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Brief reviews for May 2007

Beck, Isabel L. (2006). *Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Pages: 135 Price: \$40.00(hardcover) \$20.00(paperback) ISBN: 1-59385-268-1(hardcover) 1-59385-257-6(paperback)

Here is a book that belongs on every beginning reading teacher's desk! *Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys* by Isabel Beck is useful, logical, and comprehensive. Beck has a conversational style of writing which presents her ideas simply, without undermining the reasoning behind them. The reader may be advised to start examining the book from the end – the Epilogue. Here, the author recaps the goals of the book, the book's relevance in early reading classrooms, and common concerns of reading teachers.

Once convinced of the application of the ideas discussed in the book, the reader cannot help but notice the clarity of thought and logic with which the information is presented. The book is extremely "teacher-friendly." Cognizant of the fact that teachers appreciate models, Beck provides numerous examples to explain and enhance certain theoretical points. In addition, she (very kindly!) presents actual scripts of what the teacher might want to say during a particular classroom procedure or exercise. The author provides anecdotal support for points that she emphasizes, mainly, that "children must gain control of the print-to-speech mapping system early if they are to become successful readers" (p.12). Before delving into the main discussion, the author gives an explanation of terms used in the book. All of these features make the book attractive and the author approachable to the reader.

Isabel Beck believes that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is necessary. It is important not only to expose the beginning reader to the letter-sound relationship, but also to focus on all the positions in a word in which the target is found. This emphasis results from research findings that children frequently have difficulty decoding the non-initial letter (or grapheme) in a word, thereby hampering their progress as readers. Phonemic awareness instruction is crucial for early reading development. Beck provides actual lesson plans for teachers to use easily and immediately; these contain the focus of the lesson sequence; detailed procedures; and commentary on the purpose or reinforcement of theory in practice, with occasional additional notes. A detailed Appendix contains word lists and instructions. The procedures appear to have been tested to work effectively, and thus, their utility remains unchallenged.

In addition to being useful, the ideas in the book are also logical. One of the most appealing features of the book is that Beck not only shows the "how" of a suggested procedure, but also the "why." In other words, the ideas are descriptively as well as explanatorily presented. She rightly asserts that imitation and repetition drills do not guarantee comprehension, and thus, the target sound or concept must be made explicit through explanation, visual cues (using Word Pockets that demonstrate visually the position of the sound in the word), and active participation (physical action to demonstrate the process of oral blending). The use of minimal pairs is a fundamental part of her proposal, and through minimal pairs (*hat, mat, sat*, for instance) phonemic awareness is developed. An important and interesting point that the author makes is that commonly, the point of attention in teaching phonics is misplaced. For instance, very often in teaching a particular vowel sound, teachers use examples where the vowel remains constant while the consonants around it change, with the belief that repetition of the target sound would reinforce it. Instead, the author suggests, the vowel in *hat, fat, and bat* should be contrasted with other vowel sounds as in *hot, fit, and but* to discriminate the target vowel from other vowels. Beck also proposes correcting errors using the method of contrasting minimal pairs. Such an approach is fundamental in linguistic, phonological analyses of sound

systems.

Although the book is comprehensive in its progression from teaching simple monosyllabic words to multisyllabic words, there remain some areas with scope for the introduction of new, but useful material. For instance, when discussing lack of one-to-one correspondence between certain sounds (especially vowels) and letters in English, the author may add a footnote mentioning that for many languages of the world that is not an issue since there is, in fact, consistent correspondence between letter and sound. Given the varied linguistic backgrounds of students in classrooms today, a teacher may benefit from being aware of that possibility in the child's native language, and consequent difficulty with English reading. Further, in the same discussion of letter-sound correspondence, the student may benefit from knowing the correct articulation of the target sound. This may be done with charts showing the articulation mechanism or even better, with animated articulation diagrams available on several educational and commercial websites. This could ensure the accurate pronunciation of sounds from early on.

Isabel Beck's *Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys* is a useful resource for reading teachers, where the author shares promising strategies for early, explicit, systematic phonics instruction, based on years of cumulative experience and research.

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

Camp, Deanne (2006) *Pairing Fiction & Non-fiction: Strategies to Build Comprehension in the Content Areas*. New York: Scholastic Teaching Resources.

Pages: 96 Price: \$15.99 ISBN: 978-0-439-39708-0

Camp is a professor of reading and director of the Graduate Reading Program at Missouri State University. She has been an educator for over 30 years in both elementary and high education. She is the director of the Literacy Assistance Program which provides graduate students as tutors for struggling readers and also conducts research in classroom reading. As a result she has written several articles on using literature in the classroom. She is also co- author of *Creating Independent Readers: Developing Word Recognition Skills in K-12 Classrooms* (Holcomb Hathaway Publishing, 2001).

With the growing number of books for children published each year, it is becoming more popular to use trade books in the classroom to support the curriculum. Trade books are fiction and non-fiction high-interest books that cover a multitude of subjects. The author uses the term "twin" books to refer to a fiction and a non-fiction book on the same topic. A search of the educational literature produces numerous articles related to the topic of using paired trade books to support the classroom curriculum and textbooks for most subjects and grade levels. This an excellent book to assist a teacher in introducing the use of paired trade books into the classroom. By using high quality paired trade books with classroom texts, the teacher can provide a better understanding of a topic and reinforce of the information presented to students.

In Chapter One, Camp discusses using paired books with textbook units for grades 3-5. She gives eight reasons to use the twin book method in the classroom: 1) to meet academic standards that will "help you meet all of your school district's curricular goals;" 2) to get students excited about learning, while helping "them retain what they learn;" 3) to develop students' background knowledge and "to learn ways to connect new information with what they already know;" 4) to increase vocabulary; 5) to improve comprehension; 6) to improve critical thinking skills so students learn to "compare, synthesize, and evaluate information;" 7) to enhance students' writing by writing about what interests them, and 8) to help meet the dual goals of presenting content-area information and exposing students to excellent literature (p. 7-8).

Students often struggle with textbook material, but they may easily recognize or understand a content better when it is initially presented as a fictional story. Camp suggests beginning with the fiction book first because it will provide background knowledge and will "encourage students' initial exploration of a topic and enhance their interest in the nonfiction twin book" (p. 9). A helpful FAQ section offers insight into using the twin book method of integrating trade books with textbooks. Also included are brief instructions on how to use the lessons that are presented in the book.

After this groundwork, Camp provides strategies and lessons that can be used to integrate twin books into the curriculum. Each lesson includes an objective, how the lesson works, when to use it, and a "Putting the Strategy Into Action" section that provides lessons developed by practicing teachers to use as examples when creating a program.

In discussing "Twin-Book Strategies to Boost Word-Identification and Word-Ownership Skills" Camp states that these strategies will assist students in word recognition through vocabulary instruction. Five strategies (the Word Sort, the Predict-o-gram, the Word or Concept Map, Vocabulary, Language & Prediction, and the Word Storm) are presented. These are straightforward and provide significant information to enable the teacher to be able to put the strategy to use in the classroom.

"Twin-Book Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension" provides five lessons (Directed Reading-Thinking, Know-Want to Know-Learned, Literature Circles, R.E.A.D –Read, Examine, Anticipate, Develop-and ReQUEST) that will move students closer to reading comprehension through learning skills that will assist them in monitoring their own comprehension by using "prior knowledge and experiences, understanding language patterns, reflecting on reading selection and having an emotional response to the selection."

In Chapter 4 the author provides strategies to enhance student writing. These strategies (the Venn Diagram, the Dialog Journal, the Double-entry Journal, Group Summarizing, and Webbing) make use of information learned in earlier chapters and provide students with different types of writing-response activities. Camp states that using the twin books will "provide a clear focus on topics that might otherwise be daunting to write about."

Finally, Camp provides a listing of twin book examples that are recommended for use in the classroom, a listing of professional sources cited in this book, and a listing of children's books that were cited. A one page index simplifies the use of an already easy to use book.

Reviewed by Naomi Williamson, Associate Professor of Library Services, University of Central Missouri

Flockhart, Dan (2007). *Fantasy Baseball and Mathematics: A Resource Guide for Teachers and Parents, Grades 5 and Up*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 206 Price: ISBN: 978-0-7879-9443-3

This book was written by a middle-school mathematics teacher with over ten years of experience in the classroom. The author uses fantasy baseball, a game played by millions of adolescents and adults, to teach a number of math concepts within the context of the game of American baseball. There are three main sections in the book. The first section reviews the scoring system for baseball, particularly the method for recording weekly points earned by players on the team. This section is geared to all levels of experience – both novice fantasy baseball players, as well as experienced. This reviewer found the section to be very helpful, as it had been a time since he had looked at baseball stats. The second section of the book deals with graphing activities related to the fantasy baseball games. The third section of the book provides the teacher with activity sheets and quizzes for use in the classroom.

The author carefully aligns his book to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards (2001) to ensure that multiple Content Standards are addressed. The Standards are listed in the front, and Flockhart identifies which Standards are addressed. In addition, the NCTM Process Standards are also highlighted. This is helpful for any teachers attempting to align a resource book to their own curricular goals and objectives.

The third section of the book provides various activity sheets which support these Standards. While many of them are authentic, worthwhile activities, this reviewer felt that some of the activity sheets were a bit stretched or contrived, and perhaps more authentic, contextual situations could have been used. But, overall, the activity sheets provide students experiences which address Number & Operations, Algebra, Measurement, and Data Analysis & Probability, four of the five NCTM Content Standards. The activity sheets are geared to all middle school levels, with suggestions for adaptation for varying degrees of difficulty. For example, one worthwhile activity can be found on page 84. Students apply baseball statistics in ratios and proportions, a common strand found in the middle-school curriculum. One of the questions asks, "If it took Spencer Green six weeks to earn 4 1/2 points, how many weeks would it take him to earn 5 1/4 points?" Questions such as this one provide students with an opportunity to learn a challenging concept within the context of a motivating experience.

This reviewer recommends *Fantasy Baseball and Mathematics* to middle-school mathematics teachers, particularly those at grades 6, 7, and 8. The book can serve as a supplement to the current curriculum. Teachers who are seeking to find ways to engage and motivate their students through sports, particularly baseball, would be well served by this resource book.

Reviewed by Christopher Johnston, Ph.D. Student, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Haager, Diane; Dimino, Joseph A. & Windmueller, Michelle Pearlman (2007). *Interventions for Reading Success*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 437 Price: \$49.95 ISBN: 1-55766-678-4

Interventions for Reading Success provides reading specialists, literacy coaches, and classroom teachers with the means to deliver quality, research-based reading interventions within the classroom context. This resource will be welcomed by reading instructors who work within a tiered model in the Response to Intervention paradigm. The volume provides over 100 activities for classroom interventions, along with 75 activities designed for additional practice at home. These activities are most appropriate for Tier 2 interventions – those strategies used to supplement quality classroom instruction.

Intended for students in kindergarten through third grade, the activities are designed to provide additional instruction for children who are struggling to master the key components of early literacy: phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, fluency with connected text, vocabulary development, and comprehension. The lessons are explicit and systematic, but the authors are careful to state that this is not intended to be a "lock-step reading program implemented in sequential order" (p. 5). Teachers are encouraged to select the activities that will meet the needs of their students. The detailed plans provide a great deal of support for the novice, but experienced teachers are given permission to "add your own special touches and flair." (p. 5).

The chapters contained in the overview section provide important information that should not be overlooked in one's hurry to get to the activities. Chapter 2 contains an excellent summary of the three-tier model of reading intervention that will help classroom teachers understand their vital role in supporting struggling readers. Each component of the early reading is briefly described. The authors discuss relevant research and make the reader aware of the role each component takes in the reading process.

Assessment is a critical component of any reading intervention program. The authors discuss three types of assessment that they believe are needed for effective intervention. First, assessment is used to identify students who do not meet benchmark standards and thus are at risk of reading failure. The next step in the process is diagnostic testing to determine strengths and weaknesses for individual students. Assessment of this type is critical in order for effective instruction to be developed and to select the activities that will meet student needs. Ongoing assessment is the final piece of the assessment triad. This piece serves the important role of monitoring student progress and providing documentation of treatment resistance. Both roles are vital to the Response to Intervention Model.

Effective interventions require more than the purchase of a program and well written lesson plans. Problems with organization and classroom management can derail the best of programs. In Chapter 4, subtitled *The Nuts and Bolts of Implementing Intervention*, the authors provide suggestions for preparing and organizing materials and commonly asked questions such as "What do I do with my other students?" and "How do I teach intervention groups when the students are at different levels?" These issues are dealt with in a practical manner that will appeal to classroom teachers. For less experienced teachers, or for paraprofessionals involved in the intervention process, an elaborated lesson plan is provided to demonstrate how to take the outlines and scripts provided in the text and expand them into a lesson.

The activities themselves are simple, practical and well-designed. The goal and materials needed for each lesson are clearly stated at the top of the page. Each lesson follows a consistent format including teacher modeling followed by student practice. For students who need additional practice, the text provides variations for the activities, usually featuring a kinesthetic approach, or a variety of manipulatives. Reproducible templates for the activities are provided in the appendices.

Many of the lessons in the phonological awareness section are variations of familiar activities. The extensive Alphabetic Principle section will be a valuable resource for second and third grade students who may have mastered the phonological aspects of language, but are still having difficulty with decoding.

The Home-School Connection activities are a welcome and much needed feature in reading intervention. The activities are designed to complement the work done in the classroom. They provide parents with scripted lessons and the materials they need to practice reading skills with their child at home. There are also suggestions for sessions to train parents in the program. The Home-School connections provide a means of encouraging parents to become partners in the education of their children.

If there is a weakness in this book, it lies in the chapter on vocabulary development and comprehension. This is a relatively short section where the format changes abruptly from concise, explicit lesson plans to general principles of instruction. Strategies such as semantic feature analysis and word mapping are briefly summarized and a few examples are provided. Similarly, the comprehension strategies will be familiar to most teachers and include the KWL chart, story grammar questions and the use of graphic organizers.

Interventions for Reading Success is a practical, affordable way to provide effective, research-based interventions in the classroom. It provides a viable alternative for schools that lack the resources to invest in costly comprehensive programs.

Reviewed by Karen Kindle, a doctoral student at the University of Houston.

Johnston, James. (2006). *Effective School Leadership: Strategies for Successful Administrators*. Norwalk, CT: Crown House Publishing.

Pages: 103 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 190442476-7

Effective School Leadership is a basic refresher on the much written about subject of school administration. The format is easy to read because the material is based on workshops/seminars done by the author. Each chapter is basic leadership 101, but it serves as reminder for us not to neglect the key components of leading people.

The author contends that real school improvement involves the human dimension. The text stresses the vital role of quality relationships in the educational process. As school systems constantly search for new programs to improve their quality, they are encouraged to take into account the people resources they already have that will contribute greatly to the overall performance of the institution.

The major premise of the book is that to lead others you must first be capable of leading yourself. It's about rapport and one's ability to blend diverse personalities where people value and support each other. It is these interpersonal relationships that will foster school growth.

There are very few new ideas in educational leadership, and this book is no different. However, it does hit the mark in pointing out the key components of leadership and reminds the reader to not neglect the simple things that will make the big difference in their job performance.

Reviewed by Dr. David E. Lee, Educational Leadership and Research, University of Southern Mississippi.

Levine, Peter A. & Kline, Maggie (2007). *Trauma Through a Child's Eyes: Awakening the Ordinary Miracle of Healing*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Pages: 480 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 1556436300

Having worked as a disaster relief chaplain in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, I was looking for information that would give me an understanding of the stressors and behaviors in the children who rode out the storm or who "went north" for the storm and came home to total devastation. This is the first book that I have read regarding trauma and I found some of the ideas very intriguing. It was written for parents, teachers, medical workers, therapists, and anyone who worked with children, and it is easy to read and understand. It includes activities for teachers as well as parents and care givers.

The premise of the book is that trauma is a physiological event rather than psychological. According to Levine and Kline trauma triggers the "fight-or-flight response" which causes adrenaline, hyper-arousal, changes in blood flow to shore up muscles for fight or flight and various other physical responses. Because children often can't flee or fight, they freeze. The idea is that all the physical energy that was built up in the anticipation of fleeing or fighting is trapped, and if it is not released, it can cause emotional/behavioral problems in the individual. The authors state that trauma leaves an imprinting on the brain. Trapped energy can cause behaviors that are often mis-diagnosed as other disorders, such as phobias, ADHD, acting out, disruptive behaviors, and many others.

There are four sections in the book. The first gives the definition of trauma, its impact on the body and what is going on in the brain. It tells how to recognize the physical symptoms of trauma in children as well as the

emotional. Physical symptoms may include headaches, stomach aches, bed wetting, repetitive play, avoidance behavior, low energy etc. Feelings of shame and guilt, etc. emerge on the emotional level. (This is by no means the total list of symptoms, there are many more.) It helps the caregiver recognize the signs of shock, whether immediate or delayed.

Section two deals with preventing trauma and shows how to give "emotional first aid." It provides exercises to teach the difference between sensation and emotion and how to help trauma victims identify sensations that may be the cause underlying emotional difficulties. Sensations are the actual physical stimuli the body feels such as cold, numb, tense, jittery etc. These sensation responses are connected to the seven senses, but are often thought of as an emotional response. The authors contend that emotions are physiological responses as well, and have their own energy. The premise is that if you can identify the emotions and the sensations, then you can track down the cognitive response as well.

For example, in writing this book review, I notice tenseness in my shoulders (sensation). I am afraid that I won't find an editor to take an unsolicited book review (emotion). If I don't submit the review, then it will lower my grade and I might not pass the course that assigned the review (thought). The authors present the idea that if I could first focus on the sensation of the tense shoulders and in their words "befriend" that sensation long enough the sensation would change. Then I would get to the origin of the sensation faster, which would be the thought that I might fail the class. As I linger with the sensation it will diminish and I will settle down and be able to move on to what I need to do and not be locked in to the emotions that are underlying the sensation.

The exercises in this section are geared to equip caretakers to help children who are stuck in frozen emotions, or mixed emotions (from shock and trauma) to identify the sensations that are caused by the underlying emotions, and then identify the emotions involved. This allows the trapped physical energy to be diminished. If it is not diminished, those underlying emotions can grow and get out of control, such as rage, terror, etc. The exercises can be done in an individual setting or a classroom setting if the trauma happened at school. They help care givers to recognize and use the resources readily available. The activities include using internal resources such as music, art, math, sports, spiritual beliefs etc. as well as external resources which include caregivers, the environment, or sensory comfort. This section also covers what is going on in the brain during trauma. It gives hope to the traumatized and their loved ones that trauma and its effects can become a thing of the past, not something that has to be lived with daily and forever: there is healing after a traumatic event.

Section three gets into helping the traumatized person heal. It talks about the language to prevent further trauma as well as the language to help deal with trauma. It gets into specifics in regards to accidents, and falls, divorce, death, loss, sexual molestations, and medical procedures. To give an example, it lists eight things a caretaker can do to in response to falls and accidents. Responders need to be aware of their own responses before they can help the child. If the child shows signs of shock, keep her still and quiet, hold her, and then as she quiets down, draw her attention to the sensations she is feeling, etc. This helps the child release the physical energy that flooded the body as a result of the survival mode triggered by the fall.

Section four is a mixed section involving the authors' agenda in changing behaviors and policies in parts of society (i.e. birthing practices, circumcision practices, classroom practices, etc.). It presents some food for thought about the way we handle trauma for first responders, mass traumas (such as 9/11, Katrina, Columbine, etc). It also provokes thought on current hospital care for children, with examples of hospitals that have successfully initiated family-centered care.

I found the authors' bias in this section a little unsettling. They believe childbirth is a traumatic experience and assert that over use of Cesarean births and inducing labor are issues that could lead to trauma in the newborn. They promote a similar bias on the issue of male circumcision (Female circumcision was not addressed. I assume because it is not an American practice.), and elucidated on the trauma circumcision could cause, landing on the side of ending circumcision all together. They do not address the spread of STD's, the risk of cervical cancer in partners and various other health issues related to the issue. In regards to school, I got the impression that the authors felt that schools were not adequately addressing the issue of trauma in children and that school violence, acting out, etc., were issues of unresolved trauma. In all of these discussions the book appears to over simplify the issues and put the burden of mental and emotional health on people who are not trained in mental health issues. This bias made me uneasy and could possibly cause me to use this book only as a secondary source.

Another problem with the book was the lack of adequate foundation for some of the concepts discussed.. The authors mention repetitive play, avoidance behavior, and low energy on Somatic Experiencing several times in the book, and assume the reader knows what is being referred to. No definition is ever given for Somatic Experiencing and the omission leaves the reader with no platform for understanding the basis of the authors'

argument. Nevertheless, some of the ideas and exercises are worth considering, though I would recommend balancing it with more study on trauma and children.

Even though this is the first book I've read regarding trauma, and in some areas raises questions for me, it is a book that I will keep as a resource.

Reviewed by Kathy Brush, masters student in counseling, Adams State College.

McDonald, Nan L. & Fisher, Douglas (2006). *Teaching Literacy through the Arts*. New York: Guilford Press.

Pages: 192 Price: \$42.00(hardcover); \$19.95(paperback) ISBN: 1-59385-281-9(hardcover); 1-59385-280-0(paperback)

Teaching Literacy through the Arts, from the Tools for Teaching Literacy series edited by Donna Ogle and Camille Blachowicz, is a substantial addition to the field, providing both a theoretical basis for why a teacher should teach literacy with and through the arts, and concrete examples of thematic units and resources that provide strategies for interweaving arts activities into the general curriculum in ways that can help students deal with classroom concepts on their own terms. This review highlights the strongest ideas in each arts chapter and shows how the book supports teacher action research and reflective practice.

McDonald and Fisher cover the practical application of four basic art disciplines: music, visual arts, drama/theatre and movement/dance. The emphasis is on *literacy through the arts*. By this they mean, "... both specialized, sequential instruction in the arts (taught by an arts specialist) *and* [italics in original] arts activities and experiences infused into their literacy instruction in the general classroom" (p. 5).

The chapters address the development of three aspects of literacy: oral language, reading and writing. The authors subscribe to the U.S. Department of Education's (2003) five essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension strategies. One could add, it seems to me, that the suggested activities will also help students learn to make meaning in many ways. The authors refer to the NRWEL 6 + 1 writing traits rubric, adding that students writing for authentic audiences and purposes in the arts are more motivated.

Each chapter opens with several quotes from teachers sharing their experiences in using the art form to teach literacy skills. This is followed by an anticipatory set of statements asking the reader to give a scaled response prior to reading the chapter, and similarly, after having read the chapter, about their attitudes, beliefs and practices. Each chapter consists of many examples from named in-service teachers who use these techniques and provide the reader with the result.

Music

Learning and singing songs in the classroom are creative opportunities for oral language development. Young readers can expand their understanding of print when the teacher leads a sing-a-long from a Big Book. As they learn the song by echoing the teacher they make connections to the text. Many songs used with early readers accentuate the sense of story and sequence. Songs help learners focus on rhyming words and begin to make letter sound correspondences. Songs are full of new information and images that help convey new concepts for learners. Older students can re-write a popular song using new terminology they are learning. The rhythmic nature of chanting and singing promotes fluency in reading and can be a mnemonic device for remembering and retaining new knowledge. Sometimes simply including music in the classroom reaches students in new ways by setting a mood for study and contemplation.

Visual Arts

Professional standards in education reinforce visual representation as a language art. Written language began as graphic representation of sounds, objects and concepts, so it is natural to call upon this connection to help learners grasp the deeper meanings of what they see and hear and are asked to write about. Graphic organizers, or semantic maps, can help in the formation of new arguments and interrelationships of new ideas. Using pictures to illustrate narrative introduces students to story grammar and can serve to hold ideas out for closer examination. The many alphabet books that are available help young learners understand sound/symbol correspondences. Because pictures and graphic representations can be so rich in information, they serve to provide background information for large and complex units of study and can help students show their new understandings.

Drama/Theatre

In addition to building confidence, theatre arts can draw students into subject matter and provide alternative

means for teachers to assess understanding. Students gain experience in public speaking, and importantly, as listeners, learning the role of audience. Opportunities for students to do readers' theatre (and improvisation) are experiences in collaborative ensemble work, very important skills for students to learn. Dramatic readings of prose make the meaning of diacritical marks and print conventions such as quotes and exclamation marks clear. In one of the examples a teacher mentions the use of storyboard to help highlight the key points of a narrative and make it possible to illustrate those ideas as tableau (or, for that matter, as comic book art or video).

Reading aloud in rehearsal promotes fluency, and recording student voices for review can allow them to do self-critique as to their elocution and appropriate inflection. In this chapter, teachers share their experiences using drama to tie in several modes of understanding for students. A high school teacher tells about having students act out scenes from an historical novel. A middle school class investigates historical figures by creating them as characters in a talk show format. Fifth graders write their own Readers' Theatre script based on an individual from their social studies.

Movement/Dance

The authors make a strong case for the importance of action and activity for learners. Kinesthetic arts give structure to experimentation, imagination, and play. Whole body activity engages the whole brain, combats restlessness and can help students focus. Movement and oral language can be used together to help with expression and comprehension. Young learners benefit from forming the letters of the alphabet with their bodies. The teacher-contributors give several examples of how movement can compliment other arts-based activities.

In a final chapter called Putting it All Together the authors provide a model for teachers to do Action Research. Self-study tools encourage reflective practice for integrating arts activities into the classroom. Eleven pages of resources for teachers and appendices containing full lesson plans related to each chapter close the book.

I thought this book to be excellent for helping teachers-in-training and in-service teachers to understand how well the arts can fit into a wide variety of learning environments.

Reviewed by J. David Betts is Assistant Professor of Literacy, Technology and the Arts in the Department of Language, Reading & Culture, College of Education, University of Arizona. His research interests include art and technology integration in language arts classrooms and in out-of-school educational settings.

Moskal, Mary Kay & Blachowicz, Camille (2006). *Partnering for Fluency*. New York: Guilford Press.

Pages: 142 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 1-59385-264-9

There has been a flurry of attention to reading fluency in the last few years because of a growing realization of its importance in reading comprehension (Wolf, 2006). This attention has raised the awareness of many researchers and teachers. Among them are Mary Kay Moskal, Associate Professor in the School of Education at Saint Mary's College of California, and Camille Blachowicz, Professor and Director of the Reading Program at National College of Education of National Louis University, who contribute to the field by producing their co-authored book *Partnering for Fluency*. Aiming to share ideas with educators, who are working with their partners—students, parents as well as volunteers—in achieving fluency in reading instruction, the two authors explore a variety of themes ranging from basic concepts, vocabulary, and perspectives on fluency to ways of providing educators with resources needed for achieving reading fluency and individual professional development. The uniqueness of their work is revealed throughout the nine-chapter book.

Unlike Tompkins (2003a), Rasinski (2000), and Richards (2000), who regard reading rate, word recognition, and prosody as the three elements that affect fluency, Moskal and Blachowicz redefine oral reading literacy by including rate, accuracy, and prosody as its three elements. They point out that reading fluency encompasses more than just "sounding-smooth" or rate, the two elements that were included in earlier definitions. In redefining oral literacy, the two authors also summarize the interdependence of fluency and comprehension, which can be described as both fluency and comprehension supporting each other. According to this newly defined relationship, automatic word recognition does not guarantee understanding.

The authors devote Chapter Two to informing educators of approaches with which they could make reading instruction accountable by building research bases of their own. For example, the authors introduce research,

questions, and controversies over shared vocabulary, oral reading fluency, repeated reading, self-managed learning, and collaborative learning. In this way, educators are able to trace differences made by researchers, theoreticians, and practitioners in the field.

In the next three chapters, the authors provide educators with ways for assessment, instruction preparation, and lessons for instruction. In terms of assessment, they note that sensitive and relevant assessment points the way to instructions and goals to help educators to differentiate their instructions. The discussions and examples provided in the chapter could be used as instruments for screening assessment in a variety of ways. The text examines issues that need to be considered before fluency instruction begins, such as material selection and planning for development. For example, five considerations are listed in this chapter ranging from the incidence of content words and high frequency words to the language patterns, familiarity with the topic, the number of words in the passage, and the level of the text. The authors suggest a variety of instructional activities to be incorporated into a literacy curriculum so as to meet the individual needs of the diverse learners (p. 55).

Chapter Six, the key chapter of the book, highlights their work by presenting their "most novel ideas"—to pair students up for mutual support in achieving fluency development. The authors, by quoting Covey (1989) and several other researchers such as Koskinen and Blum (1986), point out that the student partnering approach "creates a social learning environment" and "allows for student interest, responsibility, and a connection to others and their learning." (p. 78). They also recommend students self-managed repeated reading (SMRR) activity which is a one-one-one model through which students collaborate with peers. The model has been proven to be effective as students are motivated by being in charge and responsible for their own improvement, playing leadership roles, and documenting their own growth. Six considerations for implementing SMRR and its benefits are listed.

In the following three chapters, the authors provide additional models and resources. For example, the Volunteer Partner Program is introduced for school districts that may not be able to implement the one-on-one model. Tips for recruiting volunteers and providing training sessions include implementation and selection of materials. The authors provide professional resources for an effective fluency program with a list of books and articles. They also included a sampling of commercial materials for fluency instruction with a brief overview of seven programs they recommend. This information is followed by general guidelines for implementation and additional materials. In the concluding chapter, the authors report their staff development program and volunteer program results from a collaborative investigation in a multiethnic district to improve reading instruction (p. 123). Their work indicates that fluency development as a simple concept can inspire deep and meaningful inquiry by classroom teachers and volunteers.

Overall, Moskol and Blachowicz's shared ideas allow educators to understand the concept of fluency, learn the ways to build partnership for research bases, develop a literacy curriculum for fluency instruction with the partner model as one of its components, assist students who are in greatest need of explicit fluency intervention. The book also provides educators with the resources needed for achieving fluency in reading instruction and for their professional development. With the step-by-step treatment of the little things that go with successful fluency instruction, the authors have made fluency a goal achievable and manageable with two particular strengths.

First of all, suggestions in the book are research-based, which allows for a wider application of the ideas to fluency instruction in reading classrooms. For example, when suggesting the appropriate beginning time for fluency instruction, the authors looked into the work by Allington (1983), Bear (1991), Strecker, Roser, and Martinez (1998) and came to the conclusion that fluency instruction should begin among second graders.

Second, the authors make fluency instruction easily attainable by providing a variety of tools for all elementary instructors who are willing to incorporate the strategies into their own classrooms. The book contains a total of 17 tables, 9 figures, and 8 forms. In Chapter Three alone, for example, eight tables, one form, and one figure are provided for assessing the readers' rate, accuracy, and fluency in reading. In addition, the authors highlight elements they consider crucial for fluency instruction. For example, in Chapter Five where a variety of activities for fluency reading are recommended, the authors not only discuss the strengths of each activity, but also list steps for instruction and teacher tips for implementing each activity. In order to catch the educators' attention, the authors put all the steps into eight boxes so that the steps could be easily followed. However, a list of all the tables, figures, and forms with page numbers in which they appear is missing from the table of contents, which is a drawback.

Easily read and well-provided with illustrations, *Partnering for Fluency* enriches the literature in the area of fluency instruction by offering a new concept of fluency, a partnering model, activities, and strategies. Not only will educators and instructors benefit from the authors' work, but so will students who set the goals for reading fluency.

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Reviewed by Li Jia, Division of Bi-cultural-Bilingual Studies, College of Education and Human Development, University of Texas, San Antonio. Li Jia, earned her PhD in Culture, Literacy, and Language in 2006, and M.A. in English as a Second Language in 2002 from the University of Texas, San Antonio. Her field is second language acquisition and language socialization, with a special interest in heritage language teaching and learning. She was an associate professor of English in China before coming to the United States for advanced degrees. She is currently teaching ESL in the Division of Bicultural- Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas, San Antonio.

Parker, Emily & Pardini, Tess (2006). *"The Words Came Down!": English Language Learners Read, Write, and Talk Across the Curriculum*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 191 Price: ISBN: 1-57110-414-3

How can schools meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs)? The ever-growing presence of ELLs in American schools makes this an increasingly pressing issue for teachers, school administrators, and policy makers. In *"The Words Came Down!": English Language Learners Read, Write, and Talk Across the Curriculum* Emilie Parker and Tess Pardini, two National Board Certified teachers from Fairfax County, Virginia, offer a meticulously elaborated answer to this question for the K-2 levels of instruction. Premised on the idea that ELLs learn best when involved in all aspects of the school experience, Parker and Pardini's proposal makes critical use of two pedagogical workhorses, the learning community, and the workshop.

Regarding the learning community, the authors explain that everything about the classroom environment should convey a sense of security and inclusiveness to ELLs. To this end, they detail a wide array of pedagogical tips and tricks – from how to handle sitting arrangements, what to display in the classroom, and how to involve ELLs and their parents in class activities and routines. Interspersed throughout this presentation are the personal stories of immigrant children taught by Parker and Pardini. These poignant anecdotes serve as a reminder of the inherent difficulty of the task undertaken by ELLs – simultaneously mastering new social norms and complex academic material in a language that is not theirs. These stories also set the stage for a valuable discussion on the schooling needs of ELLs, including the need to 1) negotiate meaning with English-speaking students, 2) engage in academically challenging and fulfilling work, 3) master social and academic English, 4) understand the rules and routines of the classroom, and 5) be recognized and respected as individuals as well as members of their particular culture. The discussion closes with the critical observation that community building is a process that develops slowly over the course of time and requires concerted, daily effort on the part of teachers and students.

The second half of the book focuses on "the workshop," that is, "the architecture that supports English language learners" (p. 35). As Parker and Pardini explain, the workshop format supports ELLs in two important ways, one, by allowing teachers to differentiate instruction according to learner needs and two, by facilitating collaboration between ELLs and other students. In an excellent overview of the topic (Chapter 3), they present the structure of the workshop format and supporting activities, and discuss some of the underlying research. This section features two of the most interesting and useful discussions in the book, the first enumerating strategies for making reading accessible and meaningful to ELLs, and the second explaining how ongoing assessment enables a dynamic learning environment that responds to the evolving needs of these students.

The remainder of the book offers an in-depth look at five different types of workshops, namely, the Writing Workshop (Chapter 4), the Reading Workshop (Chapter 5), the Social Studies Workshop (Chapter 6), the Math Workshop (Chapter 7), and the Science Workshop (Chapter 8). Using materials from their own teaching, the authors illustrate a variety of techniques for helping ELLs master English and discipline-specific concepts and skills. While undeniably useful and important, these chapters are somewhat repetitive and overly detailed. All but the most dedicated readers will opt to skim through this material, being better suited for occasional consultation than for careful reading.

A more significant problem concerns the authors' failure to discuss the ramifications of their proposal in the high-stakes world of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Among the best-documented shortcomings of NCLB is the narrowing of the curriculum that has taken place in many schools as a test-driven approach to education has taken hold. Crucially, pedagogical approaches such as Parker and Pardini's, which attend to a wide range of student needs and which take their time in doing so, are being replaced by programs that teach to the test and promise quick results.

In light of this, it would have been useful to understand how Parker and Pardini's approach has managed to survive the ravages of the accountability movement. No doubt, part of the reason is that their approach has been used in K-2 while testing under NCLB begins in the third grade. However, a more important factor may be the authors' ability to defend their work to school administrators. An account of their strategies to protect and promote their vision of education would have been helpful to other teachers of ELLs who are toiling under the constraints of NCLB.

Notwithstanding this shortcoming, *"The Words Came Down"!: English Language Learners Read, Write, and Talk Across the Curriculum*, should be praised as a solid contribution to the field of ELL pedagogy and a testament to the power of talented and caring teachers to transcend linguistic barriers. Its eminently practical approach and accessible style make it particularly well suited for use in collegial circles and in pre-service teacher internship programs.

Reviewed by Maria M. Carreira, Associate Professor of Spanish Linguistics, California State University, Long Beach.

Solmon, Lewis C. & Chirra, Kalyani (2006). *The Last Silver Bullet? Technology for America's Schools*. Greenwich, CN: Information Age Publishing.

Pages: 265 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 9781593112462

This book on technology's impact on education was originally written for the Milkin Family Foundation in 1998 and contains the complete text of that original report. As far as I can tell not one word was changed and not one formatting change was made from the original. Compare for yourself, the entire original report is available on-line from the nice folks at ERIC.

Ask yourself: "Do I really need to spend \$25.00 for a ten year old report that is available for free on the Internet?" I thought not.

Reviewed by Arie C. Koelewyn

Van Zoest, Laura R., Editor (2006) *Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry Into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 9- 12*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.

Pages: 271 Price: \$39.95 ISBN: 1-59311-501-6

Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 9-12, is one of four books in a series written to document classroom teachers engaged in research. Thirteen studies are included in this particular book, including probability; calculus; lesson study; teaching mathematics through problems; and classroom discourse. Through the diverse topics, four research types emerged (focused study; practical inquiry; social inquiry; part of a larger project) which incorporate a variety of methodologies (e.g., analysis of lesson, teaching, or student work; use of student interviews); and with varying research issues (e.g., extend research of others; classroom teacher and university researcher collaboration; self-reflection; theory building; professional development).

Throughout the chapters, several themes reoccurred. For instance, mathematics teaching and learning are complex, grounded in social, cultural, historical, and political forces. In addition to a strong subject background, teachers need expertise with pedagogy and how students learn. Through inquiry, the teacher researchers grew as professionals, especially in collaboration with university faculty and fellow teaching colleagues.

To give the reader a flavor of the book, Heather Robinson uses research to guide her transformation from a teacher-directed educator to that of a facilitator. She focuses on student understanding and engagement by incorporating cooperative learning strategies and asking high order problems. Nicole Garcia and Patricio Herbst, as part of a larger study, serve as a teacher and researcher team to incorporate a mathematical problem in each 50 minute geometry period. They aim to engage students in discussions to explore, think, and justify. Through the process, we gain insight for the teacher's rationale in selecting a problem and how she deals with the issue of fairness that arises from the students.

I found this new book a fascinating read. The editor has done a wonderful job to ensure each chapter is accessible to the busy teacher. The teacher researchers have posed their own questions and provide detailed and descriptive accounts of their transformative journeys. The chapters are written positively and passionately, documenting successes, challenges, next steps, and further questions. The book is applicable for graduate students, policy makers, university teacher educators, and for teachers interested in conducting research with their own students. Research conducted by classroom teachers "has the potential to inform mathematics education research, practice and policy in ways that reach far beyond the walls of the classrooms where the work was originally done" (p. x) through theory building and practical implications to teaching and learning.

Reviewed by Louis Lim, BScHons, BEd, MEd, MA (candidate), department head of mathematics at Richmond Hill High School, located slightly north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. His action research studies, supervised by university teacher educators, have been published in the Ontario Action Researcher and AR Expeditions.

White, Jeff (2006). *The Spirit of Education*. Ann Arbor, MI: Dirt Sheep Press.

Pages: 400 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 1-84728-075-7

Jeff White's book is a result of his many years in the education "business" and of his frustrations in the field. Throughout the volume, White recalls his own experiences as a student preparing to teach, as an elementary and secondary teacher, as a college professor and supervisor of student teachers, and finally his disillusionment with American education. These vignettes provide authenticity to the author's ability to speak on education, but are not the book's focus. White's primary purpose is to rekindle a philosophical conversation on the essential questions with which the educational system should be concerned, and he revisits these questions in an intriguing and novel manner.

In the introduction, White challenges the reader to consider the definition of education. Education, he writes, "has become a process of adding cumulative layers to one's store of knowledge, [but] the true aim of education is to call forth that which is essential to the individual" (p. ix). The remainder of the book takes a more unconventional approach, with Tarot cards providing the framework for White's "re-vision" of education. Chapters in Section I: A Journey Begins and Section II: The Spirit of Teaching each feature a character from the deck. For White, these characters symbolize qualities that are needed if the system is to truly "educate" the best in students. We need to look at education and the world like the Fool, with "a beginner's mind" without allowing assumptions and experiences to blind "us to possibilities" (p. 9). Education also needs the other characters of the deck such as the Magician (information); the High Priestess; (passion and emotion); and the Emperor (socialization).

Chapters in Sections III: The Spirit of Learning; IV: Transformative Learning; and V: The Education of Spirit bring into play other Tarot cards such as the Chariot, the Devil, and Justice. Each card is used to emphasize

White's Progressive views of education. For example, in "The Lovers," White writes, "Learning isn't a specialized activity that happens at the hands of educators, (sic) it is something we do because it's the way we are built" (p. 137). The Hanged Man views the world from different perspectives. White asserts that in our present educational system "cognitive dissonance makes us uncomfortable; rather than shifting our minds to accommodate new knowledge we tend to reject that knowledge in an attempt to ease the discomfort" (p. 221). But in his argument that education "doesn't need to be managed or coerced or quantified," White's tone is sometimes bitter and disillusioned (p. 375).

The publisher of the book, Dirt Sheep Press, is unfamiliar to me. I was disappointed by the large number of typographical and grammatical mistakes that were present throughout the volume, indicating carelessness in editing the book for print. For example, on page 27, the last sentence says, "In our culture, don't have a terribly deep understanding..." Or later, "a font of ...wisdom" (p. 49) and "I suggest that this these concerns don't describe..."(p. 69). Any of these mistakes could be made easily by a writer, but the sheer number of such errors in this book detracted from its overall quality.

Nevertheless, *The Spirit of Education* is filled with captivating ideas about education, some new and some that need revisiting; some with which I agreed and some with which I didn't. Reading this book was a time-consuming process because its contents frequently demanded that I stop to reread and ponder sections. I like a book that makes me think, and this is one of those books that provides a banquet, not a morsel, of food for thought. I recommend the book to anyone in education, who is contemplating entering the field, or who is simply concerned about the path education is following. I only hope White's editors will be more diligent in helping the important things he has to say be heard.

Reviewed by Jean S. Hamm, East Tennessee State University



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