t know anything about Canada (p.38).

One of the most refreshing points of the book is to break away from the weightiness of the “expert,” theoretical verbiage, and get to read the simple words and thoughts of the actual kids being examined. Kelly weaves the student narratives from both one-on-one interviews and

focus groups into her explanation of the theories and issues surrounding identity formation and black Canadian youth. At times the author's own bias is revealed as she makes assumptions tying the students' mind to academic theory. The ties are not always straightforward, at times ambiguous. Early in the book the author admits that inherent in this type of study is a certain level of subjectivity and researcher bias. She does not see that bias as being problematic, but rather a virtue to be embraced. The most obvious point for me was that there were few clear threads connecting the students. Each had views and opinions, backgrounds and tastes that crossed the gamut of human existence.

Although *Borrowed Identities* draws on the views of only fourteen black Canadian students from two Edmonton schools, their thoughts on matters of race, gender, sexuality and religion as impacted by popular movies and music echo through school corridors and on street corners clear across America. While not a casual read by any means it does, in the best standards of academic writing, serve as a seed for thought and consideration in how we look at our children and their struggle to find self and meaning in this global and consumption driven world.

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Pages: 231 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-8204-6127-X

Reviewed by Kevin D. Simmons, Adams State College. Currently a student in the MA program in Counseling Psychology. He is also the At Risk department head and Student Support Team (SST) chair of an 800+ student middle school in an economically depressed area of southern Utah. He will also be taking on the position of Guidance Counselor at the Liahona Academy (an RTC for teenage boys) this year. This book review was completed as a class project for "Lifespan Development." The book was selected because of an interest in the impact of communication (BS in Organizational Communication from the University of Portland) and its impact on adolescent identity formation; particularly in minority groups.

Kristo, Janice V. & Bamford, Rosemary A. (2004)
Nonfiction In Focus: A Comprehensive Framework for Helping Students Become Independent Readers and Writers of Nonfiction, K – 6. New York: **Scholastic**.

I'm a freelance writer of non-fiction essays, with published stories about travel and food around the world. I was curious then, about teaching non-fiction to school age children.

For a comprehensive review in "how to" form, turn to *Nonfiction in Focus*. Authors Kristo and Bamford present a complete system for teaching students to comprehend, respond to, and write nonfiction. Divided into two parts, the first half of the book explains nonfiction and how to evaluate this genre for use in a literacy program. The second half details strategies for using nonfiction as a literacy learning activity, building sequentially from teacher-guided through independent student activities.

The book's teaching/learning framework is derived from Vygotsky's Social-Cultural Theory. Scaffolding by the teacher of literacy activities in nonfiction is a primary strategy, while other facets of Vygotskian theory are demonstrated in the "read aloud" and "think aloud" activities encouraged by the authors. Each chapter clearly illustrates with examples and tables the type of scaffolded instruction presented.

Each chapter presents a figure, highlighting activities for that chapter against the total framework. In Part Two of the book, the authors wisely begin at the most scaffolded level of teaching (Instructional Read-Alouds and Modeled Writing) and progress to the most teacher-independent instruction (reading and writing through Discovery Circles). Each Part Two chapter begins with "Quick Points" explaining the purpose, scaffolding level, teacher/student roles, instructional context, types of materials and possible future directions for the chapter's instructional method.

Along the way are lists of suggested books and "text sets" reflective of a particular theme for the curriculum. Figures and tables clearly explain the major points and are useful resources for comprehending the framework, particularly within a teacher-training setting. Other sidebars include benefits of instruction, prompts to use, points to consider, and stages of reading behaviors across the K-6 spectrum, comparison charts, classroom guides and check sheets. The chapter's main points are summarized at the end in "Closing Thoughts."

Nonfiction in Focus also includes multiple appendices that list nonfiction award winners, magazines of nonfiction for children and helpful checklists for student assessment of nonfiction works, teacher assessment of instruction, and curriculum design for K-6 nonfiction studies.

The book is awash with figures, boxes and sidebars, which may be both its strong suit and its Achilles' heel. I found my eye continually drawn to the figures attractively scattered over nearly every page. But the text was gnawingly similar to the boxes I had just read. The prose-heavy figures provide a quick summary, explanatory content and easily digested points, which contribute to the implementation of the learning

framework. The text covers the same information, often without adding depth to the fine explanations in the figures.

Suggested non-fiction text sets in the book are narrowly focused. Nature topics are favorites, as are books of historical non-fiction. Other areas like cultural studies, recreation, personal essay, manufacturing processes, travel and customs are clearly missing from the repertoire suggested for the K-6 student. The enterprising teacher can dig through the appendices for further suggestions, or arrive at the conclusion that these topics are, perhaps, less conducive to K-6 student learning. I disagree.

Overall, *Nonfiction in Focus* provides a well-researched and comprehensive system of instruction grounded in relevant educational theory. This book would be an excellent addition for the new teacher, or as a faculty development and teacher training resource. It can help literacy students understand how nonfiction information is presented and used, and how to wisely approach the material, whether it's is the life cycle of butterflies or a first-person tale about eating gelato in Italy.

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Pages: **304** Price: **\$27.99** ISBN: **0-439-36598-8**

Reviewed by Deborah J. Smith, Ed. D., Empire State College, Saratoga Springs, New York

Levin, Diane E. (2003) *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times: Building a Peaceable Classroom*. Second edition. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility .

Diane Levin's *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times* provides step-by- step guidance for pre-school and kindergarten teachers who want to make their classrooms more peaceable. Well integrated with this guidance are useful summaries of relevant theory in child development, conflict resolution, and the effects of media on young children's thinking. Levin favors child-based and child-initiated discussion over all else, and her book includes many interesting verbatim transcripts of discussions among children and teachers, and discussions between teachers and individual students. Some of these transcripts include running commentary by the author about what the teacher or child is doing, and what the teacher ought to do. The primary

framework of her method can be seen in her advice about how to talk with children about violent events in the media: listen to what children say and ask open-ended questions to discover what they know and think; respond to the issues they raise rather than bringing in adult agendas, answers, facts; provide information necessary for child to “feel safe;” consider each discussion as part of an ongoing process.

In the first section, “Establishing a Foundation for Peace,” Levin describes the ubiquitousness of violence in the contemporary American world as existing on a continuum from “real” experienced violence in home (low prevalence of exposure), to media violence (nearly universal exposure). This unending exposure to violence leads children to develop repertoires of conflict behaviors grounded in the use of violence, rather than peace, to achieve solutions. According to the constructivist developmental theory presented by Levin, the meanings that young children construct from events and experiences are egocentric, imitative, conflated with fantasy, stimulus-bound, and non-logical. In this stage they are prone, without active adult help, to make the very worst of violence. Adults must provide opportunities and scaffolding in order to complicate children’s thinking/actions in such a way that they can think/act peaceably. From here, Levin presents a model of a peaceable classroom where the first need is to be safe and to feel safe. The developmental needs most important for the teacher in the peaceable classroom to meet are safety, autonomy, connectedness and mutual respect, gender identity and appreciation of diversity, understanding of violent experiences, and support for personal meaning making. Guidelines for teaching practices that support this model are provided.

In the second section, “Building a Peaceable Classroom,” Levin addresses conflict resolution, anti-bias education, creative play, and dealing with media violence. Conflict resolution is an essential aspect of peace education, made difficult by the level of aggression and the poor repertoire of peacemaking skills brought to schools by children, by teachers’ own dispositions and training, and by the emphasis in schools on discipline and performance. According to Levin, teachers must go beyond treating children’s behavior as a management/discipline problem and help children build skills for solving their own conflicts peaceably (i.e. through discussion), arriving at win-win, rather than win-lose, solutions. A frequent source of conflict and violence are the stereotypes and biases brought from home, and the world generally, into the classroom. Teachers are urged, when confronted with, e.g., racist or sexist behavior and words to suppress the urge to “pour adults ideas into kids’ heads,” and instead to allow kids to talk freely and safely and together about what they think and why. They must help children construct bias-free representations, incorporate all aspects of diversity in their curricula, encourage mutual respect and promote just action: this should be the core of social studies in the early childhood classroom.

Levin goes on to say that anti-bias education is not colorblind, not

adult-oriented, and does not “exoticize” otherness. The chapter on fostering creative play centers on overcoming the tendency of children to overuse media characters, like the Power Rangers, and media-scripts, like simple good vs. evil scenario in which the good characters are permitted every form of violence against the bad. In the author’s view play is primarily cognitive, that is, working out cognitive solutions to understand “violence” or other kinds of affective problems. The role of teacher is to help children complicate their play in ways that allow them to move beyond the narrow, prescriptive and violent solutions to conflicts offered in the media, to more nuanced understandings and peaceable solutions. Levin concludes this section with discussion and guidelines related to dealing with children’s exposure to violence in the news, with a special emphasis on work with children in the aftermath of 9/11. The emphasis here is on using whatever material children bring to the table to arrive at safe, constructive, helpful representations. For example, one boy’s art suggests that we should give Osama Bin Laden money to buy building materials so he doesn’t have to live in a cave. The modes of dealing with these kinds of mediated “real” violence are discussion, play and art, with a sort of pseudo-therapeutic bent directed at the “working through” of internal fears and misunderstandings. The most important goals are promotion of feelings of safety among children, and the construction of narratives that feature helping and hope, rather than exclusively death and despair.

The final section of the book offers curricular suggestions for building a peaceable classroom, starting from familiar early childhood educational activities. Levin recommends, and offers detailed guidelines for creating class charts, cooperative games, “us” puppets, conflict stories, curriculum webs, and for using children’s literature. Her ideas are eminently practical and grounded in the principles of a peaceable classroom. The goal of the activities she proposes are community-building, development of children’s autonomy and freedom, collaborative problem-solving, perspective-taking, peaceful problem solving, literacy and numeracy development, to name a few. *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times* would be a useful and salutary addition to the library of almost anyone who works extensively with young children. Having visiting many kindergartens as a teacher, supervisor and parent, I can only applaud the goal of making these classrooms more peaceable, and more child-centered. It is unfortunately rare that peace, or even cooperation and mutual understanding, is a real goal of early childhood education. This book contains many very useful strategies for creating a peaceable classroom, from how to conduct a discussion that is not a teacher lecturing, to how to think about community and curricula in ways that further rather than hinder development.

I do have some complaints. The “finding” that aggression is learned and not a constituent part of the human makeup is overstated, which affects the way that one might understand “working through.” In general, the adoption of a pseudo-therapeutic approach to dealing with

important emotional issues with children requires a fuller explication. Additionally, that media violence has a negative impact on children's development, a position often taken implicitly or explicitly by the author, is certainly not something that everyone agrees upon. Following from Levin's assumptions about the importance and valence of media influence, there is, it seems to me, an overemphasis on countering the media and its representations of violence, and a neglect, bordering on denial, of "violence in the world." Sometimes this leads to what seems to me a rather simplistic view of social violence and aggression, and to the false conclusion that one might keep children safe merely by turning off the television and staying away from Toys'R'Us and Walmart. Part of my reaction is probably due to my own experience working with older children and adolescents, for whom peace cannot be achieved without due consideration of questions of justice and truth. That said, almost all the specific strategies for discussion, problem-solving, re-presentation of personal meaning and curricula that Levin presents here would be quite applicable for a teacher of older children, or even for a teacher of college students. I know that this book would be a very valuable resource in a teacher education class, where I plan to use it.

Pages: **184** Price: **\$23.95** ISBN: **0942349180**

Reviewed by William New, Associate Professor of Education Studies, Beloit College

Lyon, Anna & Moore, Paula (2003) *Sound Systems: Explicit Systematic Phonics in Early Literacy Context*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Sound Systems is a guide for teaching phonics as an integrated part of a literacy block consisting of shared reading, shared writing, and guided reading and writing workshops. The goal is to provide teachers with the tools to meet the needs of individual students while directing the overall progress of the class in understanding the complex letter-sound relationship in English. The book is divided into three sections: phonics research, phonics assessment, and phonics instruction. Included are appendices with key concepts for developmental reading stages as well as resource materials for implementing the assessments and instructions in the book.

The book was written in the context of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the new emphasis on proven scientific research for education. What this means for educators is that the pendulum is swinging strongly in favor of phonics instruction in the long-standing dispute regarding the importance of phonics instruction versus whole language instruction. Newcomers to the debate can read the history going back to the seventeenth century in an article by Robinson, Baker

and Clegg (1998).

Sound Systems is based on the findings of research from the Report of the National Reading Panel stressing the importance of systematic phonics instruction in learning to read (NICHD, 2000) and the recent findings in brain research related to reading (Bransford, 2000). Reading ability is divided into the broad developmental categories of emergent, early and transitional to track progress in reading (Lyon and Moore, 2003, p. 11). The authors provide a theoretical and research based context for what is ultimately a practical resource.

The position taken by *Sound Systems* echoes the view of the International Reading Association, a key player in literacy standards development. The IRA presented a position paper in 1997, which is still relevant today. The IRA states, “When phonics instruction is linked to children’s genuine efforts to read and write, they are motivated to learn. When phonics instruction is linked to children’s reading and writing, they are more likely to become strategic and independent in their use of phonics than when phonics instruction is drilled and practiced in isolation. Phonics knowledge is critical but not sufficient to support growing independence in reading” (IRA, 1997. p. 4).

The program designed in *Sound Systems* incorporates the use of periodic assessments such as Running Records, the Names Test, and Analysis of Errors in Writing Samples as a key component of phonics instruction. The results of assessments are used to design individual, small group, and entire class instruction. Cumulative records of individual and class achievement are used to guide phonics instruction during the course of the year.

Using a tailored approach to phonics instruction allows children who read at grade level to continue in their development while providing necessary tutoring for children whose knowledge base is below grade level. This is in keeping with the findings of the National Reading Panel who state, “Children who have already developed phonics skills can apply them to reading and do not require the same level and intensity in phonics instruction provided to children at the initial phases of reading acquisition” (NICHD, 2000 p.11).

Lyon and Moore admit that it is “complex to assess students’ needs and match instruction to the students” (p. 65). This is an obstacle that might prevent some teachers from implementing the program of instruction that is recommended in the book. The alternative of a commercial phonics program may be attractive to some teachers.

Only history will tell us whether the current focus on scientifically proven methods and nationally mandated standards assessment will have a successful outcome in improving literacy. Past history indicates that extreme positions do not lead to success and inevitably lead to a swing of the pendulum back to other extreme approaches (Robinson,

Baker and Clegg, 1998). *Sound Systems* is trying for a compromise by integrating systematic phonics instruction into the literacy block devoted to reading, writing and spelling.

I recommend this book for undergraduate (and graduate) courses that prepare teachers to teach phonics as well as K-3 teachers who are looking for a way to systematically incorporate phonics instruction into a literacy block.

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Pages: **167** Price: **\$21.88** ISBN: **1-57110-346-5**

Reviewed by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Bibliographer at the University of Maine. In addition to her M.S. in Library Studies from Florida State University, she has an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida with a specialization in language acquisition.

Melwani, Mona (2003) *Just the Right Words: 201 Report Card Comments: Short Narrative Comments, Word Lists, and Sentence Starters That Cover any Situation, Let Parents Know How Their Kids Are Doing-And Save You Time!* New York: Scholastic.

This is a book that should be read before the school year begins and then referred to before each marking period. The title says it all! *Just the Right Words* is a helpful resource for all elementary classroom teachers. It is especially helpful for beginning teachers just getting the hang of assessment and treading the difficult waters of parent- student-teacher communication through report cards. In just 96 pages the

author provides a blueprint for organizing and synthesizing all the myriad teacher observations, notes, parent-teacher conferences, interventions, behavior modifications, student conferences and rubrics into a seamless assessment tool.

Author Mona Melwani confesses that she has a unique background and experience as an educator. She taught at an international school in Asia for over twenty years. Students were well behaved and highly motivated. The student body represented over fifty countries. Melwani's approach reveals her to be a sensitive, caring teacher. She succinctly explores the dilemmas of communicating with students and parents of ESL, developing, proficient and struggling learners.

Each chapter gives an overview of the topic. Chapter 1 contains a general review of report cards, and assessment. The author gives guidelines for report cards. She discusses the impact of report cards on the parent-teacher relationship. Chapter 1 also includes a handy rubric of common report-card descriptors (p. 11). Each chapter contains a representative student report card, and then reviews the descriptors and comments used for students at different proficiency levels. Chapters 2-4 cover the disciplines of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Chapter 5 covers social - emotional behavior and work habits. Chapter 6 covers general comments used by homeroom teachers. Lists of synonyms for terms that describe student work are also interspersed throughout the chapters.

Appendix A contains generic paragraph descriptions of curricula with examples of how to tie these to individual student work. The other appendices contain alphabetic listings of useful phrases divided according to discipline, a list of do's and don'ts and a list of active verbs. A bibliography of recent resources is contained at the end of the book.

In addition to all of this, the graphic layout of the book is very appealing. Text boxes resembling lined notepaper are used to clarify the text. Shaded underlined text in bold, reminiscent of hyperlinks, classify the narratives and comments. These elements coupled with lots of white space, chunked information, and appropriate photographs of diverse teachers and students at the beginning of each chapter; create a dialogue between the author and the reader. It is a pity that the paper and binding are so flimsy.

Just the Right Words is an engaging student assessment handbook for beginning teachers and a useful review for their more experienced colleagues. The suggestions of veteran teacher Melwani, subtly guide readers through the organizational demands of creating a three dimensional portrait of student work and achievement in the classroom and of creating a respectful dialogue between teacher, parent and student. A useful addition to the Scholastic Teaching Strategies series.

Pages: **96** Price: **\$13.99** ISBN: **0-439-53136-5**

Reviewed by Sheila Kirven, Education Services Librarian, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ.

Owocki, Gretchen (2003) *Comprehension: Strategic Instruction for K-3 Students*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Owocki, who has focused on children's literacy in her teaching and past work, delivers a more than respectable guidebook about the practical nuts and bolts of teaching reading to primary students. Based on recent research and her experience with young readers, the author details a systematic approach for working in a variety of reading contexts: whole-class, small-group, partner, independent, and individual instruction, as well as literature circles. Owocki bases her macro-process approach on ten tested strategies known to be used by proficient readers: predicting, inferring, setting the purpose, retelling, questioning, monitoring, visualizing, connecting, deciding what is important, and evaluating. She then breaks down these basic strategies into twenty-seven mini-strategies that help children develop their comprehension over time.

Stemming from her premise that teachers should nurture a passion for literature, Owocki, in a step-by-step fashion, carefully guides teachers in the ways they may help primary readers to improve their listening and reading comprehension. Chapter 1 describes the most important characteristics of good readers and what teachers should do to support their development. She cautions that while decoding and preparing for future grades is important, teachers should provide books whereby children connect reading to content of *interest* to them, so that reading becomes a vital, relevant part of their lives.

Chapters 2 thru 6 are chock full of graphic organizers, instructional charts, evaluation tools, and numerous examples of teacher-talk meant to engage students in their comprehension tasks. Besides delineating the ten basic strategies, Chapter 2 includes useful charts that outline "Successful Reader Strategies" and "Strategies for Kids" with questions that young readers should ask of themselves as their comprehension skills become increasingly advanced.

Besides explaining "A Framework for Comprehension Instruction," Chapter 3 features a much needed tool for outreach to parents, "Information Request for Families," in the form of a reproducible letter, and a lesson plan, "Deciding What's Important," that employs actual teacher-talk at the primary level. Owocki also provides a clear explanation of scaffolding (a term that some educators have used to describe almost any type of teacher support). To properly scaffold, for example, she advocates that teachers utilize *conversational* rather than interrogational talk.

Chapters 4 thru 6 describe how to work with the ten strategies, including the adjustments for teaching comprehension in various groupings. Chapter 4 alone has twenty- nine figures that teachers can copy and use to initiate the comprehension strategies. Chapter 7 is an unexpected delight in guidebooks of this nature. In this last chapter, Owocki develops in great detail the specific pieces of children's literature that are most appropriate for developing each of the twenty-seven mini-strategies for comprehension. Even if her book choices are not accessible, a teacher could determine an equivalent book for addressing each of the twenty-seven specific comprehension mini-strategies.

Owocki has provided an accessible, easy to understand, useful guide for teachers to quickly get primary children started on their path toward greater reading comprehension. Her examples and graphic approach (whether through detailed descriptions, or her charts, graphs, and other figures) would be most useful to first- and second-year teachers, while her systematic approach could augment or improve the efforts of a veteran teacher. This book is close to a state-of-the-art approach to teaching reading comprehension, straight- forward yet eloquent at times, designed for teachers who must keep track of student progress and yet function in-the-moment with their young readers.

Pages: 176 Price: \$21.00 ISBN: 0-325-00576-1

Reviewed by James A. Therrell, an Assistant Professor of Education at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva, Oklahoma. A recent K-1 teacher, he is now teaching both graduate and undergraduate classes, he is also the Facilitator of the Early Childhood Education Network for the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. Dr. Therrell's research interests involve the teaching-learning processes that contribute to flow experiences, as well as teacher collaboration.

Ray, Katie Wood & Cleaveland, Lisa B. (2004) *About the Authors: Writing Workshop With Our Youngest Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Written by writer and researcher Katie Ray and kindergarten/first grade teacher Lisa Cleaveland, this very readable text provides a "simple" and basic way to teach children to write and ways to encourage them to want to write. The basic premise is that children should write every day, "no matter what, let them write every day" (p. ix). Included in the book are "books" written and illustrated by kindergarten and first grade students.

The book is divided into three sections to explain writing workshop in the classroom: "Building a Strong Foundation," "Understanding the Teacher," and "An Overview of Units of Study."

Cleaveland includes time for writing workshop in her first grade class from the beginning of the school year. Encouraging children's curiosity and providing them with materials for their writing allows them to use their energy "to fuel the writing" (p. 7). According to the authors, teachers must be able to accept that the writing done by five and six-year-olds will look just like that – writing by five and six-year-olds. The term "approximation" is used to describe what teachers must be willing and able to accept from the students. Teachers must see past the spelling and language to the understanding and intent of the children.

Writing workshop is regimented only in that it is a regular occurrence in the classroom. Cleaveland believes "that two things are essential for the development of children as writers: experience and teaching" (p. 24) In order to learn to write they must write and they must be taught through lessons during each writing workshop time. Also necessary for the children to learn to write is "environmental support." This means that the children should be surrounded by writing. It is through the many kinds of writing that children learn – games, banners, posters, songs, menus, blocks, and books.

The final section of the book provides units of study which include techniques, resources, ways to make the writing and illustrating better, discussion of genre, and sample children's books.

This book gives the necessary information for a teacher to implement writing workshop in the classroom. The authors have done their homework and tried the various strategies and ideas in the classroom. It is organized and easy to follow, providing a wealth of information. The examples of books written by children indicate just how much children can do if they are allowed to freely write.

Pages: **256** Price: **\$25.00** ISBN: **0-325-00511-7**

Reviewed by Naomi Williamson, Associate Professor, Library Services, Central Missouri State University.

Robertson, Brian C. (2003) *Day Care Deception: What the Child Care Establishment Isn't Telling Us*. San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books.

One cannot fault Robertson's goal to educate the public about the inside scoop on the presumed ill effects of daycare on child development. His efforts in pursuit of this goal are too often muddled by a convoluted and selective citation of what the author presents as evidence. Selective, in this context, refers to Robertson's emphasis on popular press articles and comments made by some day care proponents and far more numerous day care opponents. Given the considerable body of academic research concerning the effects of daycare on child development, its slim treatment by the author is a

serious omission.

When the author does examine the academic literature, his review of findings is often unbalanced, a claim that he levels against the academic community in its own presentation of daycare research findings. For example, the second chapter is largely devoted to the academic response to Jay Belsky's research, which often has been interpreted as yielding anti-daycare conclusions. Those researchers whose findings do not concur with the author's beliefs that day care has harmful effects are portrayed as toeing a party line, whereas those whose findings are consistent with Robertson's views are portrayed as academic outcasts. This imbalance, however, may pale in comparison with Robertson's polemic that indicts the day care establishment and today's parenting style for ill effects that are not clearly related to the care of children by individuals other than their parents.

The latter focus is evident in the first chapter, dedicated to a discussion of the 1999 Columbine killings. The perpetrators of this heinous crime, according to Robertson's telling, are adolescents exposed to deficient parental care as characterized by parental absence at some unspecified time in the adolescents' lives. How parental care of adolescents is linked to early childhood daycare, which is presumably the focus of the book, is far from clear and is not substantiated.

A clearer but still tenuous connection is made later by the author concerning the number of prescriptions for antibiotics requested by mothers with children in day care. The reader is supposed to infer that children in day care are more inclined toward illness than children not in day care. However, without baseline information about how many children, during whatever the author perceives as the day care era (which also is unclear), require antibiotics, this conclusion cannot be reasonably drawn. Finally, comments such as attributing the "process of internalizing moral requirements" to "consistent, devoted individualized care" (p.78) are baseless, and emblematic of the relatively simplistic accounts for children's behavior that all too often appear throughout the book.

An opportunity for clarity and explication of Robertson's suggestions for redressing the liabilities of day care is presented in the final chapter. However, this opportunity is allotted a mere 12 pages that are largely consumed by a review of current and proposed governmental economic policies. Clearly, these policies have implications for the delivery and use of day care and ultimately, its subsequent effects on child development. However, one might have hoped for some concluding statement about ways to remedy the status of day care, parenting, or whatever had ultimately been the focus of this book.

Pages: **222** Price: **\$25.95** ISBN: **1-893554-67-8**

Reviewed by Fran C. Blumberg & Stacey J. Eger, Fordham University, Graduate School of Education

Schmidt, John J. (2004) *A Survival Guide for the Elementary/Middle School Counselor*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Do you feel like you are functioning in a survival mode day-to-day as you go about your job as a school counselor? Juggling all the duties a counselor is responsible for brings about this feeling whether you are new to the profession or experienced. Author, John J. Schmidt, Ed.D, believes counselors need to be proactive in their jobs instead of working in a survival mode. Hence, the second edition of *A Survival Guide for the Elementary/Middle School Counselor*, is now available to give practicing counselors tools and strategies to help them become more proactive in what they do. Like the sentences above, the book speaks directly to counselors.

This book is a treasure-trove of wonderful insights and resources from an author who has been in the trenches and knows what it is like. He speaks from the heart with insights and knowledge that only come from experience. Everyone can learn something from this book to make any counseling program a little more effective. Reading the book may be overwhelming at first, but remember to take it one step at a time. A quality comprehensive counseling program takes time to develop and grow.

Throughout the book, Schmidt keeps in mind the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) national model when sharing ideas. A comprehensive developmental counseling program belongs to the entire school, not just the counselor, and should follow the guidelines of ASCA, the state education agency, and local school district. An advisory committee is a means to involve the entire school staff in the counseling program. Schmidt shares ways to use the advisory committee in planning and developing the counseling program in several chapters.

Each chapter includes ideas and strategies to help a counselor be: identifiable, capable, available, and accountable. Schmidt believes these characteristics are essential to being a successful counselor. From his experience he shares reasons why he believes something should be done a certain way, along with pitfalls that may be encountered and how to avoid them. Sample forms and checklists are included throughout the book to help the reader put into practice the strategies outlined in the book. He also advocates that readers examine his ideas and strategies and use only the ones that fit their personal style and professional setting. Not all of them will work for everyone.

“Why are you here?” and “What are you supposed to do?” are addressed in Chapter 1. Schmidt contends that in a comprehensive program there should be preventive services, developmental activities and remedial interventions that involve students, parents, and teachers.

This section gives guidelines to help in planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive program. Ways to seek input from others are explored as this is essential in an effective program. Schmidt includes suggested ways to communicate the counselor's role to the staff, parents and students, along with a glossary of services.

Schmidt suggests asking an advisory committee to do a needs assessment, write program goals and objectives, develop services and activities, and recommend assignments for delivery of services. The book includes practical ways to promote the counseling program and balance time demands, while worksheets help prioritize activities and set a schedule.

For program planning, Schmidt suggests assessment procedures, organizational structures and evaluation processes. He shares tips on how to coordinate referrals, schedules, records, and other aspects of a counseling program. In a discussion of essential services Schmidt outlines three basic services Counseling, Consulting and Appraising along with describing specific services that belong in each of these broad categories. He provides basic information about individual counseling, interviewing children, brief counseling, group counseling and parent/teacher counseling. Consulting may be situational, informational, or instructional.

“The essence of a comprehensive school counseling program (is) to assure that each student has every possible opportunity to develop his or her potential” (p. 107). In order for this to be a reality, the counseling curriculum needs to be integrated within the academic curriculum. Chapter 5 addresses this issue and shares ways to integrate affective education, educational planning, test results and improved instruction and career development in a way that promotes a “lifetime of learning.”

In today's society, counselors work with a diverse population. Exceptional children, English language learners, and culturally diverse populations. Schmidt does not fail to address ways a counselor can be an advocate for all children; to be sure they receive the services needed to develop to their fullest potential.

Every school needs a Crisis Intervention Plan in place. Schmidt describes in detail how to go about setting up a team, what should be in the plan, how to set the plan up and the procedures to run it. He describes preventive activities and programs involving students and parents. A sample plan of action for crisis counseling is included which will guide the counselor in working with the child in crisis.

Students come to the counselor with a variety of concerns. Schmidt devotes an entire chapter to describing some of these concerns and possible strategies that can be used to address them. For each concern the following questions are discussed: What is it? What are the effects

emotionally and educationally? and What do you do? The concerns included are: bullying, divorce, child care, loneliness, relocation, stress, underachievers, child depression and suicide, child abuse, chronic and terminal illness, substance abuse, loss, violence and school phobia.

The last few chapters are devoted to the counselor's community relationships within the school, the neighborhood, the area and the profession. Schmidt discusses ethics, values, legal issues and emotional well being.

A Survival Guide for the Elementary/Middle School Counselor is a resource packed full of information to help all counselors. The book is organized in such a way that counselors can take one aspect of a program, develop a plan to implement some of the ideas and strategies presented and then proceed to another area at a later date. It is meant as a guide to take what matches individual program needs and leave behind what doesn't fit. Even after 20 years in the counseling profession, from reading this book I have learned many strategies that I plan to implement to make my program the best it can be. There is something useful in this book for every counselor out there, new and experienced.

Pages: **283** Price: **\$32.95** ISBN: **0-7879-6886-2**

Reviewed by Mary Ann Sweet, Elementary School Counselor, Tomball Independent School District. An educator for 25 years, with 5 years experience in special education and 20 years experience as an elementary school counselor.

Smith, Michael W. & Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. (2002) *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

I have to own a book in order to really read it. I write in it, post notes in it, draw arrows and pictures and diagrams in it. My copy of *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* is literally bristling with papers, whichever were handy, wherever I was reading, in a variety of colors and sizes. And each is marking the spot of a very profound statement by the authors, or reference to a researcher I would like to follow (188 entries in the Bibliography!). Each is marking information I must remember-always-forever; or risk not being a very good teacher.

Near the very end of the book the authors explain that most of their preservice teachers fall into two categories. I know these! I see it every day at school, at conferences and in various readings: teachers who teach literature, and teachers who teach kids. To some the material matters most, to others the kids matter most. Smith and Wilhelm challenge us to something further, or more complex, "our goal ought to be to teach English to kids or teach kids English" (p. 187). I would

translate that into "Because I teach kids, I teach literature." I find it amazing how changing a simple premise, can have such far-reaching results.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's "flow" theory is given deep credence by the authors. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990) is not a title I would have thought would give new insight into how I teach my less than enthusiastic juniors. Yet, it is just that. Our authors compact Csikszentmihalyi's eight characteristics of flow into four:

- A sense of control and competence
- A challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill
- Clear goals and feedback
- A focus on the immediate experience

They found that these four characteristics were found again and again to be the backbone of all real reading in the data collected during the research for this book.

Forty-nine boys, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic levels; enrolled in the seventh grade through twelfth grade; from urban, suburban and rural schools; in private and public educational settings, and who exhibited all skill levels were the raw material with which Smith and Wilhelm worked. They did not want to fall into unfair stereotyping of these young men. They worked scrupulously to insure that the literacy levels of these boys would be accurately approached, examined and appropriate conclusions reached.

Through conferences, protocols (think alouds), surveys, and a plethora of other activities, the authors found their research activities in alignment with the "flow" principles. They found that the approach commonly taken in the teaching of reading and literature is completely out of step with how these young men, albeit all young people, make meaning of communication in all of its forms. They refer to Vygotsky's similar findings that "all learning occurs in social situations where expertise is shared between people" (p. 44), thus underscoring the social aspects of literacy.

Repeatedly through the book the authors ask questions. I have used one in particular to guide my planning and actions in the classroom. "What is the quality of the experience I want them to have today?" (p.50). Statements that set me to soul-searching are, "teachers can avoid or overcome resistance with teaching that builds on students' interests and abilities."(p. 80); "It is part of our responsibility as teachers to create contexts that develop and sustain the interest of our students" (p. 81).

It will take more than one reading to plumb the depths of this text. Ideas that seem most relevant to me and my practice include the not so new idea that "frontloading" is essential in generating interest to create relevance to achieve the control and confidence of "flow ." The authors speak of intrinsic motivation as paramount in efforts to achieve success

in any endeavor, including reading. The authors remind me in Chapter 5 that the importance of engaging materials matter when mining intrinsic motivation. Teachers must lead students into Seeing texts as music, texts as storied, texts as visual, and exportable into conversations. Texts that sustain engagement, texts that provide multiple perspectives and that provide new, novel, experiences, texts that are edgy or subversive, texts that have powerful ideas, texts that are funny do not seem to be the everyday fare of our students. And again, in order for them to see any of this I have to have carefully crafted an "into" experience worthy of their attention.

Smith and Wilhelm offer ideas for providing engaging reading experiences for our students. "...we need to attend to our students and how they are learning. We must make adjustments and change our strategy as needed. We must teach as if we are surfing on the crest of the future's breaking wave" (p. 187). Surfing is a dramatic, but completely accurate metaphor for our work in the classroom. The authors suggest that the power of inquiry can motivate and drive both the students we teach and our plans for teaching them. The asking of big questions and the location of all of the possible scenarios, and answers, will guide them into more sophisticated levels of literacy.

The authors don't give lesson plans for tomorrow; instead they inform our practice with information that will lead us to learn (and they quote Smagorinsky, 2002), "...by making and reflecting on, things [we] find useful and important" (p. 189) .

References

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. (1990). *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

Pages: **224** Price: **\$23.00** ISBN: **0-86709-509-1**

Reviewed by Charlene Roberts Koenig, who teaches, juniors and less than enthusiastic juniors at Shasta High School in Redding, California

Stull, Elizabeth Crosby (2004) *Global Discovery Activities for the Elementary Grades*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Global Discovery Activities for the Elementary Grades is an ambitious text. The format is excellent and the illustrations are clear and engaging. As those of us who have written on the topic of multiculturalism know, tackling folk tales, celebrations, arts and crafts, games, songs, food, and general activities runs the risk of stereotyping people and reducing complex, contemporary societies to dated cultural images of things as they were.

Stull suggests in the dedication that the ideas for this book have come from study tours of the various countries. I would have appreciated hearing more about whom she spoke to, how the selections were made, and how the various activities were generated. Her directions and illustrations are excellent, and the black line masters for actual classroom activities are clear and ready to use with little effort.

Each section contains a list of recommended books, and these lists are adequately annotated. Having said that, any list risks leaving out more things than it includes, but I believe that Stull has made wise choices and has endeavored to insure that all the items are readily available and are reasonably priced.

I have two concerns about books of this type. The first is the scope of the project. Asia and Africa are tackled in one section while North America, itself, is broken into three sections. This presents a challenge as the diversity within Asia or Africa is immense. Lumping the indigenous populations of Australia and New Zealand together with its European population is also problematic.

The second concern is the departure of some of the extension activities from the actual cultural of the countries studied to more a generic curriculum tie to North American schoolwork. It would be helpful for the teacher who is new to the field of global education for the book to make a distinction between traditional activities and mainstream, curriculum ties.

Used thoughtfully and carefully, this text offers teachers a resource of activities to build from in their classroom. Having traveled extensively myself and written multicultural curriculum, I know the risks of tackling such an immense project as this book. Subtle errors such as placing an activity looking at Picasso's work in the section about Latin America and references to the Inuit population of northern Canada as Eskimo are a concern. However, in the hands of skilled teachers, this text could assist teachers and their students inquiry into our global community and begin to make sense of the richness of the diversity around them.

Pages: 496 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-7879-6924-9

Reviewed by Susan Crichton, Educational Technology, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary

Sullivan, Joanna, Ed.D (2004) *The Children's Literature Lover's Book of Lists*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The rapid publication of children's books makes book selection and recommendation an often daunting, albeit, fun task. So many wonderful books, so little time to read them all. What's a librarian,

teacher, or parent to do? Ta da! *The Children's Literature Lover's Book of Lists* is at your service. While this practical no-frills guide does not offer annotations (it is, as the title implies, a book of lists), well-organized chapters group thousands of titles according to grade level (preschool through sixth grade) and topic. Drawing from her own extensive knowledge of children and reading, Joanna Sullivan, who currently serves as the Director of the Family Literacy Program for Migrant Workers, compiled the booklists from a variety of reputable sources such as the National Council of Teachers of English, The American Library Association, professors of education, teachers, and school librarians

Although numerous high quality guides to children's literature exist, there are three particularly valuable aspects of this book; the lists are entirely reproducible, arranged by reading level, and based on curriculum standards. Each list includes copyright information and the author encourages dissemination of lists to parents, teachers, librarians, and students. A list of children's books specifically on science topics at a certain grade level, for example, could be passed out to students in a teaching science class. The author also includes a bibliography of Web resources such as professional organizations, book awards, and author and illustrator sites. This particular list would make a nice handout for librarians who assist students in children's literature classes. The publication's "lay-flat" binding should ensure better preservation of the book's spine due to the wear and tear of copying.

A shortcoming of some children's literature guides is that grade or reading level of books is not indicated. Although, as this author notes, grade level should not be used as a boundary, it is often a useful way to gauge how well suited a book is for a child. The lists in this book are grouped by grade level (pre-K through grade one, grades two through three, and grades four through six). Within the grade level sections, the author introduces genres and topics that typically emerge in the covered reading level. In fact, a survey of the booklists reveals an outline of the different stages of reading encountered at different ages. For example, a booklist for "sound awareness" is included in the chapter for pre-K- through first grade. Suggested in this list are those books that "reinforce the concept of letter/sound relationships" such as "long E" or "short U." Books on idioms, palindromes, homonyms, and oxymorons are recommended for grades four through six.

Books have also been selected that meet curriculum standards, particularly in content areas such as reading, social studies, mathematics, and science. After reviewing state standards, the author decided to use those from New Jersey, Illinois, and California, as they reflect, according to the author, what is required by most state standards. To find a book that covers mathematical concepts expected to be covered at the second grade level, one only has to look at the math section under "grades two through three."

The Children's Literature Lover's Book of Lists is a focused and easy

to use guide. Pointing out its flexibility, Sullivan writes “it is not meant to be read in one sitting from cover to cover. Rather, it is designed to be savored in small chunks in order to gather ideas for books on different topics to use with students of various grade levels and ability levels”(p. vii). This title will definitely be a wise addition to any children’s literature collection. It should prove to be an invaluable selection tool for years to come.

Pages: **352** Price: **\$29.95** ISBN: **0-7879-6595-2**

**Reviewed by Laurie A. Charnigo, Education Librarian,
Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL.**

Talvacchia, Kathleen T. (2003) *Critical Minds and Discerning Hearts: A Spirituality of Multicultural Teaching*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press.

The greatest task of education as we enter the 21st century
is to address pedagogically the radical reconfiguration
of social life brought on by the proliferation
of multiplicity and difference.
—Dimitirades & McCarthy¹

Few works on the theory and practice of teaching and learning in multicultural contexts engage the issues from the dimension of spirituality. Kathleen Talvacchia’s *Critical minds and discerning hearts: A spirituality of multicultural teaching* provides a theoretical and spiritual reflection addressing the understandings of mind and habits of heart teaching professionals are called to acquire in light of continued persistence and awareness of alterity and difference in contemporary U.S. society and classroom contexts.² Informed by theories of critical pedagogy, social justice, and spirituality in education, the author delineates a spirituality of multicultural pedagogy. Rather than answering the methodological question of *how* teachers should teach in multicultural contexts, Talvacchia takes the reader on a more holistic and integrated journey on the understandings of mind and habits of heart she has come to understand as imperative for the important work of teaching we do as professional educators: “[the book] is in effect a spirituality of teaching in a context of radical diversity” (p. 2).

Besides the academic and theoretical understandings Talvacchia uses to bring the book to life, this “spirituality of multicultural teaching” is also and explicitly informed by her own life experiences as a daughter of immigrants living in an urban context saturated by a non-assimilationist Italian ideology. Talvacchia draws from her many identities as a Catholic feminist, professional lay minister, and a lesbian sexual orientation to provide a personal and contextual scenario for her

discussion of theoretical and spiritual matters in multicultural teaching and learning: “When I came out as a lesbian, in addition to contending with the homophobia and heterosexism of society, I contended with a faith community that could not understand my lesbian orientation and a gay and lesbian community that could not accept my religious orientations and values. Like many of us, I have personally lived many differences that have significant social and political consequences” (p. 3). Each chapter opens the discussion with a personal event in the author’s life as a traveler exposing herself to different world cultures and societies, and to different ways of seeing within academic/professional settings. Thus, infused in the narrative of this work, we find the academic as well as the personal voice of a caring practitioner reflecting on her experiences as a social being and as an educator; we find the reflections of a situated, positioned subject who begins to *walk the talk* as a result of critical meditation on her positionality, and as a response to her ethical commitment to embody a sensitive and socially engaged logic of multicultural pedagogical practice: insights from a critical mind and a discerning heart—the essence of a spirituality of multicultural teaching—and an example of teaching as an “embodied action” (p. 16).

In her quest for finding a way to living morally in a diverse world (p. 3), and in her understanding of teaching as a ministry and as a service to others in the name of God, Talvachia has “sought to understand how [the] habits of heart and mind [she delineates] might become a fundamental aspect of a teachers identity, practice, and spiritual formation” (p. 4). Talvacchia is concerned with questions such as: How are teachers to function effectively within the diverse society and educational contexts we find ourselves? In considering the ethical “imperatives” for the work teachers do in the midst of today’s radical diversity of peoples, ideas, and contexts, the author addresses a number of important and critical issues for teachers who consider their practice as one tied to the spiritual realm.

The book is divided into five interrelated chapters, each containing a section on ‘Reflection of Teaching Practice,’ as well as a series of questions for further study. In “Perceptive Attentiveness,” Talvacchia reveals how she came to understand the functioning of the logic of oppression given “the fact that members of the dominant culture often cannot see the ways in which they discriminate” (p. 22). As such, the author asserts that “multicultural teaching demands the formation of teachers as professionals who forms herself spiritually as a person who is able to relate openly to her students in their totality as human beings” (p. 22-3), and offers a spiritual stance that reiterates “The spirituality of multicultural teaching encompasses a deep and abiding concern for understanding identity groups in their social location of difference and teaching in a manner that honors that difference” (p. 23). From this understanding can then emerge useful instructional techniques given these are informed with a holistic understanding of persons in particular, situated social contexts. The critical and discerning teacher makes use of social analysis to understand the sociocultural context,

ideological worldviews, and broader political, economic, and social structures in which teachers and students alike live, move, and have their beings. This inquiry into the self and the social is driven and assisted by an intellectual, an affective, and a theological standpoint or the spiritual stance to which multicultural teaching and learning are committed.

For Talvacchia, “the spirituality that develops a critical mind and a discerning heart grows from a spiritual stance that embraces perceptive attentiveness” (p. 25). Attentiveness as such involves connecting one’s heart empathetically to the real experiences of people living in an unjust social system (p. 26). The elements of the spiritual stance of perceptive attentiveness comprise: a) a metanoia or conversion of heart and mind into accepting others in Christian love; b) a politically active stance, which “indicates that the work of compassion, solidarity, and self-knowledge in community concerns itself with power in the world and how it is used against some people and for others” (p. 28); and c) a just transformation of injustice against structurally discriminated groups.

“Listening and Understanding” is another key chapter reflecting on two of the most important competencies any teacher must have. Talvacchia reiterates the fact that “listening demands attentiveness to another, an active participation in what that person is revealing. But the goal of listening is not only hearing but to understand” (p. 39). These skills are essential given that without them “we cannot comprehend who we are, let alone who our students are as persons or what they need in order to learn” (p. 40). The listening and understanding discussed in this chapter pertains to attentiveness to experiences of marginalization, both in our selves and in others. Talvacchia holds that the discipline of listening and understanding involves attentiveness to: a) our own experiences of marginalization, or lack of it, in relation to the experiences of others; b) the marginalization experiences of others from an empathetic standpoint; and c) self/other experiences of marginalization from the perspective of social structural power, and the privilege of some groups over other groups in a hegemonic society. She also asserts we must recognize that “empathy for another’s experience cannot be an excuse to appropriate that experience and make it our own” (p. 40-1).

Talvacchia calls for attentive awareness in interaction. Teachers must learn to listen and to understand by a) developing our awareness of our own woundedness, and making an effort to educate ourselves about social groups outside our current knowledge; b) by making a commitment to create more space in our pedagogy for students to find their own voices; and c) to attend to the contradictions that we observe in our social interactions between groups of persons. We need to ask questions such as: (1) Who makes the decisions and has the access to the most power in a particular context? (2) Who benefits from the decision and to what end? (3) Who bears the cost of the decision, and is it right to ask them to bear it? (p. 50). These issues are related to the notion of interpreting the “signs of the times,” an idea emerging from

St. Augustine of Hippo in his *The City of God* and later used in Vatican Council II encyclical, *Gaudium et Spes*. Talvacchia asks: “How can we discern the signs of the times in our teaching practice? In what ways do we perceive the spirit of God operating in our teaching experiences? What are the ways in which we ignore it or miss it altogether?” In sum, “How do we discern God’s Spirit at work in multicultural education settings? And “What are the ways in which we resist God’s Spirit or miss it entirely? (p. 51). The answers provided range from cultural miscommunication to assumptions of monoculturalism in the classroom setting— an all fits one logic. For this reason, Talvacchia encourages teachers to always maintain a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (p. 53); one that allows us to critically examine what is missing in a given context. When we are clouded by the assumption that the classroom is monocultural and seems to have one point of view, we could begin our critical reflection by asking: a) What questions are not being asked? Which groups are not asking questions and why? b) Whose perspective is being left out? Whose perspective is dominating?; c) Who, *more precisely*, is our “audience”? Do we need to reassess our comprehension of the composition of the class?; d) have we done an adequate needs assessment of the group? Have we asked the fundamental question, “Who needs what as defined by whom?” and what questions do we need to ask directly to the students in order to be clear about what we are missing in the classroom dynamic? (p. 53).

Talvacchia speaks of “Seeing Clearly” as “the discipline we need to develop for multicultural teaching that centers us squarely in the fear of someone who is extremely different from us” (p. 60), and as “as a function of how well we listen and understand the experiences of others” (p. 67). In this sense, the presence of conflict is seen as essential to the multicultural teaching context: “multicultural teaching challenges us to handle the conflict so that it becomes a teachable moment for all learners” (p. 60). Further, the work explores ways of “Acting Differently,” which “involves incorporating the disciplines of learning and understanding and seeing clearly, so that our teaching practices demonstrably changes” (p. 76). Acting differently will spring from a change in conviction; given convictions are the embodiments of the particular worldviews and value orientations we bring to any teaching context. According to the author, the conviction to become a critical, discerning educator “result[s] from both analytic rigor and spiritual reflection on our lives and teaching practices” and calls us to act from that very conviction in the classroom setting: to *walk the talk* or the conviction (p. 80). As such, educators operating from the socio-spiritual standpoint of multicultural pedagogy are called to make a commitment to “knowing, relating, and understanding those who have different experiences from us” (p. 89), and to “Staying Faithful” with courage and patience as we engage in the process of developing critical minds, discerning hearts, and a hospitable classroom.

The spiritual nature of this work makes it relevant to those who understand the act of teaching and learning in multicultural contexts as a spiritual endeavor; one that is intimately connected with a sense of

self as being with and for others in the work of co-creation with God. It is also relevant to those who might question or critically assess the spiritual standpoint Talvacchia brings to the issues. Although, as Talvacchia demonstrates, a conviction for teaching for social justice--and as a response to acquiring a critical mind and a discerning heart--need not be necessarily related to lofty, beyond-the-realm-of-experience spiritual goals; the spiritual in this context refers to that which is embedded in the very fabric of the every day, the mundane, the social world--a spirituality named critical awareness, empathetic understanding, and concrete action in the here and now.

Notes

¹ See their *Reading and teaching the postcolonial: from Baldwin to Basquiat and beyond*. (2001) New York: Teachers College Press.

² Talvacchia begins the book by reiterating: "It is not that the world has become multicultural. We have always been a world of pluralistic cultures and peoples. The change that has happened is that now we accept the reality of pluralism as a norm and a value that we have not before" (p. 1).

Pages: **102** Price: **\$16.99** ISBN: **0-8272-0491-4**

Reviewed by Cristian R. Aquino-Sterling, a doctoral student in the College of Education at Arizona State University. His academic and research interests pertain to contemporary social and multicultural theory and language and identity in education. He can be contacted at cristian.aquino@asu.edu.

Walker, Catherine & Schmidt, Edgar (2004) *Smart Tests: Teacher-Made Tests that Help Students Learn*. Markham, Ontario: **Pembroke Publishers, distributed by **Stenhouse**.**

In today's externally imposed testing environment it is important for all teachers to gain the power and authority to play a key role in the assessment and evaluation of their students. *Smart Tests* is a valuable tool to achieve this purpose. This book is not only for teachers but any person who designs assessments and teaches others how to engage in this task.

The key features presented in this book are:

1. the rationale for teacher designed tests
2. pre-planning necessary to develop these tests
3. samples of variety of tests in different subjects taught at the elementary level
4. techniques to design and implement challenging tests
5. strategies to prepare students and parents to meet the challenge
6. approaches to evaluate the tests

7. ways to communicate the results to all the stakeholders.

There are several aspects that set this book apart from others publications of its kind; the most significant being the focus on the views and opinions of teachers, students, and parents. Rather than present a “how-to-do-one-size-fits-all” tone the book accentuates the reasoning and strategies to identify and include the opinions of all the stakeholders in the process of assessment (test) design and implementation. In the same manner, it emphasizes not only the inclusion but also active participation of the students and parents in the test evaluation and communication process.

The authors present assessments (tests) as an integral part of the teaching process and not as something to be imposed externally and disassociated from the process of teaching. As a matter of fact, all the examples included are instructional (teaching) tools based on current best practices. Several tips for successful implementation of the various samples and strategies are included in a very easy-to-use format. Overall, the rhetoric is kept to the minimum and to the point. The sample assessments and evaluations are detailed and clearly explained.

The book would benefit from the addition of samples of diagnostic assessments or at least some explanation of the importance of knowing students’ prior concepts to allow designing instruction and assessments based on students’ prior knowledge. It should also have included weblinks to international, national, state and local released items and provided a few examples from these released items in each subject area. These additions would help readers in bridging the gap between externally mandated assessments and teacher designed tests.

On the whole, this is a very user-friendly resource that is vital for all elementary teachers as well as elementary teacher educators as they design, implement and evaluate assessments.

Pages: 144 Price: \$18.00 ISBN: 1-55138-166-4

Reviewed by Anjana Arora, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Northern Kentucky University

Warner, Dorothy A. & Guthrie, William (2001) *Knowing Good Schools: A Guide to Rating Public High Schools*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

This book represents a significant contribution to the field of secondary education. Secondary schools are buffeted by ever increasing demands and expectations from parents, colleges and universities, policy-makers, legislators and others. In this climate it is difficult for practitioners on the school level (principals, supervisors and teachers) to sort out the claims made on the high school and to satisfy the

educational needs of students and the larger community that supports the school. *Knowing Good Schools* helps high school educators, parents, board members, and other interested community members to answer this all-important question: how can we know if our high school is effective?

The purpose of this book is to provide defensible criteria that would enable a meaningful and revealing evaluation. The authors draw upon a rich base of scholarship and research in the field of secondary education to validate their recommended criteria. In other words, if public high schools are to be rated, the rating process should be based on recognized ideas as to what constitutes a good school. Virtually every major study and policy report on secondary education is cited by the authors in this effort. Beginning with the 1918 *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* to the more recent ideas of Ernest Boyer, Theodore Sizer, John Goodlad, and the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report, the authors ground their evaluative criteria in ideas that are derived from historical precedents as well as the best of current thinking. Moreover, the criteria are not a mere compendium of recommendations made by others but, instead, they offer an intelligent synthesis of ideas that consistently converge on what is agreed to be best practice. Consequently, school leaders and community members can be reassured that the evaluative criteria are based on an authoritative consensus of what a good secondary school should be like.

The evaluative criteria are comprehensive in perspective. They avoid the trap of trying to establish a school's reputation by exclusive reliance on test score results and college admissions data. They are built around the following categories: organizational and administrative vitality/effectiveness, the instructional environment, richness of the curriculum, academic achievement, support for learning, student life, and parent and community relations. The book provides readers with specific and reliable strategies for gathering data within each category to develop a picture of the total school operation. The authors lead readers to pertinent and readily available sources of data crucial to the rating process. If schools are to be rated fairly, the process must go beyond reputation and rumor. A particularly valuable feature of this book centers on how it identifies data sources readily accessible in the schools and in the public domain to facilitate the evaluation process. Readers are guided by a thorough list of evaluation questions that enable a comprehensive picture of school qualities to emerge. The book concludes with three illustrative case studies that demonstrate how the rating process can work in a rural, suburban and urban high school. The case studies are especially useful in demonstrating the flexibility of the evaluative criteria as a means for revealing the special qualities of schools from diverse community settings. They also demonstrate that anyone guided by a serious consideration of a school's qualities can, within a reasonable amount of time, draw justifiable conclusions about the merits of a public high school. Short of a full accreditation review, I know of no other resource that a school can use to efficiently and continuously monitor its effectiveness as a basis for self-improvement.

In an age of accountability this book serves as a valuable resource for educators, parents and community members alike. Readers will come to understand that the important task of rating high schools deserves a deliberate investigation based upon a balanced set of recognized criteria. Moreover, by reading this book, they are given the tools to conduct such an evaluation through an efficient and fair process. The scholarly value of this text lies in its thorough treatment of the literature on effective high schools, its synthesis of this literature to derive a defensible set of evaluative criteria, its effectiveness in identifying the most valuable sources of data and information for making judgments about the qualities of a school, and in its explicit demonstration of how the evaluation/rating process should proceed. I believe this book is an outstanding example of how historical analysis, critical reading of seminal texts, and technical knowledge of data sources can be used to address practical problems faced by school practitioners and citizens.

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Pages: 176 Price: \$79.95 ISBN: 0-89789-739-0

Reviewed by Reviewed by Dr. Dennis Buss, Associate Professor of Graduate Education, Rider University, Lawrenceville, New Jersey

Williamson, Joy Ann (2003) *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

On September 9, 1968, approximately 200 freshman students from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, were arrested as a result of protests initiated against the school administration over issues related to financial aid to student housing. The student riot and demonstration, when viewed in the context of the 1960's, was aimed at the politics of social change in American society. Law enforcement agencies viewed the demonstration as an "unauthorized mass demonstration," resulting in the arrest of hundreds of students many of whom had not even attended their first class on campus.

Joy Ann Williamson's new work describes the campus environment at the University of Illinois during this controversial period in American history. Her approach in writing this volume is unique in that she uses interviews with participants as well as traditional archival data to build her superb narrative. She draws heavily on the social context of the 1960's, an era filled with concerns for racial equality, participation in the Vietnam War, and the dilemmas faced by university administrators in meeting these diverse challenges. The University of Illinois, as well as the entire state, was totally involved in the debate over civil rights in the mid-1960's. During his 1966 visit to Chicago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warned citizens that if Mayor Richard J. Daley "fails to understand that if gains are not made, and made in a hurry through responsible civil rights organizations, it will open the door to militant groups to gain a foothold" (p. 40).

The establishment of the Black Power movement in June 1966 by Stokely Carmichael was one of the ideologies to which African-American students at the University of Illinois were attracted. Although criticized at times for being an "ill-defined movement," (p. 25), "Black Power became a widely popular ideology. It included political, economic, cultural, and psychological components. Black political power meant Black police officers, tax assessors, mayors, and legislators. Black economic power meant equality of the standard of living of African-Americans and the development of community institutions. Black cultural power meant self-determination and self-definition" (p. 25). Therefore, according to Williamson, students at the University of Illinois used Black Power ideology to reform the University of Illinois and change the campus permanently. Their efforts increased Black student enrollment and led to the creation of the Afro-American Studies and Research Program and the Afro-American Cultural Program. Moreover, Black students were able to force university administrators into more aggressive action on other issues, such as creating a commission to hear Black student grievances, hiring Black faculty, and re-examining hiring policies for university staff" (p. 134).

One of the more significant contributions of Williamson's work is that it centers on the experiences of African-American students at America's white colleges and universities during the 1960's, an area of study that has heretofore, not been fully explored by historians of American education. *Black Power on Campus* is a superbly written historical study focusing on one of the most controversial periods in American higher education reform. On the negative side, Williamson concludes her work by telling us that the vestiges of racism still exist that the University of Illinois well into the 21st century. "Law students continue to receive in their mailboxes flyers containing racist epithets, derogatory cartoons, and statements calling for a ban on interracial marriages and citing Africa as the origin of the AIDS virus" (p. 141). "The Black Power movement made the university administration more adaptive and forced them "to react to different pressures without the luxury of time and to think in new and innovative ways about the

nature of higher education” (p. 142).

Pages: 224 Price: \$34.95 ISBN: 0-252-02829-5

Reviewed by Michael E. Long, Assistant Professor of History & Political Science, Pasco-Hernando Community College, Florida

Wormeli, Rick (2003) *Day One and Beyond: Practical Matters for New Middle-Level Teachers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Children and their developmental, emotional, and academic needs are the focus of Wormeli's book, *Day One and Beyond: Practical Matters for New Middle-Level Teachers*. His book is a helpful, practical guide for new middle school teachers to aid them in the areas of understanding middle schoolers' developmental needs, teaching the first week of school, discipline, setting up a classroom, grading and record keeping, grouping, teaming, handling homework, working with parents, creating substitute-teacher plans, continuing professional development, and relating to students. Throughout the book he offers teaching strategies as well as tips for what not to do, based on his twenty-plus years of teaching middle school.

Three principle themes are woven throughout the book: knowledge of students' developmental needs as the foundation for instructional planning and teaching, continual reflection on the part of the teacher, and being aware of how students can apply what was learned in the classroom to real life. During their middle school years, young adolescents experience a period of rapid change physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Being cognizant of these changes can significantly improve a teacher's effectiveness. Throughout the book, Wormeli reminds his readers that students' developmental needs must drive instruction. For example, the use of groupwork in instruction is recommended for middle schoolers because it addresses their need to be social, to belong. It helps them form an identity and sense of self-worth thorough interactions with others.

Middle school teachers are some of the adults in a student's life that help prepare him or her for adulthood. Wormeli encourages teachers to reflect upon how classroom instruction prepares students for real life. One of the examples in the book includes the use of grade sheets. With grade sheets, students take the responsibility to record their own grades on a sheet as assignments are handed back to them. This teaches them clerical skills and responsibility, in that they are always aware of what grade they have and need to make decisions accordingly to either maintain or improve the grade they have.

Though rewarding, teaching is a complicated, challenging profession that requires persistent growth and adaptation. As communities and

society change, so do the needs of students. In the chapter on professional development, Wormeli shares his experience of writing and reflecting daily on his classroom practice. By engaging in regular, ongoing reflection; he was able to gain a big-picture perspective that led him to make better instructional decisions, i.e., contemplate the positive and negative aspects of decisions and brainstorm options. Ultimately, reflection allowed him to analyze his instruction at a depth he previously had not done.

This book lays a solid foundation for those wanting to become successful middle school teachers. It does an excellent job of setting a new teacher up for a successful career by establishing students' developmental needs as the foundation for instruction, encouraging teachers to continually reflect on their teaching and pursue professional development in order to improve, and maintain the perspective of how their students' learning will prepare them for real life. Wormeli contends, "Every moment with a student is an opportunity for something positive to happen" (p. 177). *Day One and Beyond: Practical Matters for Middle-Level Teachers* prepares educators for numerous positive moments.

Pages: **208** Price: **\$19.50** ISBN: **1-57110-355-4**

Reviewed by Adria D. Dodici, Portland State University



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