



## education review // reseñas educativas

editors: david j. blacker / gustavo e. fischman / melissa cast-brede

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

October 24, 2012

ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>

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Powell, Rebecca & Rightmyer, Elizabeth C. (Eds.) (2011) *Literacy for All Students: An Instructional Framework for Closing the Gap*. NY: Routledge.

Pp. 269 + xvi

ISBN 978-0-415-88587-4

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In *Literacy for All Students*, the editors indicate that, “Over time, we have become aware that traditional reform efforts such as “research based” literacy programs and school-wide literacy initiatives have been ineffective in closing the gap.” (p. xi) The purpose in this book is “to serve as a bridge between theory and practice” (p. xi). Personal vignettes are included throughout to provide human illustrations of the text’s main components. There is Tami, who directs her teacher in the all-important rule for electric fences, “Don’t ever pee on one” (p. 4), and Zane, who despite the newfound knowledge from his teacher that “the bottom” in Standard English is the backyard, chooses to honor his language and culture and leave “the bottom” in his letters (p. 190).

Citation: Maneiro, Heather Lisa. (2012 October 24) Review of *Literacy for All Students* by Powell, Rebecca & Rightmyer, Elizabeth C. (Eds.). *Education Review*, 15. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1186.pdf>

Each chapter in this book provides an outline for an element of Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP). CRIOP is a tool developed by the editors initially to examine teachers and instruction in the Read to Achieve (RTA) program. Student stories are shared throughout the text, often introducing the chapter and CRIOP element. A Teachers' Voices section that shares the stories of the teachers is an instrumental component of each chapter as well. The chapter summary of each component provides a table overview showing the difference between classrooms that exemplify the component of CRIOP and classrooms that ignore the CRIOP framework. The gem of each chapter though is the sheer amount of background research supporting each component. A lengthy bibliography is included at the end of each chapter encouraging further reading and research.

Part I of the text focuses on the sociocultural context of literacy instruction. Chapter 2 starts with the teacher and focuses on the importance of caring in the teacher/student relationship. Chapter 3 contains additional information on the caring climate and adds information on the importance of the physical environment. Indeed, the classic classroom configuration of students in a row facing the teacher perpetuates the belief that the teacher has all of the knowledge (and power). Part I concludes with chapter four on parent and community partnerships and collaborations. Indeed this appears to be the true foundation of the CRIOP framework. Recognizing the parents as the first teachers and experts on their children with important information and knowledge to share provides the background for instructing students in the CRIOP framework.

Part II moves from the context of instruction outlined in Part I to the core instructional practices. Chapter 5 focuses on culturally responsive assessment and creating a culture of learning, vs. the current culture of testing that seems pervasive in most of the American schools. In chapter 6, Angela Cox outlines bridging the classroom world with the student world. The ties between chapters 6 and 4 are clear. To effectively bridge the students' world, effective partnerships must exist with the parents and the greater community. Chapter 7 starts to really push the envelope bridging the theory (research) and practice. The

heart of this chapter seems best stated in a quote from one of Delpits's (1988) articles (a source frequently cited in *Literacy for All Students*):

There comes a moment in every class where we have to discuss "The Black Issues" and what's appropriate education for Black children. I tell you, I'm tired of arguing with those White people, because they won't listen. Well, I don't know if they really don't listen or if they just don't believe you. It seems like if you can't quote Vygotsky or something, than you don't have any validity to speak about your *own* kids. Anyway, I'm not bothering with it anymore, now I'm just in it for a grade. (p. 280)

Chapter 8 is the point at which we meet Zane, a student, and see the power of his choice and what it means to him. Powers points out in her chapter introduction:

Knowing when, where, and how to use different styles of discourse gives students the power to converse in many different situations, including in school. When this type of instruction is not provided, students like Zane conclude that their language—their discourse, and hence their identity—is inferior to the "dominant" language within the culture of the school . . . Students like Zane may decide to sabotage their academic success rather than assimilate into the culture of the school and comply with language expectations. (p. 192).

The book concludes with Part III: Becoming Critical. Chapter 9 calls teachers to look at the underlying reason as to why literacy is important, especially for marginalized populations. Indeed, reducing literacy to skills and drills as our culture of testing seems poised to do takes away the students' power to read the world. Ruben and Miguel illustrate this beautifully in their vignette provided by Gandara (2000). They sit with the ever-important worksheet working through the long o vowel sounds. Though they cannot comprehend the sentences on the worksheet, they quickly determine that does not matter and find the words with the long o's as directed (p. 197).

Altogether, this text is the perfect combination of research and practice for the education professional. Strong personal stories, both of what has worked and has not, connect well with the strong research base providing human interest. This text would be perfect for preparing undergraduate educators to work in diverse classroom communities as well as for graduate students and practicing professionals who find themselves struggling to connect in a classroom community that varies significantly from their own background. I strongly recommend this book.

## References

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## About the Reviewer

Heather Maneiro is the Instruction & Information Literacy Librarian at Minnesota State University in Moorhead. Heather has also worked as a classroom teacher, a school librarian, and a corporate trainer. Her current research interests are the impact of school librarians (K-12) on incoming college students and their success.

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