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Brief reviews for December 2007

Baldwin, Carol (2007). *Teaching the Story: Fiction Writing in Middle School*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 138 Price: \$23.95 ISBN: 0-929895-95-9

Baldwin's *Teaching the Story: Fiction Writing in Middle School* makes a case for the instruction of creative writing. She acknowledges our current emphasis on expository writing and reading given the climate of standards-based instruction and high-stakes testing. That being stated, Baldwin claims that infusing creative writing into our pedagogy will not only enhance the writing and reading of expository texts but it will also augment the skills necessary to perform well on standardized testing. Baldwin's easy-to-read and easy-to-implement book provides mini-lessons, modifications, transparency overheads, reproducibles, and even a CD of blackline masters. This book's greatest asset is the ease at which it can be used in practice. In fact, I was able to adapt this book for my elementary school students as well as my graduate students; it is definitely not limited to the middle school student populations. Creative writing is something that all students at any grade level have difficulty producing and Baldwin is able to effectively break it down into simpler parts.

Even though Baldwin addresses the process of writing, she mainly focuses on the craft of writing, about which some teachers who are not writers have very little knowledge. As such, this is a very teacher-friendly handbook. She makes writing less of a scary venture for both writing-phobic teachers and students, whom I perceive to be the book's main target audience. Baldwin breaks down this craft into six main sections, which serve as the book's framework: Discussing the Basics, Creating a Character, Setting the Scene, Developing the Plot, Writing the First Draft, and lastly, Editing and Revising. Baldwin shares the secrets of writers by promoting the following mantras: (1) Show not tell, (2) Story is in the details, (3) Write what you know and research what you don't know, and (4) The red pencil and critique groups are a writer's best friends.

Other strengths of this book include Baldwin's presentation of genre studies and her reference to mentor texts. She provides a list of recommended reading material for a middle school population, a list that includes contemporary texts. I especially appreciated Baldwin's checklists. These checklists are student-friendly and self-explanatory.

Baldwin presents a strong rationale for teaching creative writing; however, this becomes redundant throughout the text. Similarly, she outlines step-by-step instructions for the mini-lessons including the goals, classroom set-up, supplies, etc. For a practicing teacher like myself, not a new teacher, this was also a little redundant. She seemed to spend more time describing the preparation than the procedures. But, the inclusion of the mini-lessons as well as their content was very effective. (I would have liked to have seen more excerpts of exemplary writing models included in her mini-lessons.) Also, there were times when she would refer to the resources on the CD without including a print copy; doing so would have made for easy reference.

As a writer, I feel that Baldwin presents the key basic elements of good writing. As a teacher, I feel that Baldwin gives some effective best practices for the teaching of creative writing. Overall, I thought the book was worth reading as it is very practitioner-oriented. This is a must-have for teachers who need support in teaching creative writing.

Reviewed by Virginia S. Loh, a doctoral candidate at SDSU-USD, an adjunct professor at University of San Diego and National University, an elementary school teacher and a published children's book author with Candlewick Press.

Diamond, Linda & Gutlohn, Linda (2006). *Vocabulary Handbook*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing; Berkeley, CA: CORE.

Pages: 232 Price: \$32.75 ISBN: 978-1-55766-928-5

In the tradition of other CORE materials, Diamond and Gutlohn's (2006) *Vocabulary Handbook* provides insight into vocabulary instruction at the elementary level. Research findings about vocabulary acquisition anchor the *Handbook's* Introduction. Recommendations from the National Reading Panel report of 2000 complement citations from prominent scholars such as Beck, Biemiller, Graves, Nagy, and Stahl. The authors artfully extend current reading research into meaningful classroom practice. In a trio of chapters, Diamond and Gutlohn articulate three categories of explicit vocabulary instruction: word instruction, word-learning strategies, and word consciousness. Lesson examples are designed for a range of elementary students with a special emphasis on English-Language Learners. Employing a variety of classic methods, from modeling to questioning to using graphic organizers, the twenty-nine sample vocabulary lessons fit easily into most elementary classrooms. The text concludes with a Resources section of handouts and helpful classroom materials. All of these valuable components position Diamond and Gutlohn's *Vocabulary Handbook* as a powerful resource for both teachers and teacher educators.

Diamond and Gutlohn frame the three main chapters with an interesting approach utilizing four basic questions about vocabulary instruction (what? why? when? and how?); the questioning framework cleverly describes the definitional "what?" and the procedural "how?" of specific word instruction in Chapter 1, word-learning strategies in Chapter 2, and word consciousness in Chapter 3. Each valuable "what?" section provides background knowledge and research support. Theory Activity Boxes encourage teacher praxis. The useful "how?" sections present multiple lesson models oriented to kindergarten through upper elementary students. In contrast to the thorough "what?" and "how?" sections, the brief "why?" of each chapter simply summarizes research already presented in the text, and the minimal "when?" gives general timelines and guidelines for assessment. These two sections do not warrant extensive attention.

Each of the 29 lesson modules is designed by Diamond and Gutlohn to be "adapted and used to enhance vocabulary instruction in any commercial reading program" (p. 53). The lessons demonstrate a clear progression of grade level and complexity from specific word instruction to word-learning strategies to word consciousness. Each lesson model outlines benchmark information, grade level specifications, prerequisites, grouping suggestions, and materials. The scripted lessons proceed from teacher modeling to guided practice to independent practice. Teacher-selected vocabulary terms and teacher-directed discussions guide the lessons with student-selected terms and student-directed conversations incorporated during independent practice. Despite the lack of the consistent integration of Internet technology for vocabulary exploration, the lessons motivate and stimulate student learning.

The highlight of the text is the Vocabulary Hotshot Notebook presented in the final lesson of chapter 3 — word consciousness. This individualized word wall reflects the authors' belief that an "interest in and awareness of words" (p. 158) should be a constant effort. The Vocabulary Hotshot Notebook, a personal collection of new words for "students not only to record target words, but also to keep track of these new words as they encounter them in the outside world" (p. 189), encapsulates ongoing vocabulary development. Mentioned regularly in preceding chapters, the Vocabulary Hotshot Notebook connects classroom word study with real world vocabulary use. As documentation, students are asked to record the focus word, its source, context, and definition. Diamond and Gutlohn's Vocabulary Hotshot Notebook is a treasure.

For greater readability, the authors provide summary charts and illustrations throughout. Beyond these visual supports, Diamond and Gutlohn supply many margin additions that detract somewhat from a concise text. The margins are filled with quotes, examples, definitions, teacher notes, supplemental resources, tips for English-Language Learners, and links to related sections of the workbook. In a more organized format, these focal guide points would definitely enhance the appeal and effectiveness of the text.

As a veteran classroom teacher and teacher educator, this reader recommends Diamond and Gutlohn's *Vocabulary Handbook* to elementary teachers facing the challenge of a linguistically diverse student population. It provides a wealth of research-based instructional resources specifically designed to support vocabulary acquisition and development. Teachers of all grade levels may benefit from the clear discussion of theories of vocabulary acquisition. Finally, current teachers as well as future teachers could adopt and adapt the lesson models for everyday classroom use. Overall, the *Vocabulary Handbook* is a worthwhile purchase.

Reviewed by Amy J. Evers, a graduate student in Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. As a former high school English and German teacher and middle school Reading Specialist,

Ms. Evers's background provides a wide foundation for further studies in literacy. Her areas of interest vary widely from enhancing teacher education at the university level to assisting both tutors and children in the UGA Reading Clinic while exploring theoretical frameworks within the constructs of qualitative inquiry.

Earnshaw, Steven, editor (2007). *The Handbook Of Creative Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Pages: 485 Price: £65.00(hardcover) £18.99(paperback) ISBN: 978 0 7486 2135 4(hardcover) 978-0-7486-2136-1(paperback)

Forty eight chapters that open up "worlds of writing and worlds of imagination, ways of thinking about form, structure, plot, language, character, genre, creativity, reading, teaching, audience ... and being a writer" (p. 7).

The above summary of a comprehensive handbook on writing captured my curiosity as an educator, mentor and tutor of future language teachers. As I need to make my students aware of different ways of stimulating and developing learners' creative writing skills, this book offered me an open door to a world of writerly expertise. The contributors, being professionals in their respective fields in the UK, America, Canada and Australia, show a sound understanding of their subject and present an international outlook on this vast area of study. Moreover, their varied contributions steer clear of preconceived ideas and uniformity.

Not being a writer myself, I found a wealth of information to equip me as teacher-cum- tutor, and this handbook is bound to do the same for many students embarking on a creative writing programme. As a variety of contexts is explored in a versatile manner, the student-writer and teacher are not only introduced to the principles of the literary tradition and genre, but guided in the writing process for obtaining a postgraduate degree, or making a contribution in other walks of academe. However, the scope of the book is much wider, as there is ample food for thought on literary culture, literary theory, the world of publishing and production, the art of writing and the world of the writer.

A number of contributors clarify the establishment and development of writing workshops since 1920, when occupational writing emerged as a subject at the University of Iowa, providing the reader with a solid historical and critical background of this important event. The reader is also alerted to the tension between literary critics and creative writers, and between academics and artists. Special attention is paid to the processes and products involved in teaching, learning and assessment with regard to creative writing. Eventually several chapters explore the degree structures for MA or PhD curricula in creative writing at different universities, thus examining the critical theories underlying the practices of creative writing.

Furthermore, the reading and writing of different genres are explained when experts in the various fields give practical, basic advice on how to write short stories and novels, memoirs, science fiction and fantasy, humorous fiction and crime fiction. Others focus on writing for children and teenagers; poetry and verse drama; or scriptwriting for the stage, radio, film and television. Further topics include writing as therapy, group writing in communities, writing for the web, translations, as well as the role of the critical essay, and how to start a literary magazine. A workshop simulation even shows the reader how to communicate information, while the structure of non-fiction as a genre is presented in a creative and compelling way.

A separate section deals with the writer's life, the different routes to publication, and the work of a literary agent in meeting the demands of the mass media. Other matters of interest deal with awards and copyright, anthologies, festivals, reviewing and grants, which may be of considerable help to those who choose to earn a living as a writer. One of the chapters assists the writer in expanding his/her repertoire as a writer and teacher, while highlighting the mutually beneficial rewards of both activities. The important role of continued practice and attention to formal details in creative writing is emphasized, together with the need for writers to read, write, re-write, revise and redraft after creative warming-up activities.

Anyone interested in creative writing will find this book an extensive, practical and inspirational resource, invaluable for developing writing projects and paving the way for new areas of writing activity. I fully endorse the words of professor Willy Maley from the University of Glasgow appearing on the back cover, "This is a timely and perceptive guide to the practice, pedagogy, and prospects for one of the fastest growing areas in English studies. For the range and richness of its contributions covering the craft of composition from every imaginable angle, and for the variety and vibrancy of its engagement with literary art as a public form, this volume will become a touchstone for all who value creative writing as an engaging art, and as an art of engagement."

A very helpful glossary provides brief definitions of terms or acronyms used in The handbook, many of which may be unfamiliar to readers. These definitions relate to the context in which the terms occur and are not intended as a comprehensive, dictionary- style gloss. Mention is also made of useful websites to assist the reader in finding additional information on the internet.

Steven Earnshaw's experience as writer, principal lecturer in English and former course leader of the MA Writing at Sheffield Hallam University has equipped him to be a most worthy editor of an exceptional publication.

Reviewed by Dr. Estelle Kruger. She is a senior lecturer in Curriculum Studies at the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Her areas of interest are language teaching and youth literature. She specialises in the development of creativity and imagination in the teaching of writing skills.

Freeman, David E. & Freeman Yvonne S. (2007) *English Language Learners: The Essential Guide*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 192 Price: \$24.99 ISBN: 978-0-439-92646-1

If the English Language Learners' classroom were a restaurant, David & Yvonne Freeman's *English Language Learners: The Essential Guide* would be a valuable book for the chef. This book contains useful, practical, research-based resources in planning courses for a variety of "cuisines," all however, with the similar goal of providing a well-balanced meal from tested recipes, complete with lists of ingredients and clear directions.

The authors' purpose in writing the book is to explain and illustrate effective classroom practices that benefit English Language Learners (ELL). The examples are based on well-known theories and concepts in the field of bilingual education, as well as first and second language learning: that ELL's use of their first language should be maintained and developed as they learn the second; and that interpersonal communicative as well as academic language skills need to be developed.

Chapter 1 sets up the context for the remainder of the book by establishing the different school district settings that are used as models in the work, each district with its unique ELL population and resources. Users of the book will find it easy to identify with at least one of the scenarios, thus making the content of the chapters meaningful to them. Freeman & Freeman use the multi-model approach not only to make the information relevant to all readers, but also because in reality, every school district is influenced by its particular social context, which is influenced by the political and cultural environment, as explained by Cortés' Contextual Interaction Model (1986).

The authors begin their discussion with a necessary stipulation: that teachers know their students, because not all ELL bring the same experiences into the classroom. These diverse classifications lead the reader to the lucid conclusion that one size does not fit all. One of the impressive aspects of the book is evident in Chapters 2 and 4. The authors not only prescribe and demonstrate effective ELL instructional strategies, such as content-based language teaching, in detail, but also justify them with the well- reputed theoretical explanations of first and second language acquisition theories of Noam Chomsky, Stephen Krashen, and Jim Cummins. Freeman & Freeman emphasize one of the tenets of bilingual education – the need to support and maintain the ELL's primary language – and offer ways to do it. Such a discussion offers a legitimate base to the practical applications they suggest.

Chapter 3 provides the "recipes" for teaching content in thematic units, allowing ELLs to discover the relatedness of content areas and language, while Chapters 5 and 6 discuss teaching reading and writing meaningfully to the ELL. Each chapter begins with a real scenario of a specific ELL classroom, proceeds to describe the various instructional strategies and associated concepts, and ends with suggestions for reflective, applied activities that can be personalized and made relevant to the reader.

Freeman & Freeman's book is written in clear, precise, and understandable language. The reader is left with a feeling of having participated in a conversation with these well-known authors who share promising *how-to* instructional strategies for success in the ELL classroom, together with *why-so* discussions. This approach validates the book's subtitle: *The Essential Guide*.

References

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Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, California State University.

Reviewed by Jaya S. Goswami, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, Department of Bilingual Education, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX. E-mail: jaya.goswami@tamuk.edu

Joyce, William W. & Bratzel, John F. (2006). *Teaching About Canada and México*. NCSS Bulletin 104. Silver Spring, Md.: National Council for the Social Studies .

Pages: 141 Price: \$22.00 ISBN: 978-0-87986-098-1

Today's social studies teachers need special resources and understanding if they are to bring into relief the autonomy of and connectivity between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Some teachers undoubtedly can acquire those skills and understanding through their own personal experiences, such as participation in cross-cultural teacher exchange programs. However, the current demands of standards and accountability make it less likely that social studies teachers will have the time or support to participate in extended learning activities that consider the historical, political, and economic depth of Canada and Mexico. To meet the needs of social studies teachers, William Joyce and John Bratzel have compiled a potent resource for teaching about Canada and Mexico in U.S. social studies classrooms.

Segmented into three parts, *Teaching About Canada and México*, presents social studies teachers with the "historical antecedents, achievements, and the persistent problems" inherent in each society (p. 5); thus, the authors seek to (a) expose social studies teachers to what is most valuable and unique about each nation, (b) promote the socio-economic and socio-political relationship between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, and (c) provide social studies teachers with specific activities that address contemporary issues involving these neighboring countries.

The authors introduce cogent historical and political perspectives of Canada and Mexico. This historical overview demonstrates the autonomy of and connectivity between Canada and Mexico. Joyce and Bratzel craft an independent yet comprehensive lens by which to understand how Canada and Mexico relate to the United States. Rather than focus solely on the history of Canada and Mexico, the authors situate contemporary policy issues affecting Canada, Mexico, and the United States within a historical framework. Emphasis is also placed on how media (e.g. television, movies, and literature) promulgate a skewed reality of Canadian and Mexican culture. Joyce and Bratzel's teaching strategies permit students to move beyond simplistic understandings of Canada and Mexico. Crafty discussion questions encourage active deliberation and debate that forces students to engage in global thinking.

Advancing valued content and teaching strategies on Canada and Mexico, this text relates to current issues engulfing American economic and social policy. All in all, *Teaching About Canada and México* offers a necessary resource that guides teacher understanding of Canada and Mexico's significance to North American history, culture, and policy.

Reviewed by Chrystal S. Johnson, Ph.D. and Michelle Napetalono, Master's Student, College of Education, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Klein, Barbara (2007). *Raising Gifted Kids: Everything You Need To Know To Help Your Exceptional Child Thrive*. New York: AMACOM.

Pages: 238 Price: \$16.95 ISBN: 0-8144-7342-3

Raising gifted children to become well-rounded, productive adults can be a difficult task. The stream of emotions that some gifted children experience on their journey to self-discovery can leave their parents feeling bewildered and distressed. To minimize the intensity of sporadic displays of emotions, *Raising Gifted Kids: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Exceptional Child Thrive* equips parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively handle their child's struggle for control, self-identity, and perfection.

Through research and self-reflection, Klein formulates the ideas and opinions that assist parents with helping their children become successful in all realms of life. Throughout the book, she intertwines her personal experiences and professional expertise. Having grown up with gifted siblings and raising two gifted children, she has personally experienced the challenges parents encounter while nurturing their exceptional children. As a professional, she has earned doctorate degrees in early childhood education and clinical psychology, and has worked 20 years as a psychotherapist and school consultant for families and their gifted children.

Chapter one begins by giving a general description of what it means to be gifted. A generic definition is provided, and the assessment instruments used to measure intelligence are listed. Gifted spectrums are delineated according to intelligence quotient scores (IQ). After this fundamental information is provided, the chapter outlines parental attitudes. It categorizes and discusses the types of reactions parents typically experience after discovering their child is gifted. At the end of the chapter, parents are given the opportunity to examine their personal feelings about having a gifted child by answering a list of questions. Responses to these questions help them determine the level of guidance their child will need.

Most parents of gifted children aspire to be perfect parents — a level of excellence that is nonexistent. Klein teaches parents that becoming good-enough will be more than sufficient for their parental duties. Good-enough parents take a child-centered approach to raising their children (p. 49). According to Klein, this approach is most effective because parents display total acceptance of their child's individuality. They provide an environment that facilitates self-discovery and nurtures the child's unique talents. In addition, good-enough parents counterbalance their child's perfectionist behavior by exposing him/her to activities and/or academic content that is difficult to master. These children, who are accustomed to getting everything right the first time, must learn that life brings moments of frustration and disappointment. This life-lesson will not only suppress the child's perfectionist attitude, but it will also help develop the resiliency necessary to complete distressing task.

Parents learn that there is no "one size fits all" for educating exceptionally intelligent children. Choosing the right school — one that fosters intellectual development — for a gifted child may be a difficult task. The book discusses various school options, gives the strengths and weaknesses of each, and recommends certain forms of placement for children with varying levels of giftedness (i.e., moderately gifted, extremely gifted, etc.). Parents are advised to consider a school's ambience, culture, and curriculum before making this decision.

A gifted child's disposition tends to dominate the lives of family members. Dealing with their temperament can be an exhausting ordeal. Klein teaches parents the correct way to respond to their child's moodiness, anxiety, perfectionism, and disrespect. She describes the dialogue between parents and their gifted child as "challenging" (p. 139). Driven by hidden motives and/or deep thoughts, conversations with these children can become quite intense, causing parents extreme stress and/or anxiety. Klein provides communication strategies to reduce the number of confrontations that occur during verbal exchanges between children and their parents.

Chapter six focuses on the development of gifted children's unique potential. To foster this development, two elements are essential: a proper environment and continuous motivation. The home's milieu is reemphasized because a child's ability will fail to flourish in an erroneous environment. In addition to providing a suitable environment, parents must become cheerleaders, encouraging their child as he/she pursues personal interests.

Klein also discusses the family issues — sibling rivalry, power struggles, temperament, undefined roles, overidentification — that are noted for creating family conflicts. Parents are instructed to define the roles of family members to eliminate power struggles and minimize sibling conflicts. They should establish rules that are fair and can be followed. Children are to be rewarded for adhering to rules and inappropriate behavior must be addressed immediately. In addition, parents are advised not to get too involved in their children's lives. This will lead to overidentification — parents' living through a child's ability — which creates psychological confusion and undue hardship for members of a family (p. 214).

Raising Gifted Kids: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Exceptional Child Thrive can be a valuable resource for parents of gifted children. It provides methods for rearing gifted children in a manner that they are certain to obtain optimal growth and development. Though its content is meant to educate parents, professionals (i.e., teachers, counselors, etc.) can profit from the theories, strategies, and scenarios discussed in this book. Information gleaned from this book can equip professionals with the necessary tools needed to effectively handle gifted children's dispositions and correct their inappropriate behavior. Klein presents the material in a readable manner and the book's length is sufficient for relating pertinent information without discouraging readers.

A minor adjustment would increase the book's efficacy. Klein provides too many scenarios to describe the key points discussed throughout the book. While reading these multiple anecdotes, the reader can lose focus of the point being emphasized. Reducing the number of scenarios would help to keep the reader focused on the topic of discussion.

Reviewed by Chastity Wilson, a doctoral student in the Department of Special Education at Southern University A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is a middle school special education teacher

and a member of the Research Association of Minority Professors.

Kozol, Jonathan (2007). *Letters to a Young Teacher*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Pages: 288 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 978-0-307-39371-5

Jonathan Kozol's letters to a first year teacher acknowledge truths that every first year teacher wishes his/her college professors would have addressed in many of their preparation courses. First grade teacher Francesca is the fortunate recipient of Kozol's stories from his real world experiences in the trenches. Kozol paints realistic portraits of what first year teachers can expect students to act, speak, and look like, the inadequate facilities in our nation's poorest schools, and the feeling of isolation that all new teachers face during their first year of teaching. Kozol also tackles the issue of racial segregation due to a lack of diversity within communities and its existence in America's schools. It is refreshing to hear Kozol speaking out about the backsliding into separate and unequal schools in this modern era of education.

His cautionary letter to Francesca to teach the young but learn from the old acknowledges the gravitational pull that young teachers experience toward one another. They choose to stick with their own kind and feel threatened, marginalized or stereotyped as ineffective by veteran educators in their buildings before making the attempt to seek out these seasoned teachers as mentors. Kozol urges young teachers to reach out and build relationships with the old guard in the school in order to become more effective and learn from the mistakes and trials of others. New teachers are missing out on valuable lessons when they overlook the human resources residing in their very own corridors.

His review of school professional development in chapter eight is another cautionary tale worthy of a second look. He chastises our profession for using useless jargon to make points about things no one understands. Kozol believes this stems from the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) legislation and includes terminology such as "competencies" and "restructuring" and "replicating best practices." He and Francesca both question why we bother speaking to one another in this manner, let alone to parents and communities. Why don't we just say what we mean and mean what we say? Teachers on the front lines speak in real words such as, "This is something I've tried and found it works with my students," or "I'm using this resource to teach this concept; do you have another suggestion?" This type of discourse actually leads somewhere and avoids all the unnecessary verbiage that clogs our in-services and lacks real world application.

He adequately describes the dying art of teacher creativity and artistry under the heavy microscope of accountability and the anxiety created by standardized testing. Kozol is encouraging teachers to create joyful learning experiences for their students in the classrooms - allow creativity - listen to all of their stories and "chase rabbits" with them when they are just seeking attention. Teachers give up their pedagogy for didactic systems of robotic teaching. The significance placed on standardized testing distracts teachers from the purpose of education and has created changes that are not always viewed positively by educators. Even worse, the legislation that requires such testing has been in effect in our nation's largest cities for at least 10 years and has yet to prove itself as an effective agent of school improvement. Kozol's writing reflects the reality of statistics of higher drop-out rates for minorities and the prominent achievement gap which still exists in America's schools.

His letters also caution teachers against the privatization of our nation's schools, calling the act "the single worst, most dangerous idea," because it does nothing to close any of the existing social and achievement gaps. He criticizes middle schools for robbing our children of another year under the watchful protection of elementary schools. He advocates the beautification of our worst schools in order to create a more serene environment that nourishes learning. Kozol dubs the portables that schools purchase to solve the problems of over-crowding as "containables" because all they do is contain children. They do nothing to create a stimulating environment for learning. Poor facilities make children feel as if they are not the top priority of the institution.

Kozol praises teachers for their commitment to education and urges politically savvy new teachers to build networks as political action groups that advocate change and question authority. When unfunded mandates are handed down, teachers should rise up and speak out with confidence. He makes a point to Francesca that it is hard to feel depressed about everyday worries and problems while being in the company of children. Kozol still uses his real world experiences with children — the medicine of cheerful spirits that he experiences when he visits schools — when he feels overwhelmed and depressed. The book also includes a goodbye to Mr. Rogers. Kozol describes the impact that his friend, Fred Rogers, had on his life, the lives of countless children, and the ironic notion that none of his practices would be considered "research based" or "scientific" for educators who must document such nonsense. This collection of letters to a young teacher is a must-read for educators young and old.

Reviewed by Dr. Jennifer Holloway, an assistant professor in Cameron University's Department of Education. She currently teaches eight courses for teacher preparation including: Media & Technology in Education, Classroom Assessment, Cultural Foundations, Social Studies Methods, Classroom Management, Educational Psychology, Language Arts Methods and Math Methods. Prior to that, she taught 3rd and 6th grades and served as an assistant principal and principal for eight years. Her areas of interest include social studies and instructional leadership.

Kunjufu, Jawanza (2005). *Hip Hop Street Curriculum: Keeping it Real*. Chicago, IL: African American Images.

Pages: 136 Price: \$12.95 ISBN: 0-974900-05-2

This book is non-traditional in the sense that it is not the typical curriculum used in schools to cover math, reading, history, current events, and social responsibility. Furthermore, it is non-traditional because it illuminates the issues students are facing in today's society. The text purposely addresses peer pressure, gang violence, media relations, career development, sexuality, and the academic underachievement of African American and urban students. Using these themes, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu's goal is to address and cultivate the critical thinking abilities of urban students. Through the use of challenging questions and contemporary life experiences, the curriculum engages youth to explore beliefs, actions, and practices used in their reality. For example, lesson 38 challenges students on their use of the "N" word by exploring its history, its acceptable use among African Americans, and its use in Hip Hop music. After the lesson a series of questions leads students through a paradigm shift that is designed to transform the attitudes of students regarding that word. The lesson challenges students to view the word from the perspective of other citizens; which include African American elders, those from different ethnicities, individuals involved in the civil rights movement, and many others.

The author has taken a bold, and innovative, step in creating a culture specific curriculum addressing the shortcomings of the educational system and its impact on students. Kunjufu's curriculum identifies three major objectives. The first is to provide educators with a different method to approach urban, African American, and at-risk students. Secondly, Kunjufu's curriculum sets out to make obvious that urban, African American, and at-risk student are capable of academic success — they are not intended to uphold the myth that they are destined to be athletes, performers, or inhabitants of the correctional system. Lastly, Kunjufu encourages teachers to engage students by becoming participants rather than critics of their different, but valuable, world.

Kunjufu accomplishes his objectives by creating a curriculum that meets urban youth on their level; the examples he provides embrace the culture, reality, and lens that urban youth use to operate. This approach is motivating for students who have learned that education is not for them based on distressing educational experiences. They have felt left out of the community of practice established in the classroom. These students now have the opportunity to learn core educational subjects such as math, English, and history, through a familiar lens (street knowledge).

The way this book bridges the gap between urban life, Hip-Hop, and education is ingenious. Written in an adolescent-friendly style, its innovative content creates a framework that has the potential to motivate at-risk youth to continue their educational process. Kunjufu, through his curriculum, addresses the drop out rate, aims to make school relevant, captures the interests of the students, and merges the culture of academia with the culture of the urban Hip Hop student.

Despite his formal education in economics and doctoral degree in Business Administration from Union Graduate School, Kunjufu is capable of producing this type of content because he has studied and researched urban youth since 1974 (Martin & Pendergast, 2005). Kunjufu was both intrigued and disturbed by the educational system for black students in America, and from 1974 onward he began lecturing and conducting workshops focusing on the problems facing black educators (Martin & Pendergast, 2005). The feedback and positive reception to those efforts encouraged him to walk away from the business sector and making educational consulting his full time career; in 1980 he founded African American Images, a publishing and educational consulting company in Chicago. Since that time he has published many works, including his best known book, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* and the study: *State of Emergency: We Must Save African American Males* (Martin & Pendergast, 2005).

In my work as the Director of a federal Trio Educational Talent Search, a pre-college post-secondary access program; our objective is to work with 800 low income and/or first generation students who reside in Denver's inner city. As a postsecondary access provider, an individual who educates middle and high school students on the collegiate admissions process and assists those students in accessing higher education, I was

impressed with how quickly and how long my students were engaged with this book. Students that normally attempt to leave campus within seconds of the final bell or ditch the entire day, were in the library with me for nearly an hour each day after school for several weeks. The students reported that the curriculum was indeed "real;" and math was much more enjoyable when it was applied to something relatable. Lesson 74 is called Hip Hop Math and it uses the salaries of performers and athletes, ratios of teams that make the playoffs, points scored by popular NBA players, Nike shoe production, and many other examples to explore addition, subtraction, statistics, percentages, and word problems. Students who have struggled this semester in class were suddenly answering questions and taking the risk to participate without fear of embarrassment.

Although I am clearly a fan of the book I do have concerns. The book does not show how to implement the curriculum, how to have discussions around the topics proposed, or how Kunjufu has arrived at this new curriculum. I am afraid that teachers without experience or exposure to the culture of Hip Hop will be unable to implement the curriculum without significant training. How do these teachers not offend students while exploring topics? How do they learn terminology and Hip Hop culture without specific instruction?

Furthermore, one could assume that Kunjufu's extensive experience has led him to create this curriculum. Assumptions, unfortunately, should not drive the selection of curricula. After an extensive search I was not able to find any of Kunjufu's work that directly correlates with this curriculum. As an educator, I am left to wonder if this work was influenced by some theoretical perspective (i.e. cultural psychology) or whether the curriculum has been validated anywhere. I am certain other educators, school districts, and researchers will share these questions. Additionally, with the current focus on research based practices being implemented in schools, I am afraid that this curriculum will be devalued or worse, ignored. Furthermore, the content of the book concerns me because it addresses serious issues such as racism, sexism, gangs, and drugs. Parents may be against having their children exposed to a curriculum that addresses topics in such a direct manner. As a pre-collegiate provider, I do not have to worry about the parent objecting the use of the curriculum because they sign a consent form that allows us to expose students to cultural, social, and diversity activities upon acceptance into the program. I am interested to learn if Kunjufu has had any problems with his curriculum regarding parental resistance or implementation strategies.

Hip Hop is not only a music, genre, and lifestyle accepted by African Americans and urban students. According to the September 19, 2007 *Philadelphia Daily News* article entitled, "Hip-Hop Music's White Enablers," the largest share of rap music sales in America is to white listeners. If this is the case future research opportunities are available for exploration: Kunjufu's curriculum could be used in suburban schools; issues of diversity, the achievement gap, and social interactions could be studied using the culture that seems to have the attention of many youth.

Concerns aside, I think this curriculum represents the correct direction for education. This model creates shared learning from both student and teacher perspectives and it engages students who have been identified as at-risk. Moreover, I know this is right because of the reactions my students and I share. In addition to being a postsecondary access provider I am also African American male. I attended high school in a predominately white private, Catholic, college preparatory high school on a community-based scholarship for inner-city students. I often felt that I could not identify with my teachers and they had no clue about my world, no matter how nice or supportive they were. I know the feeling of insecurity in the classroom. I had to work extremely hard to catch up, keep up, and often wondered if any of it mattered since my world was vastly different from that of my classroom or neighborhood peers.

It is important to note that Kunjufu's work is not intended to replace but rather complement educational curricula currently delivered in classrooms. It is a tool to make learning fun for disengaged students. This curriculum has the potential to capture the attention of students and create buy-in for the students to participate. The education community is experiencing some woes; perhaps an innovative curriculum, contemporary ideas, and concepts such as those in Kunjufu's curriculum are needed to create strategies for change.

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Reviewed by Ryan Ross, M.Ed., University of Colorado-Denver.

Neuman, Susan B. & Roskos, Kathleen (2007) *Nurturing Knowledge: Building a Foundation for School Success by Linking Early literacy to Math, Science, Art, and Social Studies*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 200 Price: \$21.99 ISBN: 9780439821308

We have known for a long time learning starts long before school begins. Susan B. Neuman and Kathleen Roskos along with Tanya S. Wright and Lisa Lenhart in *Nurturing Knowledge: Building a Foundation for School Success by Linking Early literacy to Math, Science, Art, and Social Studies* offer an insightful model for how to begin.

From an impressive review of 25 years of learning research, the authors have fashioned a model for early literacy and school success. The book has a generous amount of photographs, exhibits and lists of songbooks, children's books, activities, tips and guidelines for playing, reading, rhyming, singing, dancing, creating, writing, sorting, collecting, describing and exploring early literacy. The authors have connected the dots for us!

Neuman and Roskos's perspective is that children learn and understand language they have heard. Their message is engage children early and move them in the direction of greater expertise in math, science, art and social studies. The goal is to support teachers' experiences in intentional engaged literacy learning, parents in their involvements with teachers and, ultimately, children in knowledge building experiences. *Nurturing Knowledge* is also a valuable resource for parents interested in making literacy connections with their children.

Reviewed by Vincent M. Pellegrino, Vice President, Southwest Minnesota State University

Owen, Hilarie (2007). *Creating Leaders in the Classroom: How Teachers Can Develop a New Generation of Leaders*. London: Routledge.

Pages: 192 Price: \$34.95 ISBN: 978-0-415-39995-1

The major question asked by Owen's book is "Can you teach a child to be a leader?" This book on leadership development in the classroom is a product of a four-year research project conducted in England and Wales on the subject of leadership development as understood by both teachers and students. In order to contribute to the development of future leaders and to address what she calls a "leadership deficit" (p. 1), Owen worked with teachers to evaluate their understanding of leadership and their ability to identify leadership potential in their students. In a larger follow-up study, she worked with five- to eighteen-year-olds to contrast their understanding of leadership and recognition of their own leadership potential with that of the teachers.

As the first study of its kind, Owen's work aims at raising awareness on the part of teachers, students, parents and community leaders of the futility of believing that leadership is reserved for a select few. Her main premise is that there is leadership potential in all children, if the children and their teachers take the time to discover it. This study constitutes a new way of understanding the concept of leadership by asking questions such as (i) How do our first seeds of understanding leadership affect our own perception of ourselves as leaders or non-leaders? (ii) How important are the early experiences of school to an individual's belief about themselves as a leader?

Creating Leaders in the Classroom is divided into three parts. The first part is based on the findings of her study with teachers in multiple schools. She reviews the literature on leadership studies to establish the void which her study will fill. Owen sets out to discover teachers' understanding of leadership and succeeds in establishing how teachers define leadership and assess leadership abilities among their students. The conclusions drawn from this first study are that teachers tend to choose leaders based on the level of confidence of the students. Therefore, children who are confident are more likely to be chosen as leaders than children who are quiet and shy. Another finding is the teachers' belief that leadership development typically occurs in primary school between the ages of five and eleven.

The second part of the book is aptly titled "The children's perspective," and focuses on research conducted with five-to eighteen-year-olds to understand their views on leadership. This second part confirms whether or not they are given the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential as leaders and also identifies factors that most influence their perception of themselves as leaders. The reader is able to hear, in their own words, what the children believe are the characteristics of a leader. The findings from this study reveal that children ages five and six, much more than the older children, tend to choose leaders from their own gender and

define leadership from a wider range of possible leaders. Some of the older children use words like "bossy," "older" and "bigger" to describe leaders and consequently do not perceive themselves to be leaders because none of these words describe who they are. The 11- to 16-year-olds mostly agree that leadership can be learned, although there are gender differences in these students' views on leadership.

The third part of the book focuses on the role of schools in the development of the next generation of leaders. According to Owen, the first step in developing future leaders is to develop teachers as leaders or what she calls "modeling leadership in the classroom" (p. 99). This "ability to understand oneself and others and seek continual personal growth," (p. 99) is critical to any discussions on leadership development in the classroom. Once teachers have learned to model and then develop leadership in the classroom, a new model of leadership emerges which is, at once, a collaborative and collective endeavor.

The ideas that emerged from both studies led to the development of a pilot study of 25 schools to evaluate and learn "to put together what [Owen] believed to be the way forward to fulfill the vision of developing a new generation of leaders that would think differently and have the moral courage to transform our world" (p. 3).

I like the fact that Owen ends each chapter with a summary of the highlights of the chapter and begins each part of the book with a summary of the preceding part. This is an excellent way of summarizing the research findings which would otherwise have made for tedious reading.

Overall, *Creating Leaders in the Classroom*, although based on a study conducted in England and Wales, is relevant to teachers of young children everywhere. Owen succeeds in challenging educators to change their old ways of thinking about leadership. Although the author acknowledges that teachers may be faced with greater demands on their time than that of developing leaders, she offers some encouragement by including practical steps that teachers can take towards creating "a culture of leadership" (p.162) throughout their schools.

Reviewed by Chinwe Okpalaoka, doctoral candidate in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership, College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University. Her areas of interest include immigrant education and ethnic identity development.

Peterson, Ralph & Eeds, Maryann (2007) *Grand Conversations: Literature Groups in Action*. Updated edition. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 117 Price: \$17.99 ISBN: 9780439926454

Book groups, literature groups, and literature circles are all terms used to describe small and varied groups of students organized for discussion of literature as part of the reading curriculum. Reading may take place both in the classroom and outside and the group discussions of the literature are considered to be a key part of the learning process (Tunkle, Evans & Anderson, 1999). Literature groups are used in many, many classrooms now after early uses in the 1980's (Daniels, 2006).

Grand Conversations: Literature Groups in Action is an introduction to the use of literature groups at the primary level. First published in 1990, the current book is an updated edition of that first edition. Chapters include: Teaching with real books, A literature-based reading program, Beliefs and practices, Literary elements, and Teachers at work. Book lists and example reading logs are also included. This updated edition is essentially the same text at the 1990 edition with some updates to the book lists, a new foreword, and tributes to the authors.

Publication of this book in an updated edition is a reaffirmation of early core principles for the use of classroom literature groups. For example, approaching teaching with collaboration, dialogue, and a belief in children's ability to understand, tell, and find meaning in stories are essential elements described in *Grand Conversations*. Over the years many applications of literature groups have been used in classrooms. Some reflect innovative ideas and others may represent a conceptual drift from the core principles of student engagement, choice of reading materials, and student responsibility (Daniels, 2006). Thus a review of those principles may offer classroom teachers a refreshed perspective and pre-service teachers an introduction to those concepts. The authors clearly communicate an attitude of respect for learners.

Yet, implementation of a literature group approach is apt to be challenging in today's complex school environments. Students might be unaccustomed to positive social interactions and use name-calling and other expressions of hostility. These students may need extended coaching in respectful communication prior to effective participation in literature groups (Clarke & Holwadel, 2007). Discussion of these types of challenges was not included in the updated edition of *Grand Conversations* even though the nature of the

classroom context has changed since 1990. Clarke & Holwadel (2007) offer strategies for use in literature groups in these more challenging school environments. Additionally, written dialog (Daniels, 2006) may prove useful for literature discussion. The Internet plus web 2.0 approaches offer additional ways to dialog.

Grand Conversations: Literature Groups in Action in the updated edition is a useful overview of core principles of literature groups as originally envisioned and implemented. Combined with other readings, it can help pre-service and in-service teachers understand this approach.

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Reviewed by Laurel Haycock, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Schur, Joan Brodsky (2007). *Eyewitness to the Past: Strategies for Teaching American History in Grades 5-12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 236 Price: \$20.00 ISBN: 978-1571104977

Opening with the argument that teaching to enthuse is as much about process as content, in *Eyewitness to the Past* Joan Brodsky Schur provides a series of 'eyewitness strategies' for teaching American history to school pupils in grades 5 to 12. The basic premise for these approaches is that students write a fictional account of history, from a first person, eyewitness perspective, within which they weave historical facts. As Schur remarks, such strategies "can make the study of history exciting by placing students in the shoes of ordinary people who, like we do now, lived in a state of suspense through tense times" (p. 2).

The book focuses on six specific strategies, which are each allocated an individual chapter: diaries, travelogues, letters, newspapers, election speeches, and scrapbooks. Each of these methods is approached in the same way. Students begin by studying contemporary examples of the chosen format, which form models on which they base their own work. Once students have familiarised themselves with the primary sources, they work on constructing a fictional historical persona, which informs the rest of the activity. This approach ensures that particular groups are not excluded from class discussion due to a lack of primary source material, and Schur gives examples of students keeping the diaries of women and slaves. This persona can be developed through the course of the activity, or, as in the case of the letter writing task, one which is set out beforehand in a short biography. The latter exercise sees students being placed in pairs and writing to each other, with the first task being for students to familiarise themselves with the biography of their partner's character, "so that they feel as if they are writing to a real person and respond accordingly" (p. 89).

With the exception of writing letters and newspapers, the other four strategies focus on individual work. However, Schur outlines various methods for bringing students together, either during or at the end of an activity, to share what they have learnt and draw connections between the experiences of each of their fictional historical characters. For instance, in the election speeches activity, each student works, in effect, as a 'local supporter', being assigned one particular aspect of the candidate's platform. Having written election speeches, the whole class engages in a debate in the respective personas of their characters, further bringing the subject alive for the students. As Schur remarks, "My own experience has taught me that restaging an election can electrify students, injecting partisanship and passion into their study of the candidates and the issues they represented" (p. 137). Indeed, with Schur's guidelines, it is easy to see how all the above strategies could be used to prompt student discussion and debate.

The approaches discussed in the book are more complex than just helping students to adopt an eyewitness point of view. Information that students cover in their eyewitness exercises is linked with material in their textbooks to ensure that they are addressing appropriate issues. Because students have to personalise information, the content of their textbooks is made more immediate and they engage with the material on a deeper level. Furthermore, activities are organised so that students are forced to engage with the complexities of history. For instance, Schur uses the newspapers created in class as tools to make students aware of conflicting interpretations of the same events. The class is divided up into newspaper teams, which each have a particular political or social angle. Once the newspapers are complete, students are given

access to the accounts of the same events written from different viewpoints. As Schur states, "Because the class explores events from multiple viewpoints, students are able to replace a voiceless and presumably objective viewpoint with multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations. This leads students to a better understanding of how historians construct a story of the past" (pp. 7-8).

Although *Eyewitness to the Past* uses American History as its case-study, the approaches identified are transferable to any area of history. This is made all the easier due to the comprehensive guidelines provided for each task. The use of illustrative work from students throughout the book brings the ideas and approaches alive for the reader and allows an insight into how students appropriated the tasks. The only thing missing from the book is a more thorough grounding of the approaches in pedagogical research – throughout the bulk of the text we are left to rely on Schur's, admittedly impressive, teaching experience to justify the techniques outlined. However, readers can easily access such material by following the sources given in the bibliography. This does not detract from the main strengths of the book, which provides practical examples to enthuse students in the study of history, helping them develop both an eyewitness point of view and an understanding of the complexities of engaging with primary sources and historical arguments.

Reviewed by Dr. Geoff Baker, Lecturer, History, Keele University, UK.

Snow, Catherine; Griffin, Peg & Burns, M. Susan (Editors). (2007 paperback edition). *Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 336 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 978-0-7879-9633-8

There is much to admire about the recent volume written by the reading sub-committee of the National Academy of Education. In this heavily footnoted, but readable text, the authors argue there is too much to know about how students learn to read, and too much is at stake, for educational leaders to be satisfied with the knowledge teachers acquire in teacher preparation programs. Teachers and school leaders must take responsibility for continually gaining knowledge about how to teach reading. Further, the burden for learning how to teach reading cannot fall solely on first grade teachers and reading specialists. All teachers, including secondary school teachers, cannot continue seeing the teaching of reading as "remedial," but rather a central concern, whether teaching in the area of Biology, American Literature, Spanish, or World History.

Upon stating the importance of reading to school success and the difficulty of the task, the authors compile a large canon of knowledge about language and reading, including various characteristics of language systems and human cognition such as morphology, phonology, semantics, and syntax. The second chapter (out of six) makes up more than 100 of the total 300 pages of the volume. The authors clearly know the research literature relating to linguistics and reading instruction, and provide literally hundreds of citations at the end of this chapter to be used for further study. This section of the volume explores essential aspects of reading print, including the multiple dimensions of comprehension, as well as what is involved, cognitively and linguistically, with decoding, word identification, and vocabulary development. For each aspect of the cognitive processes underlying successful reading, the authors offer examples of teaching strategies, but emphasize and outline the deep base of knowledge teachers should have. The volume does not offer step-by-step instructions on how to teach reading.

The authors next discuss in further depth a range of learners, including second language learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty, among other learning variations that teachers in mainstream classrooms—not just in special education or ELL settings—will encounter. In this section the authors describe four hypothetical students, each with different learning variations and placed in disparate school settings. The authors analyze the effects of the instruction in each setting and discuss various bodies of knowledge and particular strategies that "mainstream" teachers can use to teach a wide range of students. The authors "follow" these four students as they grow and present varying learning challenges for teachers at different developmental levels. Teaching strategies, and ways of thinking about, these variations are presented, which are found in the literature and widely suggested to be effective. There is also a brief chapter describing particular indications which suggest students need "specialized knowledge," relating to disabilities, that is, when students should be referred to specialists for particular learning variations.

The authors then present a synopsis of the literature on assessment of reading. Connecting back to the knowledge base presented in the second chapter, they list various assessment strategies and specific named tests, addressing particular facets of cognition or abilities related to reading, such as phonological awareness, orthography, comprehension, or vocabulary.

Finally, the authors present a model for professional growth in reading education, based on various models of adult learning found in the literature. Arguing that educators progress through various phases of development, the authors propose that teachers move from gaining knowledge from more declarative sources, such as attending lectures in an undergraduate education program, to "on the job" or situated learning. Eventually teachers move toward gaining knowledge largely upon reflection, careful use of independent assessment, and experience over time, along with on-going research and various professional development activities.

In this final chapter, the authors marshal literature which they argue points to several basic principles of effective professional development for veteran teachers. One principle, for example, reads "programs that address the ideas and beliefs about teaching that teachers bring with them are more likely to foster dispositions of openness to new ideas and reflection on their own assumptions about effective teaching and learning" (p. 211). This is certainly wise counsel, but this statement also indicates a larger contribution; even while the authors of this volume hold doctorates in fields such as linguistics and educational psychology, and are not practicing schoolteachers, the tone of the writing is far from paternalistic toward teachers. Rather, it is consistently mindful of why the continuing growth of teacher knowledge is important—so teachers can be experts and decision-makers around curriculum and teaching. In the view of these authors, teachers are not to be the deskilled non-intellectuals who implement mandates from experts far removed from schools and classrooms, an assumption often found in teacher education literature.

The volume clearly offers a wealth of knowledge on reading instruction from some of the preeminent experts in the field. There is no one who knows the literature on reading instruction better than Catherine Snow, for example. The authors have succeeded in synthesizing in 300 pages, and in readable format, a vast literature that has been controversial in the past, particularly around "whole language" and "phonics," but today seems to be coalescing around both deep knowledge of cognitive and linguistic features of reading, as well as deep knowledge of children's literature, and how to assess and address student comprehension and interests. In fact, the "settling" or at least "simmering" of these debates can perhaps be attributed in no small measure to the leadership of Catherine Snow.

Nevertheless, there is much more to reading instruction than is included in this volume. I was struck by the lack of inclusion of the "new literacy" literature here, for example. What are the "vernacular" literacies that students bring and interface with at home? How is digital technology changing how students learn to read and write? How can the learning of literacies be better understood if seen in situated contexts, a literacy of scientific discourse, for example, or, an example perhaps more relevant to children, the literacy of particular video games? In short, what must teachers know about the context in which literacies operate and are relevant? Might the technical knowledge of phonology and morphology be relatively useless to teachers without deep knowledge of the real contexts in which it is situated?

Another literature that this volume ignores is that of critical literacy. Paulo Freire, perhaps the most famous reading teacher in the world, advocated reading the word and the world. This volume is rich in its dealing with the aspect of reading the word, but hardly mentions the *world*. What Freire refers to, of course, is the political context in which all people are located, although of primary interest to him is the oppressed. While this volume includes particular teaching strategies for students living in poverty, it does not mention the need—or the motivating power—of teaching the political contexts in which students and communities are located. Reading should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather a tool for communication, and critical understanding of the contexts in which we live.

Reviewed by Matthew Knoester, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Sullo, Bob (2007). *Activating the Desire to Learn*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Pages: 164 Price: \$23.95 ISBN: 978-1-4166-0423-5

Bob Sullo's *Activating the Desire to Learn* begins by asking readers to put themselves in the shoes of an individual required to accomplish a task:

Consider your performance when you are "made" to do something. You complete the required task, but you probably don't put forth your best effort. Because personal motivation comes from within—you are motivated from the inside out—when someone "makes" you do something, your goal is to get the other person to leave you alone. External control may lead to compliance, but never inspires you to do your best. (p. 1)

I can't think of a better way to describe the current dilemma in many classrooms across the nation. In an environment of high stakes testing and accountability, teachers struggle to make their classes relevant, fun, and exciting while maintaining a sense of challenge and accomplishment. At the same time, educators push for their students to meet standards and be prepared for life after school. Sullo argues that by using methods of internally motivating students, teachers will accomplish the seemingly impossible and daunting task of activating student's desire to learn.

Imagine a world where educators and students alike accomplish the "tasks of school" in order to meet their own personal goals. There are educational theorists who agree with Sullo's basic premise that individuals are motivated when their basic needs are met and when the motivation comes from within. What makes this book unique is its perfect timing as it emerges in the field of education in the midst of a time of change and inquiry as to how to best meet the needs of all students.

Activating the Desire to Learn is primarily based on William Glasser's development of choice theory and his implementation of internal control psychology. In order to "soften" the reader to the object lessons embedded in the case studies that color this book, Sullo begins his work with a comprehensive overview of internal control psychology, which he believes is essential to implementing internal motivational techniques. Internal control psychology, a modification to Glasser's Choice Theory, posits that behavior is driven solely by five genetic factors, or internal drives: survival, belonging, power, freedom and fun. By addressing a combination of these factors, educators can increase their influence on students because the motivation to demonstrate certain behaviors will be internal to the student and will meet each student's particular needs. This way, educators can also avoid the pitfalls of behavior modification and the application of rewards and punishment in order to achieve desired results.

Following a review of internal control psychology, but before providing case after case of internal control psychology in action, the reader is exposed to a body of evidence and research that illustrates how internal control psychology promotes academic achievement and responsibility amongst students and educators in schools. We learn about how internal control psychology has been implemented in various settings, all with positive results. These examples support the value of internal motivation by showing how it has helped build relationships in schools, foster academic motivation to succeed and facilitate behavioral modification, staff development and effective management styles. Sullo makes a strong case for internal control psychology by citing examples of how and when it can work.

Most of *Activating the Desire to Learn* is spent reviewing cases where internal motivation was utilized to help meet a particular need in a classroom setting. However, the cases are not limited to the effects of internal motivation on student learning from an academic perspective. For example, Sullo begins his case studies with a story of Pam, an elementary school teacher, who utilizes internal control psychology to provide her students with power and freedom (two of the basic psychological needs) resulting in improved classroom cooperation and a classroom structure that fosters a sense of collaboration and community (p. 40). This example is followed by the story of Jen, an elementary school counselor who is struggling to draw out certain behaviors from one of her counselees, Paul. Until she went to a conference of internal control psychology, Jen used a system of rewards and punishment to "motivate" Paul to behave in certain ways and to work hard in his classes. The result of her attending the conference was a new insight into the value of allowing Paul to be internally motivated. Jen quickly realized that Paul liked to be successful in school and it felt "good" to him. By providing Paul with an idea of how learning was relevant to him, Jen was able to minimize his expectation of reward in exchange for learning and instead Paul became excited about learning on his own.

I was particularly interested in Sullo's story about Linda, a middle school social studies teacher, who was struggling with her curriculum, having to cover the required material. The problem was that Linda, like many teachers, felt that she was allowing students to proceed from her class with a low grade and minimal mastery of the content. Linda decided to implement a competence based learning system. Students were told that they were required to succeed in the class and demonstrate competency before they were allowed to move on. Linda essentially refused to provide students with a grade until they demonstrated mastery in her class. This resulted from her "discomfort with the disconnect that existed between her grading system and the departmental stance that some things were essential to know (p. 72)." Linda's switch to competence based grading sent a strong message to her students that they were required to learn. It also demonstrated the value of relationships that she was capable of building with students because they were assured that their mastery of important concepts was more central to the class than covering the material.

In my role as a school administrator, I am constantly trying to motivate people to behave in certain ways. Whether I am working with adults or children, much of my day revolves around helping people to accomplish their goals by creating systems in the school to remove barriers to their success. When working with students with regards to student discipline, I find that Sullo's example of a high school vice principal, Steve, who used internal control psychology to improve school discipline issues is useful. (p. 146) Steve had viewed

his role as an enforcer of rules and disciplinarian. When he made a switch to internal control psychology, Steve was able to get to the root cause of inappropriate behavior and use the experience to teach students how to demonstrate responsible, proactive behavior to meet their needs. By recognizing that all behavior, even inappropriate behavior, is purposeful, Steve was able to reframe his thinking to better meet the needs of the students and help them explore the purposes behind their actions.

Activating the Desire to Learn forces educators to examine their practices through the lens of internal control psychology. The old adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" does not apply to the current state of public education. In an environment neck deep in accountability and an increasingly diverse community base, educators need to "innovate or die." Sullo lays the groundwork for designing necessary innovations in many aspects of schooling, from learning, to leadership. This little book, which can be read in a weekend, provides some valuable insight into practical ways that educators can reframe their thinking to achieve better results from their students and their colleagues.

Reviewed by David Trajtenberg, University of Colorado-Denver.

Taris, James Robert & Taris, Louis James (2006). *Hands-On Science Mysteries: Standards-Based Inquiry Investigations. Grades 3-6.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 297 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-471-69760-5

Hands-On Science Mysteries is to print what the popular Discovery Channel program, Mythbusters, is to television. Both invite us to reveal the truth, or lack of, behind intriguing, well-known urban legends. Students are guided through basic steps of problem solving as they call upon their critical thinking skills to solve each mystery. Can a person really drown in quicksand? Is it possible to lie on a bed of nails? Is there a lake monster in Scotland's Loch Ness? These questions will captivate the attention of students in grades 3-6 as well as their older brothers and sisters and parents.

Seventy mysteries are presented in an easy to use format designed by Taris and Taris to promote the use of experimentation as a learning tool. Happily, common household items are used in lieu of expensive lab equipment. Intended to support the National Science Standards of using classroom activities grounded in inquiry to solve real-world problems, teachers will appreciate the opportunity to show students how learning basic science concepts equips them to answer real-life questions.

Each lesson starts by providing a brief synopsis of a featured mystery. Students are then invited to conduct an experiment that will shed some light on possible solutions/explanations. By answering a few carefully worded follow-up questions, students are able to make use of the data they have collected to solve each mystery. Extension activities are provided for all the labs.

This ready-to-use resource will serve to enhance science lessons on a regular basis. Some of the lessons are brief enough to use as a "brain-teaser" at the beginning of science class while others are substantial enough to serve as the foundation of a entire study. *Hands-On Science Mysteries* will also provide a welcome addition to a substitute teacher's portfolio as they can be prepared quickly while still providing a substantial exercise in doing science.

Reviewed by Amy Larrison Gillan, science teacher, Southmont Junior High School, Crawfordsville, IN, and doctoral student, Science Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Education, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN. Area of research interest: environmental education, particularly ocean literacy and stewardship in landlocked classrooms.

Van de Walle, John A. & Lovin, Lou Ann H. (2006). *Teaching Student-Centered Mathematics: Grades K-3.* Van de Walle Professional Mathematics Series, volume 1. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Pages: 400 Price: \$33.99 ISBN: 0205408435

The development of a meaningful understanding of mathematical concepts in elementary school students is the basis for their understanding middle school and high school mathematics courses. This book focuses on teaching math concepts in K-3. The major focus is number sense making and encouraging students to use invented strategies to explore mathematical concepts. The approach promotes students being actively involved in learning. The authors discuss the use of problem-based strategies when teaching mathematics.

They advocate the use of critical thinking and modeling techniques that use students' multi-senses as opposed to traditional teaching that uses one or maybe two senses.

The book provides many activities for teachers to use in their classrooms in order to enhance students' understanding of math concepts such as number sense, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, area, and volume. In the chapters about measurement, data analysis and probability, the authors include innovative hands-on activities that are contextual; thereby, students could easily relate them with their daily lives. One activity mentioned in the book suggests providing children with a dot card, and then asking them to make a set of counters that is two more than the set shown on the card. There are also many activities in finding areas, capacity, time, and weight; in making bar graphs, and in probabilities.

This book will be very beneficial for college instructors teaching elementary methodology mathematics courses and for elementary math teachers because it contains many hands-on activities and effective mathematics teaching strategies for K-6 children.

Reviewed by Hosin Shirvani, Assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Texas-Pan American

Walker, Robert (2007). *Music Education: Cultural Values, Social Change, and Innovation*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Pages: 321 Price: \$69.95 ISBN: 978-0-398-07726-6

Musical meaning and the role of music in the schools has been a topic of considerable discussion since music was first introduced into Boston's schools in 1838. Robert Walker continues the discussion in *Music Education: Cultural Values, Social Change, and Innovation*. This new book examines important issues regarding the current and historical meaning of music and musical experience in the public schools. In it, Walker argues that music's role in education is justified by its central place in a culture. In so doing, he takes on what he views as some of the greatest threats to music education. These include the influence of social theorists, questionable psychological theories, and commercial-driven popular music. The book is notable for its international perspective. In addition to his native Australia, he describes music education in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. In addition, he occasionally uses schools in countries such as Russia, Korea, and China for comparison.

The book is organized into chapters that explore different aspects of musical experience, education, and culture. He begins with an overview of the issues of tradition and change in music education before exploring the evolving ideas surrounding the meaning of music and then the justifications for music and education. The next two chapters explore the role of music in the establishment of cultural identity and changes to the music education curriculum. Walker then explores 20th century art music and attempts to bring that music to the classroom in the mid to late 1900s. Later chapters provide an in-depth critique of social and psychological theories and their effects on music education. Walker concludes with a discussion of musical values and education. The arguments Walker makes are presented well, and any student of music education would do well to familiarize themselves with his point of view. Readers who are unwilling to accept some of the author's core assumptions, however, are likely to reject his conclusions, as well.

For example, the author states that "there has to be a distinction between education and entertainment," complaining that many in education are unable to distinguish between art music and over-commercialized popular music. Walker discusses in fine detail the differences between the two types of music, using as examples the music of Schubert and John Lennon, respectively. A significant caveat is required, however, to make the leap from his convincing discussion demonstrating the more sophisticated nature of Schubert's music to the conclusion that popular music has no place in education. That caveat is the acceptance of Walker's assumption that music for entertainment and music for art's sake are mutually exclusive. Walker attempts to further illustrate his point by using a sports metaphor. He uses a professional baseball game on one side and a screening of the movie *The Bad News Bears* on the other. This metaphor only works if the reader accepts that as entertainment, popular music is meant only as a representation of music.

A second example is Walker's position that "music's inclusion in education can only be justified in terms of the importance a particular culture places on its music as a valued art form." Again, he carefully crafts an argument in support of his position that focuses on the role that music plays in culture, and on the importance of understanding various cultures. He notes that few, if any societies today are truly mono-cultural. This time, his argument is depended on two assumptions. First, that western art music is the defining music of western culture. Second, that in order to understand other cultures, one must first understand one's own culture.

For this reader, the book's greatest weakness was its lack of suggestions for appropriate uses of popular music in the classroom, or ways to help students connect to the western canon that Walker holds in such high esteem. I am a practicing music teacher who works on a daily basis to open students' ears to music beyond over-commercialized rap, hip-hop, and popular genres. Perhaps Walker considered this to be outside the scope of his discussion since the book is not directed at practicing teachers. However, I believe that any useful critique of curriculum or instruction must include concrete suggestions for improving any perceived issues.

I would recommend this book to a reader interested in better understanding the music education experience. Walker clearly articulates very strong arguments in support of his vision for music education. Regardless of the reader's willingness to accept his conclusions, there is much to be gained from understanding his point of view. Additionally, the historical and international perspectives alone make this volume a worthwhile read.

Reviewed by Ronald P. Kos, Jr., currently a music teacher in the Madison Metropolitan School District in Madison, WI. He holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin — Madison. His research examines education reform policy implementation and public school music programs.

Weaver, Constance (2007). *The Grammar Plan Book: A Guide to Smart Teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 168 Price: \$20.00 ISBN: 978-0-325-01043-4

Some embrace grammar and teach it eagerly; yet for many, it is neither fun nor comfortable, and I suppose that I find myself a bit more towards that end of the spectrum. As a teacher educator working with preservice English/Language Arts teachers, I am committed to addressing the teaching of grammar in my courses, but at the same time I continually wonder how best to do it. So I approached my reading of Constance Weaver's *The Grammar Plan Book: A Guide to Smart Teaching* with a mixture of eagerness and trepidation. For me, the book came alive in the second chapter when I had the following "aha" moment: this is not a book about the *teaching of grammar*, this is a book about the *teaching of writing* and how thinking about grammar can support teachers in their writing instruction and, by extension, can improve students' writing – the most important thing of all, really.

The book is organized into two sections: first is a discussion of the methods and ideas Weaver advocates, followed then by a "grammar planner" section, which offers an "overview of grammatical concepts for enriching writing and for enhancing it through editing" (p. 10). In the first section, comprised of five chapters, Weaver introduces her main themes, perhaps the most important one being that we should teach grammar "an inch wide and a mile deep" (p. 16). Throughout this section, she gracefully works at three different levels. On the broadest level, she reiterates some of her overarching beliefs about the teaching of grammar; for example, that less is more, that it should be for the benefit of students' writing, and that it should at times arise spontaneously based on what a teacher sees. More specifically, she tells stories (and in doing so provides many examples) of her own efforts, and those of teachers she has worked with, to use the particular strategies she advocates. In the chapter titled "Modifiers to Enrich Writing," she writes,

We teachers often find ourselves helping students use more precise nouns, or naming words, and more lively verbs, or action words: These are the most basic parts of the "cake." Precise nouns and lively verbs can, indeed, greatly strengthen a piece of writing. What makes the greatest difference, though, the "filling," is using modifiers to add detail, voice/style, and sentence variety/fluency – not just single word modifiers but groups of words functioning together as a modifier (p. 34).

This chapter, as well as several others, is filled with examples of all the different ways students can play with modifiers to strengthen their writing. These myriad examples and Weaver's accompanying narration and discussion are the real strength of this book.

As she writes about these strategies teachers can use to improve kids' writing, Weaver works at a third level, wherein she quietly teaches the reader a little bit about grammar, providing information about "basic grammatical concepts and terms" (p. 34). While she does not spend a huge amount of time on this, she does name and define terms and provides valuable information about what they are and how they can be useful to both teachers and students. At the same time, however, Weaver notes (and notes again in other parts of the book) that knowing all this grammar, or knowing all the terminology, is absolutely not necessary for teachers. Yes, it can be useful, and yes, teachers need to know some bits and pieces, but to do the work she is

advocating teachers by no means need to be grammar experts or to know all the fancy names and terminology. For those who are a bit squeamish about grammar, this is a welcome pronouncement.

The wonderful thing about the second half of the book, the Grammar Planner section, in addition to its comprehensiveness, is that Weaver organizes it in relation to the Six Traits of Writing model (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions). For example, Section B is titled "The Sentence: Structure, Organization, Punctuation – and More" with the following subtitle "Addressing **organization** (transitions), **sentence fluency**, and editing **conventions** of subject-verb agreement and punctuation" (p. 95). If you are teaching or working with the Six Traits in your classroom, then this organizational feature will make it easier to think about (and will provide you resources for) teaching certain grammatical concepts in relation to specific traits. Additionally, by organizing the section this way, Weaver further strengthens the point that she has been making throughout the book – that grammar is really about strengthening student writing and that any actual *teaching* of grammar should be done in the service of helping students with their writing.

Early on in the book, Weaver introduces a very nice "framework for teaching grammar throughout the writing process," and then comes back to it a few times, both to illustrate it with examples as well as to further emphasize it as a way to think about teaching. Nothing particularly new or earth-shattering in this model. But it is, as her book's subtitle says, "smart teaching," and it never hurts to hear someone else talk through her visions of smart teaching. One of the early steps in the process is to "share a model" with students, that is, show them a model of good writing (here, specifically, a model with the grammatical tool you'll be asking them to work with). Again, nothing particularly new about this general idea: we know that it really helps kids, as writers, to see models of good writing.

Here is the point I want to make, though: just as student writers need to see models of good writing, so too do prospective teachers need to see models of good teaching. One of the things I felt most strongly, after reading Weaver's book, was that it provided a rich, detailed, and realistic model of good teaching. And for that reason alone, if not for any of the others I have discussed above, I'll happily add this to the required reading in my methods course.

Reviewed by Clarissa Thompson. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Secondary and Middle Education at the University of Maine at Farmington, where she teaches English/Language Arts Methods and Content Literacy courses.

Yendol-Hoppey, Diane & Fichtman Dana, Nancy (2007). *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Mentoring: Strengthening Practice Through Knowledge, Story, and Metaphor*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Pages: 138 Price: \$27.95 ISBN: 978-1-4129-3863-1

For well over a decade, the high attrition rate among new elementary and secondary teachers has been a concern. A higher demand for teachers coupled with large numbers of new teachers drowning in a "sink or swim" environment that causes large numbers to leave the profession are the reasons for such concern.

Many researchers, as is the case with Yendol-Hoppey and Fichtman Dana, have looked to mentoring research as a key to slowing, if not stopping, teacher attrition. Having an experienced professional to whom one may turn has many positive effects. The authors point out that mentoring also ignites a renewed sense of satisfaction in the experienced teacher and helps to produce "effective" teachers. Mentoring, particularly at induction, is an important aspect in new teacher retention (Guarina, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

As the title indicates, Yendol-Hoppey and Fichtman Dana focus on reflection, particularly through metaphor, as a means of strengthening mentor ability. The authors suggest in the forward that this book is for the experienced mentor who already has an extensive mentoring "toolbox." Largely, the reviewer disagrees in that the simplicity of the book and the basic components of mentoring discussed in the book make it less useful for an experienced mentor and more for the novice mentor.

What the book does well is introduce the concept of reflective mentoring and describe its importance in creating a teacher who not just survives, but actually thrives and is successful in public education. In the act of being reflective, a mentor gains the tools needed to guide a new teacher through a complex system of creating an educative-mentoring context, cultivating the dispositions of a successful educator, and guiding a mentee's professional knowledge development, which the authors explain are the three main components on which the mentoring relationship need to focus. In this way, the new teacher can learn to be an effective

educator as well as a survivor.

The book consists of ten chapters, three of which address why mentoring is important, how reflection effects mentoring, and how reflective mentoring adds depth to the mentoring toolbox. These chapters explain what constitutes the pieces that create each of the three components of effective teaching. The second chapter addresses the need of the mentor to be guide and nurturer as well as the ways in which reflection helps reach those goals. The remaining seven chapters contain the descriptive metaphors and vignettes experienced mentors contributed. These metaphors are identified by the mentors and reflect each one's perception of him- or herself as mentor. The seven metaphors are the mentor as story-weaver, jigsaw puzzle enthusiast, interior designer, real estate agent, tailor, coach, and mirror.

While providing descriptive metaphors can be useful in illustrating concepts, there are too many metaphors included in the book. The book is repetitive with most of the metaphors expressing the same concepts. Adding to this perception of repetitiveness, the summary section of all seven metaphor chapters begins with the same three sentences; "Mentoring is a complex endeavor. Every mentor and mentee is different. Consequently, every mentor-mentee relationship is different." At least two sets of metaphors (jigsaw puzzle enthusiast-interior designer and coach-tailor) are so similar as to be almost indistinguishable. This book could easily have made the same point with four or five chapters.

Each chapter ends with a series of exercises meant to strengthen and put into practice the concepts of the chapter. These are also repetitive and, similar to each chapter summary, conclude with the same three questions for the reader to answer. The simplicity, similarity, and repetition of the exercises do not lend credibility to the idea that this book will help experienced mentors "deepen their mentoring practice."

The book is easy to read and understand. These simple exercises and multiple approaches to the concept of reflective mentoring would be useful to the inexperienced mentor. They could provide a taste of the experience that a novice mentor lacks. The illustrations place the concepts into meaningful context that is easy to understand. The relationship between the components is clear, which is useful to a novice, but already understood by the experienced mentor.

Finally, the book does not draw in the reader. The language is simple and the reading is easy. The difficulty lies in the layout of the book. Unless readers skip the forward, preface, acknowledgements and author credentials, they must read twenty-six pages before the first chapter begins. These sections of front matter are twice the size of any single chapter in the book. Either readers must be highly motivated to read the front matter, or they must be comfortable with skipping it altogether.

Despite the repetitive nature of the book, it is a useful tool in thinking about how best an individual may approach mentoring. Reflection strengthens the mentors concept of self and goals, and that in turn strengthens the mentoring relationship. A strong mentoring relationship will help ensure that novice educators receive the support they need. This in turn will stem the attrition tide and keep those new educators from drowning in the public school systems in which they work.

References

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Reviewed by Anita L. Herold, Research assistant & doctoral student, University of North Dakota. Her research focuses on communication and public discourse.



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