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Brief reviews for June 2007

Allsopp, David; Kyger, Maggie M. & Lovin, LouAnn H. (2007). *Teaching Mathematics Meaningfully: Solutions for Reaching Struggling Learners*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 299 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 9781557668660

Findings from research studies in the United States (Badian, 1983), Norway (Ostad, 1998), Israel (Gross-Tsur, Manor, & Shalev, 1996), and Europe (Kosc, 1974) have shown that 5% to 8% of school-age children exhibit some form of mathematics disabilities and long-term problems associated with mathematics difficulties (Geary, 2004; Griffin & Case, 1997). With many of these students, reading disabilities and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder have been identified as comorbid disorders (Geary, 2004; Gross-Tsur et al., 1996). For some students, mathematical difficulties or disabilities may be observed as a developmental delay in procedural strategies, whereas other students may demonstrate developmentally different characteristics that remain persistent across the grades (Geary, 1993; Jordan, Hanich, & Kaplan, 2003; Rivera, 1997). Teachers today face the challenge of educating these struggling students in their classrooms. Doubtless, they are searching for effective instructional strategies.

Teaching Mathematics Meaningfully: Solutions for Reaching Struggling Learners is written to help K-12 teachers of struggling learners to understand mathematics in meaningful ways. The book is organized to provide teachers and those who want to become teachers with an informed yet practical process for doing this very important job.

The authors of the book start by providing a conceptual framework that integrates four universal features of effective mathematics instruction for struggling learners, including an understanding of and instruction in both content and process of big ideas, an understanding of learning characteristics of and barriers for struggling learners, continuous assessment of learning and instructional decision making, and an ability to make mathematics accessible. The rest of the book describes how educators can design and implement the universal features framework and thereby provide effective mathematics instruction for struggling learners. The book provides numerous examples, clear explanations and printable forms/worksheets to be used in the classroom. Extensive background in the conceptual framework sets the stage for activities, lesson plans, investigations, and assessment tools that are thoroughly grounded in the latest research.

The opportunity for struggling learners to learn mathematics effectively is dependent upon a wide range of factors, but among the more important are activities and practices within the classroom. In this book, the collaboration of the authors from the two different disciplines of special education and mathematics education definitely helps make it a valuable resource for K-12 mathematics teachers. Today, almost every classroom includes a number of students who are dealing with a disability – either physical, educational, emotional, or a combination of all three. Teachers find themselves looking for information and resources that will help effectively teach those students and help students learn successfully. This book discusses not only the field of mathematics but includes the different classroom teaching techniques driven from the field of special education. There are many ideas and accompanying student examples for teaching to help teachers understand why some students struggle. It directly addresses students' learning barriers with lesson plans, strategies, and forms and most importantly, help teachers checking their own strengths and needs with a thought-provoking questionnaire on their current teaching practices

Students from diverse cultures and students who are English language learners also may benefit from many

of the strategies that are described in this book. However, the research base that supports the information, in large part, does not address these specific groups of students directly. Secada (1991) has warned that efforts to educate language minority students will be in vain unless language teachers and content educators begin to pay serious attention to each other's reform agendas. The content-ESL teacher will need to teach the content and skills presupposed in reformed mainstream classes, while mathematics and science teachers will need to become attuned to the special needs of language minority students and be prepared to plan their instruction accordingly. It would be a great addition to this book to include these specific groups of students and ESOL Math integration in the next edition.

Overall, this is an excellent resource for teachers of K-12 math with struggling learners because of the many ideas and accompanying student examples it contains for teaching mathematics. It is a book that demonstrates many ways the mathematics teacher can make students' thoughts and ideas overt. The authors pay close attention to the role, importance, methods and techniques of motivation. They present ideas that will generate attention, interest, and surprise among students, and thus will foster creative thinking.

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Reviewed by Dr. Zafer Unal, Assistant Professor, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg

Atwell, Nancie (2007). *The Reading Zone: How to Help Kids Become Skilled, Passionate, Habitual, Critical Readers*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 144 Price: \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-439-92644-7

Let me be clear about my biases before starting this review. I have been an avid reader for several decades, so am probably pre-disposed to agree with an author whose basic premise is that "frequent, voluminous reading" is the single most important factor for student success in school. Nancie Atwell and her teaching colleagues also hope that reading will help their students become "smarter, happier, more just, and more compassionate people because of the worlds they experience" (p.12) through books. My personal biases aside, I suspect that other readers will also agree with Atwell's assertion, and share her frustration with the hijacking of the reading/English curriculum by structured, packaged programs that suck the life out of reading rather than fostering joyful readers. The subtitle of the book, frequently repeated in the text, summarizes the goal Atwell has for all her students (K-8) at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), a non-profit

demonstration school in Maine that she established in 1990. She is clearly passionate about reading and about her students, but that doesn't mean she is one-sided in her presentation. Atwell cites research to support her approach as well as that which seduced her, earlier in her career, to adopt reading comprehension strategies. She clearly identifies when comprehension strategies can be useful and when not. Using Louise Rosenblatt's terminology, Atwell states that comprehension strategies serve to build skills for *effere*nt or information gathering reading (e.g., textbooks, newspapers) but get in the way of *aesthetic* reading.

This book offers practical guidance on how to create the ideal situation for students to enter "the reading zone" (a term coined by her students), and how to become skilled, passionate, habitual, critical readers. Key components, elaborated in separate chapters, include making reading personal, creating the appropriate space, offering lots of good books to choose from, making it easy to find books at the right level, and promoting wonderful books. She offers examples of letters to parents, readings assignments for students, and booktalks, as well as numerous guidelines and lists (e.g., The Readers' Bill of Rights, recommended authors), many of them generated collaboratively with her students. She has created a website (http://www.c-t-l.org/kids_recommend.html) with booklists of students' favorite titles; the goal is to help her students continue reading over the summer. Atwell also discusses reading goal setting and assessment—another process done jointly with the students—and includes examples of forms as well as illustrative student responses.

Atwell tackles related issues such as responding to parent concerns about particular books chosen by their children and working with students who are challenged readers, whether due to lack of previous experience or cognitive difficulties such as dyslexia. She addresses what she believes to be the spurious alarm raised about gender differences in reading, i.e., boys not being good readers. Although CTL as an institution is clearly somewhat unique, the students who attend are not. They come from all socio-economic strata and ability levels; Maine is a rural and relatively poor state, falling in the bottom third of states in terms of per capita income. CTL strives, through tuition assistance, to bring in students representing the population, rather than those who are gifted or financially privileged; although, Atwell readily acknowledges that a school in Maine has less than the national average of students whose first language is not English. She believes all these students can fall in love with reading and the fact that her middle schoolers read an *average* of 40 books a year would seem to support that belief.

Although the CTL curriculum emphasizes reading beginning in kindergarten, and although Atwell discusses some aspects of the reading zone approach for lower grades, her emphasis in this book is on middle-school-age students; hence, those teachers are the ones likely to get the most useful information from this book. She describes what she believes an ideal English curriculum should include, acknowledging and offering accommodation for the limitations imposed by situations where the workshop approach (blocks of time) aren't feasible. Having followed the academic careers of many of her students after they graduate from CTL (through interviews and correspondence), Atwell also makes a plea for teachers to create a high school English curriculum that facilitates rather than impedes reading.

The Reading Zone is the right length for the practitioner—informative and inviting, not overwhelming. She offers lots of pragmatic tools for someone who wants to try out her approach and enough research to satisfy those who want to follow up on the ideas, without bogging the text down. So persuasive and engaging is this presentation that I plan to modify my own course on multicultural children's literature, which I teach to education students. Teachers of reading and English will find this a rich resource and a satisfying endorsement of the value of reading.

Reviewed by Paula McMillen, Ph.D., currently an Associate Professor at Oregon State University Libraries. Her previous career as a clinical psychologist, combined with her present one as a social sciences reference librarian, prepared her well to become co-founder of the Bibliotherapy Education Project (<http://bibliotherapy.library.oregonstate.edu>). She particularly enjoys collaborating with faculty in subject areas outside the library and was instrumental in establishing a joint instructional program with the English composition program at OSU. In addition to her instruction and consultation work with psychology, sociology and education faculty and students, she teaches a graduate course on multicultural children's literature in the OSU College of Education.

Blasingame, James (2007). *Books That Don't Bore 'Em: Young Adult Books that Speak to This Generation, Grades 5 and up*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 272 Price: \$27.99 ISBN: 0-439-91963-0

Blasingame, a well-known scholar and expert on young adult literature, makes a strong case for employing

such literature in the classroom. In addition to meeting the needs and interests of students, using contemporary young adult literature serves as a bridge to the classics and/or the traditional canon. As a practitioner, I can speak to the disconnects between our student populations and traditional pedagogy. We need to diversify our reading choices in order to meet our diverse student populations and to validate the complexities shared by this age group. We can no longer solely subject them to the writings of "dead old white men" (p. 22). Today's readers are facing more societal and personal challenges. Fortunately, today's books are more reflective of these challenges. But, how do we get these books into the classroom and more importantly, into the hands of students? Blasingame answers this question in his book, *Books That Don't Bore 'Em*.

Blasingame effectively addresses possible obstacles to using contemporary young adult literature. Whenever changes to the curriculum are suggested, practitioners pose two main arguments related to content standards and access. Given today's politically-charged, standards-based climate, teachers are concerned about how to address the standards. Blasingame contends that using popular literature does not sacrifice standards-based instruction. In fact, by using young adult literature as Blasingame suggests, practitioners can not only meet grade-level expectations but they will also engage students instead of boring them. According to standards, students are expected to analyze and manipulate literary forms and styles. Such analyses can be done using popular young adult literature. Blasingame also shows how common themes and literary qualities are present in both canonical and contemporary bodies of literature. Furthermore, in using literature that reflects students' lives, teachers will be in a better position to create a nation of readers. We are at risk of producing an aliterate citizenry, people who can read but choose not to.

The second main opposition is access. Blasingame's book is extremely user-friendly in that he offers many suggestions for reading materials. He lists books for whole-class reading, for read-alouds, for literature circles and for independent reading. He also categorizes books according to themes, genres, topics, and literary elements. He assumes a lot of the work of finding good books. Teachers just need to refer to his lists. In addition, he also provides tips for how to choose the best books. He addresses literary merit and quality and notes reputable review publications, publishing houses, literary awards, reputation of authors, etc. He offers questions that practitioners should consider in selecting texts like "Do the characters represent the diversity of teen readers?" (p. 56). Blasingame also references graphic novels, which are extremely popular for young adult readers and especially for reluctant readers.

The last section of the book is entitled "In the Authors' Words." Blasingame provides short biographies, recommended works, and interviews on popular authors of young adult literature such as Laurie Halse Anderson, Sandra Cisneros, Nancy Farmer, Paul Fleischman, Mel Glenn, Cynthia Kadohata, Laurence Yep, and many others. In addition to the above mentioned lists of reading choices, this section is also valuable to practitioners in that it offers some insights on contemporary authors, especially for those unfamiliar with this genre. Practitioners can use this information to be more informed about their reading choices. Again, Blasingame does most of the research and provides a succinct handbook of sorts for practitioners. This book could also be titled "Young Adult Literature and Authors in a Nutshell."

The book is well-written, easy to read and easy to implement. It is very practitioner-oriented in that Blasingame considers pedagogical implications. After all, he was a former teacher. From his writing, I can tell that he was a very reflective and responsive teacher. His approach is student-centered. Books are valuable tools to engage students in the learning process. Knowledge about books is a powerful factor of effective instruction; as a result, this book is a must-read. As an avid reader and a proponent of using contemporary literature in the classroom, I thoroughly enjoyed Blasingame's work. My response to this book is very positive. I highly recommend it. It is useful and scholarly in its presentation of suggestions and rationales.

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

Burnard, Pamela & Hennessy, Sarah, editors (2006) *Reflective Practices in Arts Education*. Doerdecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Pages: 199 Price: \$129.00 ISBN: 978-1-4020-4702-2

Burnard and Hennessy's *Reflective Practices in Arts Education* endeavors to engage the artists, researchers, and practitioners in educational settings who are trying to impact the validity of arts education research as a discourse for transforming teaching, learning, and research practice. Although the book's content relates to the everyday of teaching contexts it is not written for the K-12 educator/practitioner. This book is clearly

written for those involved in higher education who wish to pursue research or validate their own research. The significance of this book revolves around the practice of reflection which is referenced in multiple domains and contexts related to education across the arts. These authors consider reflection a form of critical inquiry where judgments, conversations, practice, process, and multiple perspectives form an interactive foundation to pursue changes in education.

Reflective Practice as research practice can be seen from different vantage points as these authors present three different sections framing the theoretical, historical, and cultural; the methods, tools, and instruments; and the case studies that show reflection in practice. All three sections of this book explore research practice in a dynamic way telling stories that exemplify the "what is," the "how-to" and the "why" of reflection. If you are looking to explore reflective practice as a research method in the arts (as well as other content areas in education), this book is an excellent introduction and synthesis of reflective practice as a whole.

This first section (chapters 1-6) clearly demonstrates the "what" of what it means to be a reflective practitioner or be a participant in reflective practice, and provides a foundation for understanding reflective practice. As a reflective practitioner myself, I believe Kushner's ideas (chapter 2, p. 21) about an aesthetic curriculum best articulate how reflection in action works, stating that we must think in terms of:

- lives, not stages
- experiments, not orthodoxies
- event-histories, not outcomes
- judgement, not appreciation
- conversations, not demonstrations
- the whole, not the parts

This section is full of theoretical and pedagogical ideas about how reflective practice functions as "collective reflection" (p.10) and if implemented, can prompt change and create new educational histories for this generation.

The second section (chapters 7-11) demonstrates the "how" of reflective practice and extends an understanding of the way in which reflective methods, tools, and instruments are used. These chapters illustrate the unique voices of individuals and their ideas and processes in specific settings. These settings include: gallery workshops involving a game, music workshops focusing on a need for a common framework, trainee dance teachers involving learning journals, technology and pre-service music teachers involving multimedia projects, and music educators involving strategic learning tasks that are pedagogically reflective. Each chapter in this section provides readers with ideas that could potentially make a difference in how they see teaching and learning through reflective practice.

The third and last section (chapters 12-15) introduces readers to the "why" of reflective practice. This is where specific issues are addressed. Several examples include using drama to reflect on negative leadership in the UK schools and conflict and bullying management in Australia. Another example discusses a music educator's pursuit to disrupt Western Curricular knowledge systems through an African music project. Kerchner's chapter (11) in this section was my favorite as it really offered insight into the artistry of what good teaching is and the different ways we can witness transformative knowledge through reflective practice. This book is best summed up in a statement by Hilton (p. 33) saying that teaching the "art[s] requires reflective discussion [in multiple forms] to create and shape meaning." This book is for all those who are educating in the arts who wish to explore, view, or participate in reflective practice. For the artist/teacher/researcher this book is a great resource for reflective practice in the arts.

Reviewed by Heidi Mullins, Ed.D., Assistant Professor of Art Education, Eastern Washington University

Chenoweth, Karin (2007). *"It's Being Done:" Academic Success in Unexpected Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing.

Pages: 250 Price: \$26.95 ISBN: 978-1-891792-39-7

All children deserve a good education. Few would argue with that statement. There is also a general consensus that all children can learn, but we squirm about whether they are all able to learn at the same rate and level. Coleman's 1966 findings that family background has a strong predictive role in academic achievement has fostered the idea that schools with high number of students from poverty and/or of color will not be as successful as schools without those demographics. The Education Trust, under the leadership of

Kati Haycock, identifies schools that are “Dispelling the Myth” where poor children and children of color are achieving at a higher rate than their peers at other schools. Education writer Karin Chenoweth spent two years visiting some of these schools. In this book, she describes what was happening so that all children are learning.

Brady (2003) noted that there is a great deal of information on how effective schools work, but there is little known about how to move an ineffective school from failure to success. In 2004, The Education Trust joined with Business Roundtable, Citizens’ Commission on Civil Rights, National Center for Educational Accountability and National Council of La Raza to form the Achievement Alliance to identify the practices in these schools that are making the difference. Using the “Dispelling the Myth” Web tool available on The Education Trust Web site (<http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/dtm/>), Chenoweth and Education Trust analysts looked for schools that had a significant population of children living in poverty and/or a significant population of children of color with either very high rates of achievement or a very rapid improvement trajectory. These schools also had to be open enrollment for neighborhood children and the high schools had high graduation rates and higher -than state average promoting power index (PPI). Chenoweth feared that she would find facilities teaching to the test staffed by burnt-out teachers robbed of any creativity. Instead she found true professionals who love their jobs and are determined that all students have the knowledge and opportunities of a well-rounded curriculum.

Chenoweth describes the programs at 14 elementary, middle, and high schools and one district. The schools were in rural, urban and suburban settings. There were striking similarities. At each school, the change was instigated by strong leadership that did what was necessary to set the stage for optimal results. Collaboration was prevalent with teachers working within and across grade levels and content areas to vertically align the standards and curriculum. Standards were the focus, not the testing. New teachers were mentored and all teachers were provided focused professional development throughout their tenure. Additional support for students, such as ESL and special education services, was “pushed in” to the classroom rather than being conducted on a pull-out basis. The principals and teachers understood that accountability was the foundation for student achievement and used data to focus on individual students, not just groups of students. School time was used wisely and the schools leveraged as many resources from the community as possible. They paid careful attention to the quality of the teaching staff, making sure that the students who struggle the most had the best instruction. Chenoweth sums up that adults in these schools expected all students to learn, and the adults worked hard to master the skills and knowledge necessary to teach students.

“*It’s Being Done*” is an inspiring documentation of schools where best practices are being put to use and are working. As stated over and over again, there is no “magic bullet,” but there is a reoccurring theme of the determination to succeed and putting together the pieces to do just that. Each story of a school success demonstrates how that school’s personnel focused on the student and coordinated all available resources to maximize the potential for that student. Educators and policy makers need to read this book to remind us what it is all about and that all children can learn – if we make that our intent.

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Reviewed by Lee Ann Dumas, Ed. D., the Director of Educator Excellence for the Texas Education Agency. She and her staff work with programs such as the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program and the School Leadership Pilot Project.

Gallagher, Kelly (2006). *Teaching Adolescent Writers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 200 Price: \$20.00 ISBN: 978-1-57110-422-9

Teaching Adolescent Writers joins a growing body of practical literature – 25 of which are helpfully listed in an appendix – for middle and secondary school writing teachers. That this is a book to be referenced is underscored by the 13 appendices containing examples of teaching strategies used in Gallagher’s classroom, ranging from “Great Quotes About Writing” to rubrics. While some of the ideas in this book come from Gallagher’s own trial and error as a teacher, he freely acknowledges his debt to others for many good ideas. Whether original or borrowed, all ideas have been well tested in Gallagher’s classroom. An experienced teacher of writing – he is part of the South Basin Writing Project based at California State University Long

Beach – Gallagher has compiled a number of practical, useful ideas for teaching what he considers to be the most crucial aspects of writing for middle and high school students.

Gallagher premises his teaching approach on six needs that he contends must be met in order for students to learn to write effectively. Students need: 1) a lot more writing practice; 2) teachers who model good writing; 3) the opportunity to read and study other writers; 4) choice when it comes to writing topics; 5) to write for authentic purposes and for authentic audiences; 6) meaningful feedback from both the teacher and their peers (p. 13). These six needs form the basis of the final six chapters in the book.

Gallagher begins his book with a discussion of what he terms "the literacy stampede." He tells his students:

You are growing up in the dawn of the Information Age. More than ever before in history, the ability to read and write will determine how far you will go in this world. For the most part, people who read and write well will compete and prosper; people who read and write poorly will be left behind. Simply put, there is a literacy stampede approaching, and it is bearing down right on top of you (p. 3).

Gallagher quotes alarming statistics such as the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress, which found that nationally only 24% of twelfth graders performed at or above the proficient writing level (p. 6). He correctly identifies writing as one of the most basic skills students will need to be successful in life. Looking at this fact, and the writing proficiency statistics quoted, one can see that educators have their work cut out for them.

The author provides timely advice on dealing with the load of national and local standards, all of which teachers are expected to teach to often reluctant students. Gallagher's philosophy can be summarized as "first things first;" he freely acknowledges the difficulty of covering everything well, and strongly advocates meeting students where they are, and giving them the most essential skills that will serve them well in the world of work.

On top of dealing with standards imposed on writing teachers from outside, Gallagher contends that it is crucial that teachers deal with the perceptions of students regarding themselves as writers. According to Gallagher, the typical succession of writing assignments connected solely to school work has left students with the perception that writing is a skill needed only while they are in school. Students need to understand that they will continue to use their writing skills throughout their life. Gallagher offers a number of ideas aimed at avoiding what he calls "fake writing." He advocates finding ways to give students an audience for their writing outside of the teacher and even the classroom. He also believes that choice in writing topics is an important way of motivating students to take writing seriously.

Gallagher offers the intriguing suggestion that teachers model the writing process for their students. He believes that students not only need finished pieces of writing as models, but also that the writing process itself should be modeled. He composes essays on an overhead projector in the front of the class, thinking aloud as he goes, so that students can see how he does it. Gallagher similarly develops his grading rubrics together with the students, analyzing a piece of writing on the overhead projector and noting together what it is that makes the writing good or poor.

Gallagher very much advocates the integration of grammar instruction with writing instruction. He provides lessons on the most frequent grammar mistakes, in his experience, made by students. Beyond that, students correct the errors made in their own papers by keeping a notebook of the grammar rules which apply to their individual errors. Gallagher keeps a file of mini grammar lessons which he can deliver on cue, and at appropriate times asks students what he can teach them that would most benefit their writing at that moment. Should students request something he is unprepared to teach, he provides the lesson on the following day. In this way, he is responsive to the immediate needs of his writing students.

Grounded in the philosophy of teaching writing as a process, Gallagher's book offers a wealth of ideas for middle and high school writing teachers. A teacher can never have too many classroom strategies from which to choose, and this book will take its place alongside other well-thumbed titles on the writing teacher's bookshelf.

Reviewed by Chris Cicchetti, Education Librarian, University of La Verne, California.

Hillmer, Timothy (2007). *Ravenhill: A Novel*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Pages: 244 Price: ISBN: 978-0-8263-3985-0

Public schools are sites of contestation. The right seeks fundamentalist judgment as morality; the left says morality should not be taught and opts for a foundationless, faddish concept of right and wrong. Despite the fact that our schools statistically are very safe places, the violence that each of us in the larger society promotes gets reflected in the schools. The many micro aggressions, the assumptions and presumptions, the stereotypes, the classifications, the dichotomies, the hypocrisy, the racism, the classism, the sexism, and the shallow fuzziness of multiculturalism prevents us from following the most basic moral teaching of a universal nature, what C.S. Lewis (2001) referred to as the Tao: love one another as you love yourself.

Too often we want to vilify "them" or to feel pity after the fact for "those poor souls," never reflecting on our own responsibilities, our own contributions to violence and hate. Timothy Hillmer's novel helps complicate school violence and shootings. Even the most basic question of "who is the shooter" becomes hard to answer. Certainly someone is pulling the trigger, but that hardly answers the question in a novel where someone else brought the gun, there is a struggle, and where the teacher is shot by a policeman with questionable method and intent. If you are confused, then this review reflects the book and what I believe is intended: school violence is confusing and complex.

Hillmer's writing and organizational structure are not confusing. He focuses on each main character at a given time in the fateful day. He depicts the many tragedies in the lives of the adult and student characters—left silent and private—each harbors fears and fantasies of violence, even the most righteous. Guns are prominent for all characters. Real life is not as black and white as we see portrayed in the media.

In the book Fundamentalist Christians protest the nature of school curriculum. Hillmer causes us to question the relevancy of what we teach given the lives lived by teachers, students, and community members. Postman and Weingarter (1971) challenged teachers to ask themselves these questions: What will you have your students do today? Why is it important? How do you know? This novel causes us to ask how what we teach and how we teach contribute to or fail to address the daily violence in our schools.

The novel delicately approaches the problem in many of our schools where athletes and upper class students monitor "others" behavior by the constant harassment, intimidation, and marginalization of other students. Homophobia is a major obsession. Of course, these students rarely receive the discipline they need. Michaelis (2000) challenges us to recognize the structures of oppression which include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence made inevitable beyond certain thresholds. We are reminded of the passive violence of adult nonresponsiveness. She encourages a perspective of injustice that incorporates the perspectives of the marginalized. Current multicultural appreciation classes in teacher education are not up to this task. A more critical examination, including examination of self, is needed for future teachers.

Hillmer brilliantly leads us into a journey of the lives of characters that allows us to share perspectives of the marginalized by giving us the past as he proceeds along a time path on the fateful day. The "big trouble maker" at school gains sympathy when we see the secret he hides which arose when he nobly saved the life of his sister. Interestingly, the same reason that his secret can not be disclosed relates to the secret harbored by the first person shot, homophobia. We see violence begetting violence when each character confronts fear and this includes teachers and administrators.

This is a well written book and worthy of practitioner attention. As we read this book, let us remember the words of Robert F. Kennedy:

For there is another kind of violence, slower but just as deadly, destructive as the shot or the bomb in the night. This is the violence of institutions; indifference and inaction and slow decay. This is the violence that afflicts the poor, that poisons relations between men because their skin has different colors. This is a slow destruction of a child by hunger, and schools without books and homes without heat in the winter.

When you teach a man to hate and fear his brother, when you teach that he is a lesser man because of his color or his beliefs or the policies he pursues, when you teach that those who differ from you threaten your freedom or your job or your family, then you also learn to confront others not as fellow citizens but as enemies—to be met not with cooperation but with conquest, to be subjugated and mastered.

We learn, at the last, to look at our bothers as aliens, men with whom we share a city, but not a community, men bound to us in common dwelling, but not in common effort. We learn to share only a common fear—only a common desire to retreat from each other—only a common impulse to meet disagreement with force. For all this there are no final answers.

Maybe it is time we not only listen to our young people, but also truly hear them, suspend our judgment and

love them. Perhaps this book will remind us.

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Reviewed by Michael W. Simpson J.D., M.Ed., an attorney, teacher, and social activist currently studying American Indian education in Arizona.

Howard, Gary (2006). *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. Second edition. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pages: 171 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: : 0-8077-4665-7

Gary Howard, a devoted multicultural practitioner, has written his second edition of *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. His writing embodies the wisdom and credibility acquired from forty years of multicultural teaching, curriculum development, writing, training, and school reform activism. Howard also created the REACH Center for Multicultural Education, an organization that has designed staff development programs and has published classroom materials internationally.

Howard writes his second edition with a renewed sense of urgency. In the introduction, Howard discusses changes that have developed in the field of education since the publication of his first book in 1999. At the forefront of these challenging issues is the federal No Child Left Behind legislation which is responsible for the high stakes testing and strict accountability. The author sees some benefit to the legislation which has forced schools to pay attention to students who are not achieving and to disaggregate their achievement data by race among other dimensions of difference. However, the NCLB legislation places little or no emphasis on increasing the competence of teachers to work effectively with children from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds (p. 2). Howard finds this omission a cause for concern because the demographics in education are rapidly changing. The teacher force today is mostly white (90 %), whereas the student population is highly diverse. The students of color are at risk of being caught in the achievement gap (p. 4).

The author believes that educational institutions have not dealt adequately with the many issues presented by the complexities of teaching in a multicultural nation (p. 4). Therefore he felt compelled to write the second edition to his book which addresses the need to prepare a predominately white teaching force to work effectively with an increasingly diverse student population. Throughout the book, Howard has successfully woven together research from multicultural education as well as personal experiences drawn from his many years of practice in the field. He postulates that both theory and practice are needed as teachers begin the work of becoming transformational leaders and educators who truly value ALL students.

If the reader is familiar with Howard's first edition, chapters 1-6 will be similar with the exception of updated references and expanded thoughts throughout. In chapters 1-3, the author first describes his personal transformation as he has grown from a state of complete ignorance concerning the realities of race toward a greater awareness of racism and social dominance. Next, he provides a review of the literature related to social dominance that can help teachers understand the methodologies of white supremacy. Howard continues to examine the roots of racism and social dominance through a paradigm which consists of three components: the assumption of rightness, the luxury of ignorance, and the legacy of privilege. The author proposes that using this paradigm will help white educators examine their own personal and pedagogical assumptions regarding race and cultural differences.

Howard encourages the reader to follow him down the path of transformation in chapters 4-6. First he suggests that white teachers can contribute to the healing and social transformation process by exhibiting honesty, empathy, advocacy, and taking possible action against racism. Next, he provides an overview of research related to racial identity development that identified central issues of personal transformation that

white teachers face as they grow toward greater multicultural competence. To assist with the personal transformation of educators, Howard discloses a model called the White Identity Orientations which is designed to describe and clarify the different ways of being white. It is his hope the model will facilitate and encourage the process of growth toward greater empathy among white educators (p. 103).

Chapter 7 is a new addition to this second edition which describes the actual beliefs and practices of the transformationist white teachers: Race matters, change begins with us, beliefs determine outcomes, and teaching is a calling, not just a job. The chapter is extremely helpful as one applies the practical ways of becoming a transformationist teacher through one's behavior, relationships, thinking, and teaching practices. In the chapter, Howard provides some practical advice to teachers as they work to help their students close the achievement gap. Howard concludes in chapter 8 that the road to a transformationist white orientation is not easy. It will cause cognitive dissonance as one reflects upon previously held assumptions about race and white dominance. However, if one perseveres, there is personal renewal and hope to be found in the possibility of change. There is satisfaction in knowing that as white educators, we have helped stem the tide of racial dominance (p. 139).

Overall, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* (second edition) is a thought-provoking book which has the potential to foment a valuable discussion among educators, administrators, and preservice teachers. His book is more relevant today in light of the many challenges that educators face in the field of education. Howard writes with conviction about controversial issues but without judgment or blame. The author engages the reader as if he were a colleague sitting across the table sharing in a reflective dialogue. His writing is intelligent and logical. The use of metaphors and personal examples help to envisage the journey needed to become a transformationist educator.

The book is designed to be a helpful tool. An index, reference section, and guidelines for discussion and reflection are included at the end of the book. In addition, the models (White Identity Orientations and Achievement Triangle: Dimensions of Knowing) as described in chapters six and seven are valuable to the reader as he or she participates in the metamorphosis of becoming a transformationist educator.

I highly recommend this book to any young teacher who is just beginning his or her journey, or to a teacher who has traveled many miles down the road of education and wants to be a part of a vision that honors diversity and ensures greater equity for all people.

Reviewed by Patricia L. Burgess, Benerd School of Education, University of the Pacific

Johns, Alison C. (2006). *Remember Why You Teach: Reflections for the Journey*. Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing.

Pages: 62 Price: \$9.00 ISBN: 0-8059-6922-5

In her introduction, Alison C. Johns describes *Remember Why You Teach: Reflections for the Journey* as a "collection of 'musings'" intended to offer "inspiration, consolation, insight, and comfort in their messages" (np). The musings originated as Johns' weekly "Captain's Log" e-mail messages to the teachers at Sierra Vista Elementary School, where the author was an administrator. If there is one theme that reveals itself in the brief book, it is making connections with colleagues and students. Throughout her encouraging, conversational e-mail entries, which include inspiring quotations plucked from her office calendar, Johns models what communication between supervisor and teachers can be and emphasizes that the staff is together on their teaching journey (p. 41). In one e-mail, she personally thanks members of the staff by name for all that they do that may seem to go unnoticed (pp. 16-17), and in another she exhorts, "Don't ever doubt your importance or worth" (p. 23). Clearly, Johns wants both to affirm the good work her teachers are doing and to raise their spirits: "We are the beginning of the dream. We are the little voice that starts inside challenging ourselves and our students to be more, to better, to be great!" (p. 29).

"I know my Soul Talk still makes many uncomfortable, but I must say it...it is who I am..." (p. 60). Johns' disclaimer comes late in the text, in the penultimate entry in fact, so readers leery of references to the soul, beware. Personally, I found it refreshing that Johns acknowledges her faculty as having lives outside of teaching and souls that need nourishing. With her reminders about testing dates, deadlines, and stressful validation visits to the classroom, Johns also recreates the teacher's work world, and as a teacher, I felt a sense of kinship with an administrator who completely understands what a complicated, exhausting, busy, frustrating, gratifying, and sometimes lonely, profession teaching is.

As a matter of aesthetics, I would have preferred a larger font and easier-to-read layout. Johns' e-mails are presented on the page much as they would appear on the computer screen-typoes, lagniappe punctuation, and

all. In her e-mails, Johns is responding to specific incidents at her workplace and in her life, so I couldn't always appreciate the references and in-jokes and at times Johns' stories seem to veer off topic a bit. In other entries it appears that Johns is ruminating on paper. "Connection, vulnerability, growth" (p. 31), she writes in one, but in such a shorthand form, these ideas may not be helpful for readers.

Johns seems to be a dedicated, thoughtful teacher-administrator, and this book is a glimpse into the author's thinking, almost a brainstorming session on the kind of book she could write if she plumbed even deeper into her titular reflections. Throughout, Johns writes about making connections, but how does she do it, and how can we do it? An entire book could be written exploring that. Obviously Johns has a great deal more to say, and hopefully this is just the beginning of a prolific writing career.

Reviewed by Déirdre Carney, adjunct English instructor at Berkeley College and William Paterson University, both in New Jersey. Ms. Carney earned an M.A. from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the Trinity College London Certificate in TESO

Kelly, Arthur, S. (2006) . *Writing with Families: Strengthening the Home/School Connection with Family Scribe Groups*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 116 Price: \$17.95 ISBN: 978-0-929895-66-6

Writing with Families is a clearly written, easy to follow, accessible, step-by-step guide for anyone who is interested in establishing a Family Scribe Group. In this book Kelly explains exactly what constitutes a Family Scribe Group, how to go about setting one up and the potential benefits they bring to families, communities and facilitators alike.

An English teacher for over ten years at an inner-city, culturally diverse middle school in Las Vegas, Kelly began Family Scribe Groups in 2001 with the families of students at his school. The five week groups were established to encourage the involvement of families in the life of the school through writing together. The book aims to give the reader "a usable guide to designing and leading Family Scribe Groups" (p. 4), an aim which is certainly achieved. A clear idea of what Family Scribe Groups are, along with all the necessary information anyone interested in starting such a group might need to set up similar groups, is contained within this short book including tips on making groups flexible and contextually relevant. For Kelly Family Scribe Groups "...are made up of families who meet, in order to write, with the guidance of one or more facilitators" (p. 7). They provide families with an opportunity to write about their lives and their experiences, to have their voices heard in the community and beyond.

Chapter by chapter the reader is led through the theoretical and practical processes required for success. The book contains a great deal of detail concerning how a group should operate including, a week by week breakdown of activities, suggested themes and 25 "culminating projects" which can be undertaken by the group once the writing is completed. Ideas for such final projects range from producing a cookbook or a calendar to planting a community garden. Examples of writing produced by previous Family Scribes Groups are also provided. However, experienced teachers may find that in some places the detail provided on how to run sessions, such as ensuring families sign in, is perhaps a little too simplistic. One of the most useful resources the book has to offer is the various templates at the back which are provided in English and Spanish.

Kelly stresses that Family Scribe Groups are about the sharing of ideas, the building of relationships with other families and the valuing of differences, as well as commonalities, within the community. Categorically they are not concerned with literacy levels, school tests or targets; "a Family Scribe Group is not the place for curriculum designers to step in and say what is needed or for testing enthusiasts to discover ways to manipulate their statistics" (p. 11). Throughout the book there is great passion in Kelly's writing, particularly when he talks about the families and the facilitators he has been involved with. He clearly believes in the benefits Family Scribe Groups have to offer everyone involved and claims facilitators, "...grow emotionally with their families and realize that they are able to help parents in new, useful ways" (p. 104). For anyone interested in starting such a group then this is the book for you.

Reviewed by Anthea Rose, Ph.D. Student, School of Education, University of Nottingham, UK

Kent, Richard (2006). *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers, Grades 6-12*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pages: 172 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-8204-7889-X

This book explicitly promises to guide teachers in creating student staffed writing centers; however readers will find much more in it: plenty of reasons to start a writing center, savvy suggestions to overcome reluctance and inertia, plus Richard Kent's passionate and encouraging testimony of teaching High School English with a writing center.

In seven chapters, intertwined with proven strategies to start and run a writing center, Richard Kent presents a body of pedagogical principles in action. You can look at actual classes with vivid exemplars of *NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing*: "Everyone has the capacity to write, writing can be taught, and teachers can help students become better writers." These classes embody also the following principles of the author: editing is crucial to good writing, everyone can become a good editor; "editors are guides, confidants, and caretakers;" editors "understand the subtlety and mystery of the craft," therefore, by becoming editors, students improve their own writing; and writing is a powerful "way to learn and to serve others."

The guide begins with an Introduction, devoted to general aspects of writing centers, their theoretical foundations, and different manners of staffing and running them. In particular, it describes the effects of the Mountain Valley Writing Center on the student staffers, on the school, and on Richard Kent, whose "teaching life changed forever as a result of the writing center."

A chapter on Planning and Organizing explains the strategy for getting started. It includes how to introduce the center to colleagues, principal, entire school staff, parents/caregivers, and superintendent. Kent advises waiting to "get the OK from your superintendent and principal" well before introducing the writing center to the school board and the media, since "[a]s you know, the hierarchy in schools is alive and well" (p. 28).

Staffing and Training reveals how Kent recruited and trained student editors, and student directors of his writing center. The author emphasizes that, "Our handpicked group of writing center staffers represented a cross-section of the student body. However, these young people had one common trait: Other kids liked them" (p. 4). Recruitment started by sending personal letters to potential staff members, requesting them to perform several writing and reading activities over the summer. Training was an on-going process. After the summer introductory plan, students editors got involved in a demanding program aimed at understanding writing as a process. Throughout the semester, students became effective editors. They learned to connect with the writer; to focus on content rather than on correcting mistakes; to tutoring students with drafts; and to prompt students who arrived at the writing center with no draft. These young editors developed skills to work with diverse population, composed of their own peers, teachers, school administrators, and nonnative speakers of English. This chapter is particularly rich on Recommended Reading for Writing Center Staff.

In Operating a Writing Center, Kent narrates his own journey to find a home for the center. He also describes the creation of an identifiable image that comprised a smart-looking logo, brochures, calendars, hallway passes, literary magazine, and bookmarks. An asset of this chapter is the Record Keeping section; it presents how the Mountain Valley Writing Center kept and analyzed records from the editor's log, and tutors' signing book.

Working Drafts: Writing Centers in Action warns readers not to feel limited by the experience, however appealing, of a unique students-staffed writing center. To prevent such limitation, the chapter introduces three different writing centers, and explains their distinctive client and coaching issues, particular strengths and opportunities.

Resources and Activities is filled with suggestions and tips to help "create a community of writers while marketing the center" (p. 123). Kent shares websites that supply sample writing assignments for teachers, and tips on writing, as well as publishing outlets for students, writing contests, and information for English-language learners. He also includes lists of resource books, of books on writing, and of books on publishing. And there is much more: tips to catch digital plagiarism; quotations for journals; and themes for school-sponsored writing contests. Furthermore, this chapter suggests and briefly describes dozens of activities to be sponsored by the writing center, including writing careers night; writing workshops; literary cafés; publishing enterprises, and fundraising for charitable causes, among others.

Kent wraps the book up with festive anecdotes that illustrate how the editor-students' enthusiasm and confidence inspired, encouraged, and helped him "dare to create a wide variety of activities and opportunities," and to redefine his role as teacher (p. 148). In a very similar way, Kent's enthusiasm and commitment could inspire all of us, novice and seasoned teachers, to create a student staffed writing center. In doing so, we might also redefine, and renew, our role as teachers.

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Reviewed by Celine Armenta, Ed. D., professor of education at the Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla (Mexico). She served as middle school science teacher for 20 years. Her professional interests include inclusion and diversity, and measurement and evaluation. Email: celine.armenta@iberopuebla.edu.mx .

Leaming, Deryl R. (2007). *Academic Leadership: A Practical Guide to Chairing the Department*. Second edition. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

Pages: 491 Price: \$40.00 ISBN: 978-1-933371-17-7

Leaming's second edition of his text, *Academic Leadership: A Practical Guide to Chairing the Department*, offers readers a broad overview of the roles and responsibilities of departmental chairpersons. Today's chairpersons face unprecedented challenges due to the many changes being experienced by higher education institutions: demands for fiscal and educational accountability, growing competition from for-profit colleges and universities, declines in accessibility for middle and low income students, and increased expectations for productivity in teaching, scholarship, and service. These challenges require that department chairpersons become effective change agents as opposed to competent caretakers of routine departmental business. While the work of departmental chairpersons has become both heavier and more complex, the provision of effective professional development for this critical leadership position is quite limited at most colleges and universities. *Academic Leadership* is a practical primer that most chairpersons, especially those who are new to the position, are likely to find very useful.

The text consists of thirty chapters each addressing a different aspect of a chairperson's duties. The chapters have been organized into five major thematic areas: leadership, the department, legal issues, faculty, students, and career management. Most chapters provide both a very general overview of the topic and related issues, and lists of much more practical and specific pieces of advice. Although some concrete examples from Leaming's own extensive administrative experience are sprinkled throughout text, some readers may find themselves wishing for more illustrations of how Leaming actually used the practices he recommends. The text is highly readable, and the content is well supplemented by the lists of website and published resources found at the end of each chapter. The appendices are likely to be very useful to new chairpersons, and include examples of forms related to faculty appointments, course evaluations, tenure and promotion guidelines, and post-tenure review policies.

Much of the more general advice seems relatively obvious and many of these pieces of advice are presented repeatedly across chapters. Some of the ideas that appear in many chapters included the importance of being fair, honest, open, sensitive, caring, confident, and having effective communications skills and an excellent work ethic. New chairpersons are frequently encouraged to talk with their deans, chairpersons already viewed as competent, and the in-house experts before deciding how to respond to a wide variety of problems arising from personnel or student behaviors. Several chapters address issues to which some department chairpersons may not have given much attention, such as working with various external constituencies to build support for a program, developing outcome assessment programs, and recruiting and retaining students. Throughout the book, readers can expect to come upon ideas and recommendations that hold particular salience for them and their context.

Academic Leadership should prove a useful resource for most department chairpersons. Portions of the text related to tenure and promotion, and to working with difficult colleagues and students, also may be helpful to many faculty. Indeed, because of its topical breadth, the identification of other resources related to each topic, and the many examples provided in the appendices, this text would be a sound addition to the professional library of most academicians.

Reviewed by Melissa L. Heston, Associate Professor, Educational Psychology and Foundations, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA

Walker, Pam & Wood, Elaine (2006) *Science Sleuths: 60 Forensic Activities to Develop Critical Thinking and Inquiry Skills, Grades 4-8*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 340 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-7879-7435-8

Walker and Wood are addressing the heart of scientific thought, Critical Thinking and Inquiry, by placing it in a format of forensics, a tremendously appealing idea for the targeted age group in grades 4-8. Acting as sleuths or detectives, students use scientific procedures to solve who-dun- it types of problems. They are first taught to be very careful scientific observers, looking for the smallest of clues. This book is intended to teach science to middle-graders, by posing a problem or question, in a way that is fun and has applications in the real world.

The book is grouped into six chapters related to forensic science. Topics cover the three areas into which science is often grouped: physical science, earth science, and life science. In the physical science activities, for example, students conduct chemical analyses, carry out examinations and comparisons, perform investigations, and gather and process data. Fibers, latent fingerprints, paper, and food are some of the materials that they chemically investigate.

Each chapter contains ten activities, eight designed to be used in class and two for homework assignments. The activities integrate math and writing skills with science. The student "Activity Package" contains written activities that teachers may copy for their students, a list of needed materials, and also background information for students to read and directions for each activity. The appendix contains a list of twenty web-sites relating to forensics.

The authors have 46 years of teaching science between them. Both teach in Douglasville, Georgia and they are coauthors of several resource books including *Hands-On General Science Activities with Real-Life Applications; Crime Scene Investigations, Real-Life Science Labs for Grades 6-12, and Crime Scene Investigations, and Real-Life Science Activities for Elementary Grades.*

Authentic activities such as the ones in *Science Sleuths* help students to make meaning of the applications of science to their lives in a format that is highly interesting. Walker and Wood have provided yet another valuable resource for teachers of science in the middle grades.

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Reviewed by by Dr. Kay Starcher Klausewitz, Assistant Professor, Merrimack College.



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