



# education review // reseñas educativas

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## Brief reviews for August 2006

**Adams, Dennis & Hamm, Mary (2006). *Media and Literacy: Learning in the Information Age—Issues, Ideas, and Teaching Strategies*. Third Edition. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.**

**Pages: 290    Price: \$61.95(hardcover); \$42.95(paper)    ISBN: 0-398-07642-1(hardcover); 0-398-07643-X(paper)**

Adams and Hamm pose the question; "what will it mean to be literate in the twenty- first century?" Chapters dedicated to "new literacies" including digital literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy, aesthetic literacy, network literacy and others attempt to answer this question. The book is intended to be a practical guide for teachers and others by giving classroom applications of the new literacies.

Recent developments in technology and their increased accessibility create new modes of communication and new curricular demands. Literacy education no longer refers to traditional text based print only, it now includes the ability to decode information and create messages using many types of media. Adams and Hamm are careful to point out that while new technology offers many exciting new possibilities for educators and certainly should not be ignored in today's technology intensive world, it is not an end in itself. The authors argue for a constructivist approach to teaching including face-to-face collaborative learning, hands on experiences, and purposeful activities that tie to real-world applications and promote critical thinking. Technology has its place but is not a substitute for concrete experiences and conversation with peers and more knowledgeable others. The authors state, "By using a variety of technologies for real-world inquiry, problem-solving, and communicating, students can come to recognize that learning is more than preparing for life, it is life in the twenty-first century" (p. 224). Technology in its various forms, and the literacies it demands of users, are increasingly important tools in today's society.

The book focuses on new literacies within the larger umbrella of media literacy. Media-related ideas and suggestions for teachers are included in each chapter. The ideas, based in constructivist theory, are designed to be hands-on, open-ended, and collaborative. In addition, the authors emphasize the importance of critical thinking when "reading" the new technologies. Perhaps this is why the lesson ideas included in each chapter resist the traditional recipe format found in many books dedicated to teachers. An example found in the chapter dedicated to scientific literacy suggests museums as a way to link science and community resources. The authors suggest giving children objects, "such as a bone," and having them work in pairs to investigate "all they can about the objects" using the resources at a museum. There is nothing inherently wrong with this activity, in fact it could potentially be a very interesting experience for students and teachers, however there is not enough here for a teacher to even begin to realize the lesson's potential. I am not implying that teachers need scripted lesson plans, but the lessons found in this book would be more useful if they were explained in greater detail, or were accompanied by examples of student work.

For a book about literacy the number of typos is inexcusable. As an example, the table of contents lists "Scientific Library" as a chapter; it is actually "Scientific Literacy." It seems reasonable to expect careful editing in a book that focuses on literacy education.

The topic of media literacy is timely and unquestionably an important one. The authors cover a wide variety of new literacies that certainly merit careful analysis in today's schools. I do not believe the subject matter is

treated in a way that achieves the authors' goal of providing practical media-related activities for teachers to use in classrooms. At best the book may pique interest in areas that are often overlooked in traditional classrooms.

**Reviewed by Jesse Gainer, Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Texas State University**

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**Brown, David G. (2006). *University Presidents as Moral Leaders*. Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers.**

**Pages: 254 Price: \$39.95 ISBN: 0-275-98814-7**

In a recent article in the *Boston Globe* entitled, "The Silencing of College Presidents" Margaret McKenna, President of Lesley College, claims that, "The university system and its expectations are stacked against any president providing the kind of public moral leadership that once characterized our profession" (2006). Such proclamations continue the debate on the role of the university president. Should presidents serve as moral leaders in the tradition of the "old-time college presidents," or should they be politically savvy leaders who avoid taking stances on controversial issues in fear of alienating donors and other important constituencies? In the collection of essays that make up *University Presidents as Moral Leaders*, university presidents present the view that they have a responsibility to provide moral leadership for their universities.

This book resulted from the Smith-Richardson Forums on Effective University Leadership hosted by the Center for Creative Leadership at Wake Forest University in the fall of 2003. Each of the three forums brought together a group of 12 university presidents to discuss academic leadership. In the sessions, three presidents presented an essay on an issue he or she had faced as a university president and then three other presidents responded through the lens of their own experiences. The essays collected from the three forums comprise the chapters of the book.

The first part of *University Presidents as Moral Leaders* focuses on crises or issues that presidents confronted during their presidency. In these essays the presidents describe the issue, comment on their leadership, and then offer lessons learned from their experiences. For example, Philip Dubois, president of the University of Wyoming, reflects on the events surrounding the hate-crime murder of Mathew Shepard, and Mary Sue Coleman addresses her involvement with the affirmative action lawsuit against the University of Michigan that reached the Supreme Court.

Part two includes a series of thoughtful essays that emphasize the role of the university president and consider the type of leadership required for successful presidencies. This section includes an insightful essay written by Thomas Hearn, President of Wake Forest University, on the effects of culture and organization on the university president and the role of the university president as teacher. In addition, Steven Sample, President of the University of Southern California, discusses what he calls the "contrarian" approach to university leadership. These essays and others in this section highlight the presidents' thoughts on the characteristics required for successful presidential leadership.

The final two chapters provide a summary of the themes that emerge from the essays. Two scholars from the Center of Creative Leadership place the presidents' comments on leadership in a framework of leader competencies developed at the center. This framework serves as an overarching guide of qualities required for a university president. The final chapter is a categorization of quotes from the presidents organized around themes and lessons learned from the essays.

Many in higher education no longer look to presidents for moral leadership as university presidents spend more time fundraising and managing external constituencies. In this context, the presidents' rhetoric in these essays raises two challenging issues for presidential leadership leading into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, the title of the book suggests that presidents of universities should be moral leaders, but it is not clear how or if students and others still view presidents in this role. Scott Cohen, president of Tulane, captures this ambiguity in his essay on moral leadership: "Even though we are defined today by our moral leadership on our campuses, I feel that our moral leadership in the eye of the public has diminished significantly" (p. 56). Cowen, like other presidents in the book, still characterizes the president as a moral leader, but to many in higher education this evokes an era long in the past when presidents shaped the character of their students under the concept of *in loco parentis*.

The paradox for modern presidents is how to adhere to the traditional model and values of shared governance as the emerging trends in higher education demand executive style leadership. Thomas Hearn's essay raises

a second issue for current university presidents. He notes that as "loosely coupled organizations," the culture of universities opposes the exercise of executive authority. This observation echoes the influential work on the presidency by Cohen and March (1986) who view the university as an "organized anarchy" where formal authority has little effect on institutional direction. However, Hearn adds that external constituencies increasingly demand that universities behave more like corporations. The loosely coupled model of academic management conflicts with the calls for presidents to lead like a CEO. In his classic book on university management, Frederick Balderston (1995) asserts that, "Loose coupling is likely to fail as an organizational form when quick and decisive action must be taken to preserve the institution" (p. 80). Hearn concludes that university presidents must find new ways to address the need for accountability while maintaining the unique culture of university governance.

Identifying with and confirming their institutions' values and morals may help presidents address this paradox. This theme arises in many of the presidents' essays. One writes "when individuals identify with the values of the institution there is a strong likelihood that change can occur" (p.146). This point reflects higher education scholar Roger Birnbaum's (1992) finding that presidents are most successful when they align their leadership with institutional values and traditions. Several other presidents find that crisis situations helped them clarify and define their university's moral stances and core values.

For those in positions of academic leadership, *University Presidents as Moral Leaders* is an engaging and thought-provoking read about the role of university presidents. Leaders facing a crisis will find the reflections of these presidents useful. The value of the book is its candid discussion of presidential leadership from a first person point of view. However, those seeking rigorous scholarship on presidential leadership will need to look elsewhere. A useful way to read this book is to take the editor's advice and begin with the material that will interest and motivate the reader most. As the editor notes, "the true justification for undertaking this effort rests with the good ideas and actions that grow from this stimulus" (p.9). The ideas about the presidency emerging from this book confirm some of the past literature on presidential leadership, but they also reveal the need for more empirical research on the role of the president as moral leader and the role of the president in the changing context of higher education in the 21st century.

## References

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McKenna, M. (2006, January 13). The silencing of the college president. *Boston Globe*.

**Reviewed by Brian Cullaty, Curry School, University of Virginia**

**Gersmehl, Phil (2005). *Teaching Geography*. New York: Guilford Press.**

**Pages: 278 Price: \$70.00(hardcover); \$40.00(paper) ISBN: 1593851553(hardcover); 1593851545(paper)**

Just as a national survey indicates that many of the nation's students don't know much about geography along comes the cure for that affliction, an energetic work by Phil Gersmehl modestly titled, *Teaching Geography*.

The 289 pages of this textbook can barely contain the enthusiasm the author has for his chosen field and the teaching ideas that seemingly erupt from each page. Gersmehl, a Professor and Director of the New York Center for Geographic Learning, Department of Geography, at the City University of New York's Hunter College, encourages the integration of geography into the curriculum. He also advocates its importance in the lives of students, not for what it does, but for what it means to them. In his work the prevailing theme is application versus factual memorization.

"Teaching geography is like teaching a foreign language, you have to teach words (facts and images about places), grammar (geographic theories and concepts), and narratives (opinions and value judgments about geographic issues) more or less at the same time." p. (49) In other words, geography, to be taught properly,

is far more than map reading.

To help his vendetta-like quest to make geography more lively and meaningful to students he offers a plethora of ideas and lessons and even puts them on a dandy CD- ROM for easy searching and retrieval.

The hands-on approach that Gersmehl advocates is strengthened by dozens of activities and duplicable resources that are especially vital for integration. For example, I teach how geography helped cause the Civil War and his map of the areas where there are the 210 frost free days necessary to grow crops such as cotton makes it much easier for the students to understand the importance of climate to US history. Overlaying Gersmehl's map with one of the Union and Confederate states makes it quite apparent how geography's importance can transcend physical landforms. He also tries to link his ideas with the national geography teaching standards.

With this exceptional writer, the reader is exposed to a variety of ideas that tumble from each page smoothed over by wit and clever verbiage that make it an enjoyable task to finish.

With No Child Left Behind's alleged mantle of excellence calling for more emphasis on math and language there is less time for geography in some schools. Recognizing this, the author points out potential problems (p.126) and shows how the teaching of geography can be improved using a variety of steps under such circumstances. Unfortunately, despite this common sense approach, the tunnel vision of test-driven curriculum leaves less time for the improving of geography instruction. So, despite the usefulness of this fun book and the need by nearly every teacher-preparation student to master it, the reality is that its main appeal is going to be to the already converted geography majors. Too bad.

**Reviewed by Alan Haskvitz, <http://www.reacheverychild.com>**

**Goldblatt, Patricia F. & Smith, Deirdre, Editors (2005). *Cases for Teacher Development: Preparing for the Classroom*. London: Sage Publications.**

**Pages: 272 Price: \$64.95(hardcover), \$32.95(paper) ISBN: 1412913667(hardcover), 1412913675(paper)**

Professional education has long relied on case study in law and medicine. Case study recognizes the complexity of reality, the importance of identifying issues and concerns, and the possibility of multiple levels of solution. Schooling for professional educators has been slow to adopt the method, opting for knowledge transmission or isolated examination of the wonderful human endeavor of teaching and learning. This book invites deep reflection into our own teaching based upon the real stories of real teachers. The editors invite many uses for the book: classroom, discussion groups, practicum, and self-study. Self-study is useful with this book because of the complexities of the issues raised within the cases and the different and sometimes surprising interpretations provided by the commentators. Goldblatt and Smith succeed in choosing topics of real import that help readers address the most fundamental of questions: what does it mean to be a teacher?

The organization of each chapter is a great asset. A short focus of the case is provided. "Thinking Ahead" points out questions and issues to consider while reading the case. After the case, the reader is asked to identify facts and issues, to analyze, evaluate, consider alternatives, reflect, and synthesize. Case commentaries follow by experts and the reader is then given guidance in analysis of the experts' commentaries. Each chapter ends with suggested additional readings, which appear to be excellent resources. In the introduction, the editors provide a case matrix for all cases, which serves as an excellent overview of the book and allows the reader to select cases for priority rather quickly.

The thirteen cases deal with religion, gender, working with other teachers, managing conflict, working with educational partners, action research, balancing needs of all students, student cheating, community, re-entering the classroom after an absence, and classroom management. Of course each main topic really deals with the multitude of issues and their interrelations. Each case is usually three to six pages long with three to five commentaries of about a page and half each. The reader can expect different interpretations and surprising issue focus.

The combination of cases written from the experiences of practicing teachers and commentaries written by various scholars really enhances the possibility of personal growth and professional development as readers answer what being a teacher means. The book might be useful for policy makers and others that have never served as teachers to begin to understand the answer in a more complex human and humane way. Solutions seem simple from afar—mandated tests and score comparisons. It is when we look at the faces of our students, parents, communities, and ourselves that the true nature of teaching emerges as a humanly

complex and beautiful encounter. This book helps us toward understanding.

**Reviewed by Michael W. Simpson, J.D., M. Ed., an Oklahoma mixed-blood lawyer and educator currently studying educational policy at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Email: mwsjd85@aol.com**

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**Gray, Jeff & Thomas, Heather (2005). *If She Only Knew Me*. Owensboro, KY: Rocket Publishing.**

**Pages: 26 Price: \$8.00 ISBN: 0-9773169-0-4**

*If She Only Knew Me* is a simple but straightforward book that every teacher should read multiple times throughout the school year. It is written as a picture book and from the perspective of a child. The child is reminding us, in his own way, to, as Covey (1989) has so aptly said, "Seek first to understand, before being understood."

How often do teachers speak first without knowing the background or context of the particular child? Through a child's eyes and voice, we are shown one child's perspective. In this case, a child from a low socioeconomic class is being put even more "at risk" by the daily and unfeeling decisions made by the teacher. The black and white pictures add to the bold starkness of the child's life, both in and out of school. The haunting pictures of an unhappy child communicate as much as the poignant statements made by the child.

The message to all kinds of educators is clear and to the point: effective teachers (teachers that students learn from) know the backgrounds of their students. While the inside cover proclaims a quote by Dr. James Comer, that "no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship," I believe that this statement reveals a one-sidedness. Only by knowing about their students can teachers relate appropriately to them, in ways that allow both the teaching and the learning to be mutually rewarding.

I strongly recommend this book to all teachers as a "must read" when entering any new classroom. Furthermore, I would recommend this book as a discussion starter for a junior or intermediate classroom, as well as for pre-service teachers in their teacher preparation programs. They who are so initially concerned with issues of "self" and classroom management would benefit from this book: it's *not* about the teacher's self, but rather about **each** student.

#### References

Covey, S. (1989). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. New York: Fireside (Simon and Schuster).

**Reviewed by Dr. Ruth Rees, a professor in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, teaching in the areas of equity and leadership. She coordinates a mandatory course for all pre-service students in the area of Equity and Exceptionality, and intends to use this book as a discussion starter in the next academic year. She is a frequent reviewer for *Education Review*.**

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**Harrington, Susanmarie; Rhodes, Keith; Fischer, Ruth Overman & Malenczyk, Rita (2006). *The Outcomes Book: Debate and Consensus after the WPA Outcomes Statement*. Logan UT: Utah State University Press.**

**Pages: 240 Price: \$22.95 ISBN: 0-87421-604-4**

Since *A Nation at Risk*, the US education system has been under scrutiny for its lack of competitiveness and rigor, with a main focus on outcomes - that is, a focus on what students know or can do at the end of their education. Assessment and accountability have become major themes in education. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) is a national and state movement with a component of assessment and accountability. Many accrediting institutions incorporate SLOs in requirements for accreditation. Although SLOs have a component of assessment, they present a paradigm shift from what teachers are teaching, to what students are learning. With any major movement, and particularly with one that affects how people do their jobs, there are debates and resistance. *The Outcomes Book: Debate and Consensus after the WPA Outcomes Statement*, does an exceptional job of highlighting the debate and addressing the concerns around this movement. This book is highly recommended for any educator, faculty, staff, or administrator involved in the implementation of SLOs at their institution. It prepares the reader for the many debates in the field and

provides educated responses to those debates. In the spirit of SLOs, it encourages dialogue around what students should be learning and addresses the differences of opinions that arise during this dialogue.

This book is intended for professional faculty, chairs, program directors, and administrators in education. While the book is primarily written for educators in the English discipline, it is still relevant to all educators. The book presents the Outcomes Statement, including the origins, debates, and complexities, that was developed by the Writing Professional Administrators (WPA) for use in first-year composition courses. In some chapters the language is particularly discipline-specific, including a focus on 'genre', and 'rhetorical'. However, this does not make the book itself inaccessible to non-English educators. Many of the debates and concerns are similar across disciplines and institutions.

This book is designed to illuminate the debate and to encourage dialogue. "It is written in the hope that faculty and administrators alike will use the WPA statement as a tool for cyclically reflecting on their own programs and practice" (back cover). The credibility of this book comes from the fact that the WPA Outcomes Statement was conceived and developed by educators with extensive experience in the field. It is clear that the educators all had varied and valid experiences, expectations, and concerns that contributed to the development of the Outcomes Statement and *The Outcomes Book*. The book is further strengthened in that it provides detailed information on the debates in the field and directly responds to these debates. The responses to the debates are also from educators in the field. The authors are not ignorant of the potential for abuse and misinterpretation of the Outcomes Statement. In some cases, the authors agree with the criticism. However, they are able to move beyond the criticisms to focus on the benefits of the outcomes themselves.

The editors divide the book into four main sections to contextualize, apply, expand, and theorize the WPA Outcomes Statement. The first section provides background information on the impetus for creating the WPA Outcomes Statement, including an "Insiders' History", as well as the concerns around consensus, and "...even consensus that we should have consensus" (p. 4). The first section also addresses the repeated, and often heated, debate around outcomes as standardization. The standardization movement is highly political and contentious. In chapter 4, Mark Wiley states that, "Examining criticisms of recent standards-based reform efforts can be instructive in terms of possible consequences that those of us who worked on the Outcomes project hope to avoid" (p. 24).

The second section of *The Outcomes Book* is slightly disjointed, in that it mixes case studies of implementation in various institutions with more in-depth analysis of broad components of the Outcomes Statement. Both of these areas are well covered, but would be better served in separate sections with clear progression of analysis and case study examples. The case studies provided are highly relevant, detailing the varied implementation processes at a high school, a community college, a university, and a state college. At Oakwood High School in Ohio, "(t)he WPA Outcomes Statement played an important role in ...three projects, helping (to) clarify college writing expectations, develop a high school WID [writing-in-the-discipline] program, and train tutors for the school's writing center" (pg. 39). This case study illustrates how the WPA Outcomes Statement could be used in all areas of writing, and in tutoring. At Kirkwood Community College in Chicago, "...the Outcomes Statement has served to guide the [Composition Assessment] committee in three areas: verification, accreditation, and articulation" (pg. 51). This case study highlights the reaction to the accreditation measures that are prevalent throughout the US. The application of the Outcomes Statement at Eastern Michigan University focused around the Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing component. This is a clear representation of how institutions grapple with the complexities of defining these broad areas. The case study for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University delineates the recent historical plans for improving their program, and outlines the assessment measures for examining related outcomes. This case study provides an emphasis on portfolios as assessment. Additional chapters in this section focus on the components of "Genre" and "Knowledge of Conventions and Logic of Error" in the Outcomes Statement. These 2 chapters, although seemingly out of place, provide more in-depth analysis of the debates in these areas and focus on how institutions can help to define these components in ways that work for them.

The third section of *The Outcomes Book* is also disjointed. This section has three distinct uses of the Outcomes Statement; application across other areas, enhancement of teaching and learning, and relationship to general education. This section demonstrates that writing outcomes are not only relevant for first-year composition students, but for all students. This section shows how the upper-level English courses would benefit from including the Outcomes Statement. It also highlights the application of the Outcomes Statement in a Technical Communication program, illustrating its versatility and relevance across disciplines. Next, the section includes another case study of a community college, this time with a focus on teaching and learning. This case study emphasizes that, "(t)he language of the Outcomes Statement provides a baseline, but programs and campuses should consider how site-specific concerns such as student needs (level of preparation, personal/professional aspirations, etc.), faculty judgment, program goals, and institutional mission may affect their expectations for student writing" (p. 151). Finally, this section addresses how the Outcomes Statement relates to general education through examination of the Boyer Report.

The last section is titled "Theorizing Outcomes", but is more a call to action to implement student learning outcomes than a review of the theories. This section continues to highlight the debates and difficulties in implementation. However, it also illustrates the successes at many institutions in encouraging professionals to move beyond the debates. This section examines the Outcomes Statement as it relates to the Developing Learning and "...bridges two different academic disciplines, psychology and composition" (p. 191). While this is an important consideration in implementing any student learning outcome, it once again presents concepts disjointed from the rest of the section.

Overall, this is a comprehensive book on implementing student learning outcomes. It is through the lens of the Writing Program Administrators and first-year composition, but deals with the concerns and debates with implementation of any student learning outcome, whether within a single course, discipline, program, or institution. The book is successful because it directly addresses concerns, even validating them at times. This book addresses the concerns of faculty in terms of loss of control, micromanagement, misinterpretation, and standardization, to name a few. *The Outcomes Book* shows that it is possible to move beyond rhetoric and resistance to action, even given these valid concerns. The book keeps the focus on the Outcomes Statement as a meaningful way for institutions, and even communities, to look at the expectations for students completing a course, or beyond. *The Outcomes Book* emphasizes faculty roles and responsibilities in conscientiously and collectively engaging in dialogue around student learning, while striking a balance between addressing concerns and encouraging action.

The one criticism would be that the book seemed disjointed at times. There are several major themes that could have been combined, including history and development, analysis of the components of the WPA Outcomes Statement, the debates — resistance and consensus, application across curriculum and institutions, and a call to action. Instead, these themes were spread throughout the book and did not follow a logical pattern.

## References

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**Reviewed by Tawny L. Beal, the Institutional Effectiveness Coordinator at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, California. She did her undergraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, and graduate work at the University of Oxford, England. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree in educational leadership at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California. Her research interests include student learning outcomes and disconnected youth.**

**Jensen, Eric (2006). *Enriching the Brain: How to Maximize Every Learner's Potential*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 352    Price: \$24.95    ISBN: 0-7879-7547-8**

If you are an educator trying to find an easy-to-follow book with up-to-date information about brain potential and learning, Jensen's book, *Enriching the Brain: How to Maximize Every Learner's Potential*, is a good read. This ten-chapter book begins with research-based support for abandoning the myth that each child has a fixed allotment of brainpower. It follows with a chapter that gives a thorough reporting of theories about intelligence and why some beliefs on the topic may need to be rethought. The subsequent chapters address enrichment in conjunction with what science supports: the malleability of the brain, brains at-risk, exceptional brains, enrichment as educational policy, school and classroom solutions, early childhood enrichment, and what the future may have in store for maximizing the brain's potential.

The book is geared toward enriching learning and learning environments and addresses brain development from birth to adulthood. Readers are reminded that enriching environments create changes in the brain throughout the lifespan. Jensen's writing remains clear and inviting even though it is interspersed with complex research findings and science.

Teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and any others interested in knowing how to maximize learning potential will be rewarded when they read this book, as it offers the whole package, from theory to research to application.

**Reviewed by Kathleen E. Fite, Professor of Education, Texas State University**

**Koechlin, Carol & Zwaan, Sandi (2006) *Q Tasks: How to Empower Students to Ask Questions and Care About Answers*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, distributed by Stenhouse.**

**Pages: 144 Price: \$20.00 US, \$24.95 CDN ISBN: 1-55138-197-4**

*Q Tasks* is a timely book for classroom teachers and school librarians who want to provide meaningful assignments that require students to go beyond the retelling of facts. Canadian educators Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan have deservedly earned recognition as leaders in the field of teacher resources on information tasks, based on their 1997 *Teaching Tools for the Information Age* and their highly popular collaborative work with David Loertscher, *Ban Those Bird Units: 15 Models for Teaching and Learning in Information-Rich and Technology-Rich Environments* (2005). If you are already familiar with the work of these two engaging and practical authors, you will not be surprised to hear that *Q Tasks* offers you more of the immensely helpful and immediately useable teaching ideas about information-related topics that you now expect from Koechlin and Zwaan. If you have not discovered their earlier teacher resources you will want to catch up now by taking a look at this new release. The cross-curricular ideas offered here are the products of highly experienced teachers who have both the imagination to create exciting lessons and the ability to present their teaching strategies in a style that inspires confidence. New teachers in particular will be pleased to discover in *Q Tasks* a treasury of teaching strategies that are based on theories of learning combined with lessons learned from teacher practice in the classroom. Experienced teachers and librarians will find in *Q Tasks* both variations of strategies they may have already tried and new ways of approaching standard curriculum topics.

*Q Tasks* is largely written for K-8 teachers and librarians, although there are several lessons that could easily be adapted for senior grades. Teachers at all levels will find ideas for how to guide students to research topics that cannot be easily plagiarized. The book contains dozens of lesson ideas that could be applied across disciplines and it offers an approach to teaching that focuses on the student as a questioner. The book is based on the idea that "the question is the answer to understanding" (p. 6), and Jamie McKenzie's notion of essential questions <http://www.fno.org/sept96/questions.html> is the question-development model that forms the basis of each activity. Koechlin and Zwaan make clear in their sub-title that their focus is on "how to empower students to ask questions and care about answers" - and they do not veer from this goal. Student empowerment is addressed in the "Using This Book" (pp. 9-10) section, where Koechlin and Zwaan note that "questioning is not like other skills in the curriculum, for which set rules and processes apply ... Questioning is just as much spontaneous and reactionary as it is thoughtful and planned. Having said that, we firmly believe that effective questioning can be taught and practiced" (p. 9).

This commonsense voice that Koechlin and Zwaan use in their writing and their straightforward acknowledgement that questioning is not easy to teach, make the text particularly appealing. The authors share their teaching ideas for improving student questioning skills with the conviction that questioning skills can be practiced and improved. At the same time, they offer teachers ample support and guidance for planning how to do this teaching effectively. The first handout in the book sets the context for the lesson ideas that follow, with the caption and sub-title "How Do We Nurture the Process of Inquiry? Increase Learning and Student Achievement by Elevating the Level of Investigation" (p. 8). The emphasis in every lesson idea is on encouraging students to use questions as a path to meaningful study and learning.

*Q Tasks* consists of six chapters that move from suggestions about how to foster curiosity in students to beginning research lessons that point to the value of questions in relation to learning. The book concludes with a consideration of how the development of sophisticated student questioning skills can lead to a student's ability to use self-questioning as a study tool, an organizational tool, and as a self-assessment tool. This final section includes an excellent resource evaluation handout that expands six key criteria with words that will remind students of questions to ask about any print or online source they are considering taking information from.

The lessons shared in this book focus on the creation and understanding of questions ("Variations on 20 questions," p.19), on ways to encourage students to improve questions they have already created ("How will a rubric help students create better research questions," p.69), and on lessons that use questioning techniques to develop other skills ("What is the role of questioning in testing ideas and theories," p.106). Teachers and librarians will appreciate the "Power Up Your Inquiry" (p.73) idea where word prompts for creating research questions are provided under the headings "question starters," "focusing questions," and "looking for relationships". Using words from the "focusing" or "relationships" lists helps to ensure that a research question will not be adequately answered by a simple retelling of facts. This helpful question development tool can be used to teach students how to create interesting, original and manageable research questions. For this section alone this book is worth its price.



The list of References includes both further reading about questioning and the sources used in the lessons. A comprehensive index and detailed table of contents ensure that the content of this teaching resource is easily accessible. The high-quality handouts and the inclusion of copying permissions are more reasons that this latest Koechlin and Zwaan book will be popular with any K-8 teacher who sees the value of encouraging students to ask questions in pursuit of deep learning. This book is highly recommended for all primary, elementary and middle school teachers and school librarians.

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Reviewed by Brenda Reed, Queen's University, Canada

### **Lepionka, Mary Ellen (2005). *Writing and Developing College Textbook Supplements*. Gloucester, MA: Atlantic Path Publishing.**

**Pages: 180 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 0-9728164-1-0**

At first, I thought you had to read Lepionka's earlier work on developing college textbooks, and needed to be a text author to develop textbook supplements, but *Writing and Developing College Textbook Supplements* makes it abundantly clear that anyone with some background content knowledge and teaching experience can create them.

Lepionka considers anything that goes along with the main course textbook to fall under "supplement," including teacher guides, student guides, transparencies, websites, slide shows, and other ancillary materials. In this nitty-gritty-details book, she gives specifics on all aspects of proposing, creating and presenting final versions of both print and electronic text supplements.

There is no "fluff" in this book. After an initial discussion of how such work is done (generally on a "work for hire" basis), each chapter describes one type of supplement in detail, with examples drawn from many subject areas. It is obvious that developing these materials is good for sideline income, and is not a high-paying glamour job, but rather is a matter of paying much attention to detail; having the ability to work with editors, publishers and authors; and keeping in mind the purpose of the particular supplement being created.

It is the latter which may require the greatest care. Supplements are created by freelancers mainly to enhance a primary textbook. It becomes a balancing act for the developer to make the supplement worth the money, even if it is a so-called "free" supplement, while not providing more content and interesting activities than the primary textbook. Give-away supplements are free to end users, but they are generally expensive for the publishers to produce, and are budgeted at so many hundred dollars per set or item. As a result, publishers want them to help sell the big, expensive text, not replace it. And many supplements are sold to students on a budget, so it is important to hold down development and production costs so that the sales price will be low enough that students will want to buy the supplement in addition to the text.

Lepionka makes an interesting point about the matter of supplements with interactive content often being more accessible and interesting to students, as well as cheaper: many students would rather buy the "supplemental" course review than the textbook. When contractors develop accompanying websites or CDs that provide the instructional content in ways that enable students to learn the material necessary to pass the course without buying the text, why would any student pay \$90 or \$130 to buy the text? This is the balancing act a freelance author working on supplements must maintain awareness of while working.

The chapter on creating web sites and online courses is the least well-developed and helpful. Speaking as one who has taught online since the early 1990s, it is apparent that Lepionka hasn't done much freelance work or hired many contractors in this area. On the other hand, since this has been such a hot topic for the past 5 or 6 years, there are many good resources for those who wish to work in this area. Lepionka has provided links and references for this chapter, as well as for other chapters, and those with the interest or

need can follow up through those resources.

Overall, this is a good resource for people who do want to create test banks or student guides or similar materials at the college level, and probably also for el- high texts in some fields. It is likely that these materials will not be created in- house by the textbook publisher, and authors usually do not create most of the supplements for their work, so a good proposal is likely to gain you a contract. In *Writing and Developing College Textbook Supplements*, Lepionka has provided the information you need to develop the proposal and develop your project, turning in a good supplement on time and in the format required for that project.

**Reviewed by Mindy Machanic, Adjunct Professor of social and behavioral sciences for University of Maryland University College and other post-secondary institutions, a freelance course writer and developer in any field, and a researcher and editor of assorted print and web materials.**

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**Mower, Pat (2006). *Geometry Out loud: Learning Mathematics Through Reading and Writing Activities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 258 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0787976016**

Many educators recognize the link between communication and mathematical learning. Reading and writing in mathematics classrooms provides a way of consolidating, organizing, analyzing, and expressing mathematical ideas. Framed by recent reform movements, Pat Mower sets out to support teachers' learning about how to incorporate reading and writing activities in mathematics classrooms. As the second book in the Math Out Loud series, this resource focuses on reading and writing geometrically. While many books have been written for elementary teachers on this subject, Mower focuses on an area of mathematical learning often absent from secondary mathematics classrooms. Intended for students in grades 9 to 12, she provides easy-to-use illustrative examples, teaching strategies, tasks, and lessons that emphasize the importance of mathematical communication.

Based on the premise that mathematical communication is required to deepen students' understanding of mathematics, Mower organizes her ideas into two parts: four chapters focusing on reading to learn geometry and four chapters emphasizing writing to learn geometry. The first part describes prereading, reading to understand, and postreading strategies that are particularly important when reading visual or geometrical material. The second part presents writing strategies for understanding geometry, communicating these understandings, and assessing mathematical learning. In each chapter, lessons are organized by addressing three questions: what? why? and how? For each lesson, a variety of student tasks are presented in an accessible, classroom-ready format.

A powerful dimension of this resource is Mower's attention to study skills. Through teacher-guided tasks, students are encouraged to develop concept circles, semantic word maps, graphic organizers, mnemonics, analogies, and comparison charts. Students are explicitly prompted to investigate relationships between geometrical terms, objects, and attributes.

Unique to this book is the historical approach taken by Mower. She provides an overview of geometric thought at the beginning of the book and organizes her writing to reflect the progression of the mathematical inventions and discoveries of Euclidean, analytic, non-Euclidean, projective, transformational, synthetic, topological, differential, and finite geometries. While this approach seeks to ground mathematics in cultural and historical contexts, the focus is largely on Western mathematics. A cursory mention of Arabic geometries is made. However, a more thorough presentation of Eastern contributions to the study of geometry would contribute to a richer portrait of its development.

A constructivist stance is evident as the author emphasizes students' prior knowledge, provides tasks that build on this knowledge, and presents authentic assessment strategies. This collection strives to encourage secondary students to engage in reflective thought and genuine problem solving in the area of geometry. Mower successfully presents a creative and interactive approach to learning mathematics through reading and writing activities.

**Reviewed by Gladys Sterenberg, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge**



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