reseñas educativas (Spanish)
resenhas educativas (Portuguese)

Brief reviews for July 2007

Anderson, Rebecca S.; Grant, Michael M. & Speck, Bruce W. (2008). *Technology to Teach Literacy: A Resource for K-8 Teachers.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Pages: 312   Price: $22.00   ISBN: 9780131989757

I normally don't get excited about books that are published primarily for college courses, but this book is an exception. Rather than the standard approach to using computers in the classroom, *Technology To Teach Literacy: A Resource for K-8 Teachers*, looks specifically at ways to use technology to support literacy. It briefly describes typical software applications, and then focuses on a variety of ways that technology can be used to support reading, writing and other types of communication.

As a second language instructor, I was especially interested in the chapter that discussed the use of computers in ESL classrooms. This chapter, like the others, begins with a realistic classroom scenario where both ESL and non-ESL students interact with each other and computer software as they improve their language skills. It continues with the first person account of a teacher struggling with the challenge "to develop a program that accepts and respects the language and culture of ESL students and empowers them to feel confident to risk getting involved in the learning process" (p. 147). The authors then provide the reader with further rationale for using computers with ESL students, and examples of what that might look like in practice. Their research base is strong, citing noted experts such as Larry Cuban and Paulo Freire along with respected researchers in the fields of literacy and technology in education.

Each chapter in the book, like the ESL chapter mentioned above, follows a format that begins with a classroom scenario and includes: theoretical background, examples of practice, lesson plans, and references. For example, the chapter on Using Technology to Teach Reading begins with a scenario in which a math teacher and a reading teacher discuss how the math teacher addresses literacy in his classroom. This is followed by theory related to the study and teaching of reading, examples of various approaches to teaching reading with technology, instructional design and technology tips, and lesson plans. This approach provides a realistic view of the use of technology from theory to practice, in a way that teachers will find useful.

Interestingly, colleagues of the authors, who are experts in their respective fields, wrote the chapters on ESL and literacy for struggling readers. It is refreshing to encounter authors who recognize their own limitations and the importance of bringing in other experts when appropriate. This adds to the credibility of the book as a whole.

Technology to Teach Literacy is more than just a good textbook; it would also be a good resource to include in any school's professional development collection. It provides engaging scenarios and examples of how real teachers use technology to improve teaching and learning for their students. The book is well written, with a focus on classroom practice rather than computer tutorials. Today, with renewed attention to the issue of literacy, it is refreshing to see a book that provides readers with well- researched

examples of how teachers can use technology to enhance the learning experiences of their students.

Reviewed by Michael Morales, a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University.

Daniels, Harvey; Zemelman, Steven & Steineke, Nancy (2007) *Content-Area Writing: Every Teacher's Guide.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 288   Price: $27.00   ISBN: 978-0-325-00972-8

Ambrose Bierce (1909) wrote, "Good writing...is clear thinking made visible."

In their new book on content-area writing, Daniels, Zemelman, and Steineke give us a text that is chock full of clear thinking; and it's all made visible. It is also immediately applicable in modern classrooms. The text is well written, easy to process, and respectful of teachers who have not only the task of teaching students to write more effectively but also the tasks of teaching science, history, math, and language arts while at the same time improving test scores.

This respectfulness on the part of the authors is provided in the form of field-tested examples and real-world suggestions. These are especially needed in today's schools where many teachers have their professional lives engulfed by high-stakes test scores, computerized reading-program points, and the newest of state standards. Clear examples and specific suggestions are required by teachers if a text is to be of help.

The authors of *Content-Area Writing* provide a total of 25 activities and projects that teachers of all subjects can use in their classrooms. The book is divided into two parts. The first part consists of 15 activities to help students write to learn. That is, the first part of the book has activities that will allow students to use writing in order to learn about science, history, math, geography, and the like. The second part of the book consists of ten specific writing projects that allow students to write about what they have learned so that they can share their learning with peers and others.

Content-Area Writing consistently provides a standardized format that includes among other things definitions, examples in both text and graphic formats, examples of what can go wrong with each activity or project, and variations on a theme within their 25 samples. The authors even consistently give ideas for *working the room.* Working the room is what teachers do while students are writing. While students are writing, teachers confer quietly with individual students, check for on-task writing, and monitor the room for needs.

The standardized format is very helpful in allowing the reader to know what to expect and where to look for the obvious questions about how to successfully implement and manage each of the activities and projects. For example, the authors provide a vignette of Nancy's classroom where students are using the write-around while studying the McCarthy era in an American Studies class. A write-around is a small group activity of four students who work together on a writing activity. They individually jot comments about the class topic on their own papers, pass their papers, read the previous student's comments, add their own comments, and then continue to pass the papers around the table until each paper has made it all the way around and back to the original owner. This write-around is done silently and with each student having the opportunity to both read and write about the day's reading assignment or class discussion with minimal pressure and maximum engagement.

A variation on the write-around provided by the authors comes from Jeff Wilhelm who suggests having each student in the class write two questions about the class discussion and then pass the questions to another student who provides an answer and then also adds a question. After several passes and more written answers and questions, the teacher can then open the floor for discussion of the questions and answers. Other writing activities in addition to the write-around in the first part of the book include writing break,

exit slips, admit slips, brainstorming, drawing and illustrating, clustering, mapping, written conversation, carousel brainstorming, double-entry journal, nonstop writing, reflective writing, KWL, and teacher-student correspondence.

In the second half of the text, the authors provide information on ten specific writing projects that now go beyond *writing to learn* and focus on writing to create a *product* that students use in order to share what they have learned during their study. The authors call these projects *public writing.* The projects include people research, faction, RAFT, brochure, newspaper front page, web page, multigenre project, social action paper, learning fair, and I-search paper.

The social action paper is a good example of using writing to expand and enhance students' lives. The authors give three examples of how teachers at the middle and high school levels used writing projects and papers to study the Vietnam war, the environment, and the physical needs of a school. The text provides details of how the projects came about and how the issues were resolved. While it can be risky for teachers to tackle controversial social issues in their own communities, the value of teaching students to use reading and writing to address critical issues in their lives is viewed by the authors as a worthwhile goal of literacy.

This text also has a chapter devoted exclusively to writing workshop. Writing workshop is explained in terms of the writing process and includes prewriting, gathering information, writing a draft, revising, editing, and publishing. The chapter gives special consideration to the busy schedules that content-area teachers have and their need to balance these busy schedules with their desire to include more writing activities.

A final chapter of the text features essay tests and high-stakes writing tests. The authors provide this separate chapter and encourage teachers to speak specifically to test-taking as its own genre of writing. Writing an answer to a test is not like write-arounds or social-action papers. Writing essays and answers to high-stakes tests requires a different and rather abstract and decontextualized attitude from the stance normally assumed by a good writer. Nevertheless, teachers are obligated to teach their students the essence of a good test answer; and the authors provide guidance and assurance to this end.

A helpful aspect to this text is a textbox on specific pages that reminds the reader that even though this is not a web-based text, the reader can still jump around to different parts of the book to clarify an idea or to move from one part of the book to another. The authors make suggestions in various textboxes as to when it might be time to check out other parts of the book. The one thing that the publisher overlooked is the hue of the ink. It is grayish and difficult to read.

For teachers who want to use the activities and projects in *Content-Area Writing* in their classrooms, a few general rules apply: keep it simple, keep it organized, don't grade everything the students do, use folders to collect the work rather than spirals, try unlined paper rather than lined, and date everything.

To be a writer of content-area text requires that writing instruction and opportunity begin at an early age. We need schools where teachers themselves are readers and writers and where teachers have the patience and skill to encourage their students to write. This of course requires modeling, invitation, feedback, and celebration.

Content-area writing requires a love of the subject, a knowledge of the subject, and a motivation for completing a writing project that has real-world payoff. Real-world payoff for students and teachers in schools comes from the pride of completing and sharing a written product. It comes from improving ones life and ones community. For teachers, this means maintaining the energy and commitment to including writing throughout the curriculum and throughout the day.

In the end, writing is hard work. It is just as hard as playing the flute or learning to do open-heart surgery. It is also a talent - a talent that gets better with consistent engagement, choice, and support from teachers and peers. Daniels, Zemelman, and Steineke have given us the tools we need to help students to think, write, learn, and

achieve.

References

Bierce, A. (1909). *Write it Right.* Retrieved May 20, 2007 from
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12474/12474-h/12474-h.html

Reviewed by Marsha Grace, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where she teaches courses in reading methodology, children's literature, and constructivist curriculum aproaches. For the past ten years, she has incorporated service-learning projects into her courses emphasizing guided reading, storyboards, and the use of the Lanugage Experience Approach to promote literacy and a love of literature. The service-learning projects take place with children in the local schools and at the Boys and Girls Club in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Kincheloe, Joe L. & hayes, kecia, Editors (2006). *Teaching City Kids: Understanding and Appreciating Them.* New York: Peter Lang.

Pages: 311   Price: $45.95   ISBN: 978-0-8204-8603-1

Teaching City Kids starts out strong with a chapter by editor Kincheloe, who propones that "a critical urban pedagogy is obsessed with…helping students develop into warrior intellectuals who pursue learning in their struggles for personal and social transformation." In emphasizing the importance of teachers becoming researchers of their students and their students' social contexts, Kincheloe adopts a century-old argument of John Dewey – that education must be constructed around the purposes of the student – and applies it to a critical urban pedagogy that is "obsessed with this dispositional aspect of learning." This first chapter sets a tone and portends a series of ensuing chapters that will be connected to this same theme, the "necessity of knowing our urban students" if we are to teach them. And each chapter approaches this topic from a unique perspective and field of research, ranging from Latinas in single sex schools to safety legislation and its effects on the incarceration rates of poor students of color.

While the general theme of this book is both timely and worthwhile, unfortunately, a proliferation of errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and syntax throughout a majority of the chapters presents a major distraction to the reader. In fact, some chapters are so riddled with errors of syntax and what appear to be either typographical errors or editors' notes that were never resolved before going to print, that numerous sentences and paragraphs require several readings before they are comprehensible. There is little that connects chapters two through eleven to Kincheloe's first chapter, and several authors omit crucial foundational components, such as topic and/or purpose. One example is chapter three, Leistynahe's "How multicultural curriculum development often misses the mark," which never clearly states a topic or purpose and reads like a series of excerpts in random order.

With Noel S. Anderson's chapter 12, "I still fear I'm gonna slip: A case study of African American and Latino Males in an Urban College Preparation Program," the tide is turned. This chapter has a clear introduction, is well organized and well written, and puts forth a statement of purpose that sets the stage for a compelling description of a case study. More importantly, Anderson's chapter revisits the original theme of "treating children as whole human beings, rather than as students" so as to ensure that, as educators, we study both the student and the student's context and make learning relevant to them. In fact, with only one exception (chapter 13 by co-editor kecia hayes), the last few chapters of *Teaching City Kids* are engaging, well organized, and well written. Chapter 16, by Sally M. Reis and Thomas P. Hébert, "Supporting academic achievement in culturally diverse and academically talented urban students" is a highlight of this book, mainly because it imparts specific information about factors that promote academic achievement among culturally diverse urban youth, but also because Reis and Hébert use tables and subheadings, thus promoting readability and facilitating the reader's ability to follow the

authors' argument from purpose to conclusion. Unfortunately, much of *Teaching City Kids* does not come close to meeting this same high standard of clarity of purpose, organization of thought, and structure of argument.

Reviewed by Harriet R. MacLean, Ed. D., Middle Schools Network Executive Officer in Oakland Unified School District, Oakland, California. Her research interests include student motivation and issues affecting the success of young adolescents in urban middle schools.

Martin, Nancy & Halperin, Samuel (2006) *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth.* Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. Available online at http://www.aypf.org /publications/WhateverItTakes.htm

Pages: 887031-93-6   Price: free   ISBN: 887031-93-6

The American Youth Policy Forum's report, *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth*, provides an overview of twelve community programs that have successfully managed either to lower the number of dropouts in their local schools, or to support youth and young adults who have dropped out. The report is divided into two main sections; the first provides twelve case studies of local programs, and the second describes national dropout programs. *Whatever It Takes* begins with a bulleted list of statistics on dropouts nationwide. The employment outlook for dropouts is bleak, according to the data supplied by the authors. These data help illustrate the necessity for initiatives that target this issue. The introduction provides the reader with the observations and reflections of the authors, based on the program case studies. Most of the reflections reiterate the message that the models for successful programs are available and can be replicated.

In the case studies of twelve successful programs, each profile is set up in a similar fashion. The authors provide a community profile, complete with employment statistics and educational attainment data. Details on the specific methods of the program are also provided. Most of the communities have several options for at risk youth, allowing the initiatives to meet the needs of a variety of young people. Baltimore, Maryland has numerous programs. They include Fresh Start, a program for male, out of school juvenile offenders, and Youth Opportunity, a program that focuses on connecting young people with resources within their neighborhoods. Pima County, Arizona with includes the city of Tucson, also provides multiple options for out of school youth. Las Artes is a community arts program that combines GED preparation with mosaic building. The students are able to not only receive tutoring from certified teachers, but also artistic assistance in creating murals that are displayed in prominent locations throughout the city. Other Pima County students are able to benefit from the educational and training programs at Pima Vocational High School, a year round charter school.

All twelve of the communities profiled are large, urban areas, with diverse public school district populations. Some of the programs are run by the school districts, like Jefferson County, Kentucky and Salt Lake City, Utah. Other programs, like the Youth Employment Partnership and the East Bay Conservation Corps in Oakland California, are run by non-profit organizations. Most of the programs, however, are collaborative efforts between the local school districts, community based non-profit organizations, and even, in some cases, the private sector.

The second section of *Whatever It Takes* briefly highlights six national programs that, according to the authors, assist a large portion of the out of school youth population. Some of the national programs are discussed in the community case studies, illustrating the effectiveness of the programs at the local level. Youth Build, and Youth Service and Conservation Corps are two such examples. Contact information is also given for each of the national programs for those interested in developing related programs in their local communities.

Whatever It Takes is a well organized, highly user-friendly text for those interested in learning more about the successes that communities nationwide have had with tackling the issue of out of school youth. The authors provide readers with a useful combination of statistical data, personal stories, program evaluations, and resources for further information. The issue of school dropouts and other out of school youth continues to remain a challenge for many communities, including the ones profiled. The authors are able to frame the issue in an optimistic lens, allowing readers to perceive that the problems can be successfully addressed, provided that adequate resources are available. *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of- School Youth*, would be especially useful to community organizations, school districts, or other entities interested in creating or enhancing similar programs.

Reviewed by Monica Evans, MLIS. Evans is a former elementary school teacher, middle school social studies teacher, and library media specialist. She is currently a doctoral student at Michigan State University, studying Education Policy.

Mermelstein, Leah (2007). *Don't Forget to Share: The Crucial Last Step in the Writing Workshop.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 128   Price: $15.00   ISBN: 978-0-325-00951-3

In her book *Don't Forget to Share: The Crucial Last Step in the Writing Workshop*, Leah Mermelstein asks the central question: How do we get more out of our share sessions at the end of writing workshop? She notes that share sessions should honor the writing kids have done and give them the opportunity to share that writing with authentic audiences. Share sessions need to be filled with talk from lots of students, but it is also important that students listen to one another. Finally, Mermelstein recognizes that within all of the student talk, there should be teaching going on. Mermelstein's book offers a clear and usable model for how to make share sessions an integral and useful part of writing workshop.

According to Mermelstein, share sessions should be discussions where students contribute ideas to solve writing problems, speak in their own words to explain complex writing concepts, and have the time to slow down and think about these complex writing issues. For Mermelstein, the ideal share session conversation is 10-15 minutes at the end of each day of writing workshop. She believes share sessions are an integral part of writing workshop and should not be neglected.

Mermelstein recognizes that the types of share session conversations she advocates are not going to magically happen. The second chapter of her book is an effective outline for how to determine the appropriate share session for a given day, set up that share session, and facilitate the session conversation. Mermelstein includes several quick reference charts to guide teachers' decision making and set up.

Mermelstein outlines four types of share sessions – content, craft, process, and progress – devoting a chapter of helpful, in-depth description to each. For each type she outlines the materials needed for the session, her decision- making process as she chooses her focus for that session, a detailed transcript of the conversation that took place, and ideas on where she takes her teaching next. Each chapter also includes an analysis of the share session transcript focused on the type of learning that took place during the conversation. Some of the share sessions chapters also include sample students' writing that show the impact of those share sessions. Finally, Mermelstein discusses how the share session conversation might work in partners or small groups. She offers detailed ideas for how to teach students to talk with one another in meaningful ways about their writing.

This book will be most useful to those teachers who already have an established writing workshop in their classrooms, but are looking to make the share session more meaningful. Mermelstein's detailed transcripts of share sessions coupled with the helpful "At a Glance" charts which define the types of share sessions, give suggestions for when

these types of sessions might be most appropriate, and identify which students might most benefit from these types of sessions make this a handy resource for any writing workshop teacher's bookshelf.

Reviewed by Carmen Manning, Assistant Professor of English Education at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Morgan, Peggy Lou (2006). *Parenting Your Complex Child: Become a Powerful Advocate for the Autistic, Down Syndrome, PDD, Bipolar, or Other Special-Needs Child.* **New York; Toronto: Amacom Book.**

Pages: 220   Price: $16.95   ISBN: 0-8144-7316-4

"Two essential words: communicate and adapt" and "advocating is not waging war" are just a couple of the advice gems in Peggy Lou Morgan's incredibly useful book entitled *Parenting Your Complex Child.* She offers excellent suggestions to parents and educators of children with multiple disabilities.

Morgan is the parent of 23 year old man named Billy Ray, who has autism, down syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as well as bi- polar disorder. The combination has brought about unique and complicated hurdles for the family to overcome. She writes of the successes, setbacks and frustrations of the family in a way that only a parent could.

Morgan's book is based on her own experiences with her child, however, she states that she understands that all children are unique and modifications to the plans she suggests will be likely. Her "every child is different, but here's what worked for us" approach is incredibly valuable. The strength of this book is that she manages to put Billy Ray first both in life and in her analysis. Putting the child first means attempting to see through the eyes of the child and understand the frustration of not being understood as well as the difficulty in expressing one's needs and wants combined with the fear the child experiences when he/she is confused.

There are no steadfast rules as to what to expect with a complex child such as Billy Ray, or with any child for that matter, and Morgan knows this. What the text does is address the day to day problems as well as possible solutions, ranging from difficult morning routines, to hiring staff, dealing with physicians and other professionals, minimizing power struggles between adult and child and other such practical advice. Coming from a parent's perspective, Morgan addresses the hostility, fear and insensitivity of the outside world. This intolerance suffered by children with disabilities is one that is rarely addressed. Often times, parenting advice books suggest ways to make one's child fit in. Not Morgan, her main concern is having Billy Ray accepted for who he is—not who he could be. In addition, this book tackles complicated long term decisions for issues such as planning the child's future once you, the parent, are gone (again, a very delicate yet important topic that is rarely addressed in other advice books of this nature).

Morgan does not get lost in her own story. She offers anecdotes to be sure, but only as examples for the reader to better understand her child and situation. While sometimes it is therapeutic just to read the words of others going through similar situations, it is more beneficial to read the accompanying concrete, step-by-step instructions and suggestions

For example in the first chapter she lays out some general characteristics of the complex child followed by a description of the difficulties she encountered. Next, she offers an easy to read chart that compares parenting approaches based on the complexity of the child. For example she has one column for a particular behaviour, another for the potential response by a parent to an average child; another for potential responses by parents to a less impacted developmentally child, then a final column for the potential response of to complex developmentally disabled child. It is a straightforward technique that helps to see the range of approaches in a given situation based on the child.

Morgan is a big believer in documenting everything. Throughout the book she suggests that the parents or care providers of a child with complex needs keep a journal as a record of medications, changes in function level and behaviour, as well as triumphs. This helps to find patterns. For example, is there a specific time of the day when a certain behaviour occurs? Is it after a certain medication or food? At the end of the book she offers several samples of how to chart all of this information to avoid losing any information and keeping it all organized. As Morgan explains several times in her book, these charts and journals are useful in meetings with educators, doctors and other professionals.

Certainly, this is not to suggest that the advice and solutions Morgan offers are fail-proof or always the answer, however, they are a place from which to start. She writes from a position of great strength and honesty, admitting her mistakes and offering them up for others to learn from. Morgan discusses the notion of creating community for the child; which in my view is a very powerful and important one. One I felt that could have been explored more deeply.

This is not the first parenting advice book of its kind. Others have outlined their experiences, offered suggestions and advice based on the lessons they have learned, but somehow Morgan manages to do all this in an easy to read manner that is neither preachy nor all knowing. She does well at presenting other perspectives, all the while keeping the child at the centre of her discussion. In addition to her own advice she offers outside sources such as books and websites throughout. This is a must read for any parent, care provider or educator of a child with multiple disabilities.

Reviewed by Andrena Lockley, Education Coordinator, Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region.

Shea, Mary (2006). *Where's the Glitch? How to Use Running Records with Older Readers, Grades 5—8.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 150   Price: $21.00   ISBN: 978-0-325-00849-3

This is an excellent introductory book for those in teacher preparation courses and for practicing secondary teachers and administrators who seek a detailed overview of the reading process and an understanding of reading records. Shea explains the cyclical reading process, where and why problems may occur, and how teachers can help students implement known strategies through interventions.

Each chapter is divided by labels that chunk information on chapter content and concludes with a summary of information and an introduction to the next section. The clarity of the book's organization and structure make for an easy read. The use of boldface subheadings, bulleted information, figures that illustrate retellings, coding, miscue analysis, scoring, and *If . . . Then* scenarios supports the professional reader. This is the kind of book that one can "flip through" and gain insight. It provides readers opportunity to understand and reflect on good teaching practices that assure student comprehension of what classroom teachers deem important. Shea offers questions for content teachers to ask about assigned reading when preparing lessons or units and what to pre-teach to adequately prepare students for understanding relevant subject material.

The key question she proposes to teachers and administrators is *what if thinking – what if we use this or that instructional intervention to scaffold for success?* (p. 55). The purpose of finding the glitch for individual students is to develop close reading and *close thinking* in all areas of learning. With each element presented in the reading process, Shea explains the integration of separate elements and how or when breaks occur, how to guide students to self-monitor and incorporate self-correction strategies to become efficient readers.

In presenting research findings, Shea provides explicit and pointed examples, so teachers using her text can apply the process into practice. The author lists the benefits

of the recommended strategies proposed by other noted reading researchers. For example, in the chapter on fluency, the term is defined by Fountas and Pinnell (2001) as "Fluency results from a complex interrelationship of processes that is more than the sum of these component parts." (Fountas & Pinnell, p. 316) The definition is followed by Rasinski's (2005) list of components: flow, accuracy, automatic word recognition, phrasing, and prosody. Each of the components is explained, illustrated and described. The three charts in this chapter present Fluency Target Rate Norms, Chunking words into Meaningful Phrases, and Reading Behaviors Related to Fluency. This chapter, as well as the chapters on retellings and miscue analysis, has a practice component on the text's accompanying CD.

Shea explains the benefits of retellings over question and answer assessments and the differences between informal reading inventories and running records. She describes her use of the *on-the-run* formative assessment of the running record and the benchmark summative assessment of a running record. She clarifies the differences in practice, purpose, and procedures by explaining how these assessments aid content teachers because assessments are connected to curriculum and give immediate feedback on instruction and student learning. Her emphasis is on assessing all along one's teaching to keep students in the know so they can self-direct, self-correct, and self-assess their own reading comprehension. Shea's easy to follow text covers intervention strategies to find and correct glitches in readers' thinking about reading.

The book discusses school-wide understanding and involvement in using benchmark assessment data to create consistent evaluations from class to class among school personnel. Shea's commendable text can be the basis for a professional development program in districts or individual schools whose goal is improving student achievement. A collective reading with ample discussion will support content teacher understanding of the complexities of the reading process and will examine how every faculty member contributes in assessing and supporting student learning.

References

Fountas, I. & Pinnell, G. (2001). *Guided Reading.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rasinski, T. (2005). Assessing Reading Fluency. *Pacific Resources for Education and Leaning.* Retrieved June 8, 2007, from http://www.prel.org/products/re_/assessing-fluency.htm.

Reviewed by Louise Polistena-D'Agosto, language arts curriculum specialist and reading consultant, doctoral candidate at University of Hartford (CT).

Terry, Alice Wickersham & Bohnenberger, Jann (2007). *Service-Learning . . . by Degrees: How Adolescents Can Make a Difference in the Real World.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 171   Price: $20.00   ISBN: 9780325009865

Service-learning is an approach to teaching and learning that is often misunderstood, not only by the general public but by teachers as well. Different from community service, service-learning places an equal emphasis on the benefit of the service to the receiver as well as to the provider. In community service, the focus tends to be on the result of the act itself; service-learning, however, stresses not only the service action but also on its role in providing a real life understanding and application of more abstract academic concepts and ideas.

A John Glenn Scholar in Service-Learning and the executive director of a company focused on increasing service-learning opportunities respectively, Alice Terry and Jann Bohenberger offer insight into a method of teaching that makes learning more meaningful and "real world" based. This short book is focused on the different forms of service-learning and their implementation in the classroom, in schools and in the community.

Divided into three sections—the types of service-learning, the implementation of service-learning in different venues, and practical tools for that implementation—*Service-Learning . . . by Degrees* offers a valuable resource for educators or anyone else interested in implementing service- learning with young people.

The first four chapters serve as an introduction and further explanation of service-learning in its various iterations. The first chapter gives a general definition and "lay of the land" of community service and service-learning while the next three offer more detailed explanations of each type of service- learning: community-service service-learning, community-exploration service- learning and community-action service-learning. Each of these four chapters includes examples of each type, connections between this approach to learning and teaching and theory, suggestions for implementation, starter ideas and an "ask the expert" section, which contains questions and answers related to service-learning in general (in chapter 1) and specific typologies of service- learning (in chapters 2-4),

The next chapters offer explanations of how to successfully implement service-learning into classrooms (chapter 5) and in schools and communities (chapter 6). Each chapter provides approaches and considerations in developing service-learning programs, including how to garner support and how to create and foster specific projects. In addition, and just as in the preceding chapters, examples are given from actual projects to give readers insight into what the approaches may translate to in a classroom or school.

Overall, *Service Learning . . . by Degrees* provides a well-balanced account of service learning programs, from inception to celebration. By providing not only the practical tools but also the general theoretical basis, readers are given a solid understanding of the reasoning behind service learning as well as suggestions for using it themselves, without reinventing the wheel.

Reviewed by Tanya Rose, School of Education, University of Colorado - Boulder and Managing Editor – Journal on Teacher Education

---

Tetteris, Belinda Christine (2006). *The Nitty-Gritty Classroom and Behavior Management Resource: Strategies, Reproducibles, and Tips for Teachers.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Pages: 238   Price: $25.46   ISBN: 978-1-57886-497-3

Billed by the author as designed "to help teachers better relate to, understand, and love their job by providing a practical professional resource" (p. xii), *The Nitty-Gritty Classroom and Behavior Management Resource* provides basic information to elementary and middle school teachers about topics as diverse as setting up a classroom to working with difficult parents. Aimed specifically at elementary and middle-school teachers, it is difficult to imagine that pre-service teachers would not have been exposed to all of the information in this book at some point in their college training. The book might serve as a reference to the teacher who has accepted a first position in a school or it might be useful as a remedial resource for a teacher whose performance has slipped. With large numbers of individuals entering the teaching profession as a second career, having completed alternate route to certification programs; this reference might provide useful information to those individuals whose teacher training program was abbreviated.

In the eleven chapters of this book, Tetteris attempts to lead the new teacher through the basics of setting up their classroom, keeping accurate records, and structuring their school and home lives to ensure a healthy balance. The strategies suggested throughout the book are neither new nor outstanding and appear to be common sense. For example, after spending 15 pages describing various classroom arrangements, the author states, "When designing a classroom layout keep in mind that a busy room can be a distraction for students. A classroom should be sterile for learning" (p. 16). The author then defines "sterile" in this context as "free from clutter, unnecessary posters, and furniture" (p. 16).

Many of the suggestions provided would need to be vetted against school and district policies. For example, the author provides a sign-out system that includes a sign out sheet ("that includes an area for students to write their names and the times they leave and return to the classroom") and a hall pass. However individual schools would have specific procedures for handling these activities.

Describing planning for instruction, the author offers the suggestion that the teacher "reference your district and school calendar and record the following dates in your teachers plan book" (p. 39), listing dates such as holidays, assemblies, and other school closings. Finally, when discussing recording student grades, the authors suggests that the teacher "open your grade book to the first subject page . . . Within the appropriate boxes write the name of the subject and the student names in alphabetical order for which you will be recording grades" (p. 67) and "Record student grades frequently so that you don't get overwhelmed with grading too much at once." Also included in this chapter are generic forms for recording parent contacts, alphabet sound recognition, and student progress.

Two chapters in the book are devoted to "ready-made plans" first for substitutes and second for the first week of school. Any attempt to provide generic, grade-level plans for substitutes will necessarily need to be compared to the school or district curricula for various courses. The suggestions, however, are generic enough and appeared to be grade appropriate for students. A checklist for preparing for the opening of school provided by the author provides the new teacher with a useful tool for planning and organizing for opening day. The day-by-day schedule includes all of the important tasks that need to be accomplished before one can start teaching and would help a beginning teacher to organize the two weeks prior to students arriving. The daily schedules for the first few days of school, however, are probably less useful as they cannot take into account the specific tasks and activities required in any individual school; teachers could benefit from being reminded of the need to establish a structure for learning beginning on the first day of school.

The last few chapters of the book provide the most useful information for a beginning teacher's long-term survival in a classroom. The author discusses a number of behavior management strategies and provides strategies for working with students with specific behavior problems ("How to deal with the student who fidgets" [p. 133]). A chapter on home-school connections includes recommendations for establishing positive communication between home and school, suggesting that teachers "call or write a note to parents letting them know about the good things that their child has been caught doing" (p. 143). The author also provides several pages of report card comments. Again, the difficulty with such a list lies in the fact that schools are increasingly using technology to report grades and teachers are necessarily limited to the available report card comments.

The intended audience for this book is unclear. As noted, many of the suggestions presented by the author are either common sense or would logically be part of every teacher's pre-service training program. Missing, too, is the suggestion that new teachers collaborate with colleagues or make use of other available resources within the school to determine the most effective instructional arrangements. The book might make a useful reference for teacher supervisors who could use it as a resource for those teachers who seem to have deficiencies in identified areas.

Reviewed by Scott A. Fellows, Ed.D., Housatonic Valley Regional High School, Falls Village, Connecticut.

Vopat, Jim (2007). *Micro Lessons in Writing.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 96   Price: $19.50   ISBN: 0-325-01077-3

Good things come in small packages and such is the case for Jim Vopat's *Micro Lessons in Writing*. In fact, reading Vopat's text is similar to opening a present. Upon receipt, the reader opens the envelope containing three small books about three big ideas in writing

instruction that can be easily adapted to all grade levels and learning abilities: *Big Ideas for Getting Started*, *Big Ideas for Revising*, and *Big Ideas for Editing and Publishing*. Writing in a minimalist and direct style, Vopat artfully synthesizes influential work—including Nancie Atwell, Peter Elbow, Donald Graves, Ralph Fletcher, and Katie Wood Ray, to name a few—on writing instruction along with various work done by National Writing Project sites as well as classroom teachers.

Each book contains twenty-five micro lessons that invite teachers to "complete the narrative with your students through their writing" (p. iii). Vopat's notion of the micro lesson intends to "dial down the volume" (p. iii) of mini-lessons with the idea of "less is more" (p. iii) in order to maximize instruction so that what is heard in classrooms is not the teacher's voice but "the sound of [student] writing" (p. iii). To do this work, Vopat provides teachers with good leads to support student writing that are cross-referenced and can easily be combined in any number of ways to suit instructional needs in all three of these small volumes.

The micro lessons in *Big Ideas for Getting Started* are designed to prepare students for the journey of writing. Divided into two sections, climate and topic, Vopat offers teachers ways to support students in their development of "a wealth of personal writing topics, a sense of the possible, and a writer's habit of mind" (p. iv). The climate section includes numerous ideas for beginning of the year activities that will facilitate classroom organization, community-building, and develop student attitudes towards writing. The topics section offers a variety of ways for students to discover writing topics. Not only will this section assist the development of writer's notebooks, but also the ideas found in the section could be used throughout the year to create and maintain a fresh momentum to the writing workshop.

In *Big Ideas for Revising*, Vopat's lessons about climate, conferences, and revision ask both teachers and students to "see through different eyes in order to make writing better" (p. iv). The conferences section moves from teacher and student conferences to peer conferences, self- conferences, and whole group conferences in order to develop a comprehensive system of conferencing. Vopat's micro lessons for revision tackle the sometimes difficult task of revision. In this section, the author offers a variety of ways for teachers to rethink revision. To this end, Vopat keeps the teaching of revision fresh with novel ideas such as genre switching, temporal manipulation, and sensory detail.

The last book, *Big Ideas for Editing and Publishing*, celebrates publication. Vopat envisions publication as producing a readable text. The readable text is unique to each student and writing piece and allows room for constant improvement. To do this work, Vopat's section on editing focuses on creating developmentally appropriate editing skills that can be tailored to meet student needs. The publication section offers teachers various ways to celebrate the distinctiveness of each student's writing.

Vopat notes, "Students become better writers by writing, not listening to us talk about writing" (p. iii). And this is what Vopat does for teachers as well; he does not bog the reader down with long narratives filled with student examples and prescriptive mini-lessons. The energy produced by Vopat's syntheses of major authors inspires teachers to get into their classrooms and try out these ideas, adapt them to their specific classroom needs, and most importantly, to help students become better writers.

Reviewed by Susan Nordstrom, a doctoral student in the Language and Literacy Education Department at The University of Georgia

~ ER home | *ReseÒas Educativas* | *Resenhas Educativas ~*
~ overview | reviews | editors | submit | guidelines | announcements | search *~*