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reseñas educativas (Spanish)
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Brief reviews for May 2008

Allen, Janet (2007). *Inside Words: Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary Grades 4- 12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 163 Price: \$18.50 ISBN: 978-1-57110-399-4

When my husband and my son begin talking about BMX bicycles and riding (a type of sport/hobby where smaller bikes are adapted so that riders can do various tricks and stunts) I tend to stop listening with both ears. While I care about their interest in this activity, and enjoy watching them ride, when they begin talking, they tend to use language that is unfamiliar to me (e.g., detanglers, pegs, grinds and rollbacks) and I just cannot quite follow them.

In her introduction to her new book, *Inside Words: Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary Grades 4-12*, Janet Allen talks about this idea (citing Moore, Readance, and Rickelman (1989) and Readance, Bean, and Baldwin (1985)), saying that students need to gain an insider position "in relation to content area reading and writing" (p. 4). Without adequate vocabulary knowledge (following from effective vocabulary instruction), students will remain outsiders to the academic content they need to master, just like me, listening as an outsider to my husband and son talk about their specialized activity. For me, this concept of insider - outsider status, and how it can affect students' ability to fully comprehend certain content area texts and topics, is a powerful argument for teaching vocabulary, and one of the most useful points that Allen makes in this book.

The other useful point I found in Allen's introduction was the relationship between background knowledge and vocabulary, and in turn, comprehension of content-area reading. Here, Allen cites Marzano (2004), who says that teaching vocabulary is essentially the same as teaching background knowledge. With more emphasis on vocabulary, prior to embarking on content area topics, Allen writes "learners would not only know more about the content, but they would also know the language used *inside* [italics added] the content" (p. 2).

While these two ideas were both compelling and interesting to me, I finished the introduction still wanting more; not so much more reasons for why we should teach vocabulary, I am already sold on that idea, I just wanted more knowledge about the topic, a more in-depth and extended discussion about what we gain when we teach vocabulary. Allen's introduction feels very brief and, really, in terms of actual talk about the teaching of vocabulary, it is brief. What this book really is is a collection of concrete strategies, or activities, if you will, for teaching vocabulary. And her introduction is just a very quick "hello" before embarking on discussion of the activities. For me, a first time reader of a book about the teaching of vocabulary, I wanted something in addition to an array of strategies to try, and I left my reading of the book feeling disappointed, as though there was more out there and I did not get to learn about it.

Indeed, this book follows several others by Allen, and an ever- growing body of work on the importance and teaching of vocabulary (much of which she clearly draws on here). The problem may be that I am simply entering in the middle of the conversation, and need to back up and start somewhere else. Allen's first book on the subject is *Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4-12*, (1999); perhaps that is where a person should start.

After the too-brief-for-me introduction comes the tools and strategies; Allen's myriad ideas for different ways to teach or work with vocabulary in the classroom. Not surprisingly, I found some of these approaches to be just the sorts of things I would like to try, and others, not of much interest. The ones that spoke to me the most were those that had students talking together, thinking about the words and what they might mean and

not mean, and, in particular, had students doing labeling or categorizing work with the words (concepts). For example, two chapters that I was particularly drawn to were titled "Concepts and Vocabulary: Categories and Labels" and "List-Group- Label." Each chapter is organized as answers to the same set of questions:

- What is [fill in blank for name of activity]?
- How does it work?
- When and why would I use this strategy?

Throughout the book, Allen uses the exact same structure for each chapter, certainly a helpful strategy for the reader, both in terms of predictability and in terms of getting similar information about each activity. There is some value to having such an organizing feature, at the same time, the repetition can get a bit tedious.

I am glad to have this book as a part of my library. But, given my desire to dig a little deeper, to know a little more about this topic, I think that if I had it to do over again, I might start somewhere else. Given the wealth of knowledge she clearly has, Allen's earlier book, *Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4-12*, might be a logical place.

References

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Moore, D. W., Readance, J.E., & Rickelman, R. J. (1989). *Prereading activities for content area reading and learning* (2nd ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Readance, J. E., Bean, T. W. & Baldwin, R. S. (1985). *Content area reading: An integrated approach* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

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

Alston, Linda (2008). *Why We Teach: Learning, Laughter, Love, and the Power to Transform Lives*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 144 Price: \$15.99 ISBN: 9780545047050

What makes this book different from other books written by teachers about their experiences? The answer is that the author, Linda Alston, successfully takes the reader on a journey of renewal and revitalization that leaves you eager to return to your students and share in their joy of learning.

Each chapter begins with an affirmation and tells a story about the author's life as a teacher and concludes with reflection and thought-provoking questions. Through her stories, she reminds us of the power of having a classroom learning environment that has order and beauty and of taking learning past the confines of the classroom and into the realm of real-world experiences and skills where the children are encouraged to be leaders, explorers, and good citizens.

Most of Linda's teaching was with young children from diverse backgrounds, many of whom grew up in poverty and experienced stressful challenges. She is the recipient of many teaching awards and honors; yet, she bravely presents the raw truth of her experiences, including the times that did not go well, in addition to the days of glory. Her honesty draws the reader closer to her as her stories unfold and yield insight and growth. Of particular value to teachers who read the book, are reminders to believe in yourself; trust that you make choices that can work; and, keep an open mind about the students and what they are doing, for there is often much more to learning than what we can see from the outside.

Teachers looking for classroom ideas will find the book filled with activities and strategies Linda used with her students. Those looking for inspiration will find the book filled with reminders about the potential and good in all of us. Those looking for personal fulfillment will find the book filled with words and questions that encourage reflection and action.

What makes this book special and worth reading? It describes an incredible journey made by a dedicated

teacher who really likes kids and teaches because she knows she makes a difference in their lives...and they make a difference in hers and in the world.

Reviewed by Kathy Fite, Texas State University-San Marcos.

Altwerger, Bess; Jordan, Nancy & Shelton, Nancy Rankie (2007). *Rereading Fluency: Process, Practice, and Policy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 122 Price: \$15.00 ISBN: 978-0-325-01034-2

With their publication of *Rereading Fluency: Process, Practice, and Policy*, Altwerger et al. take a critical look at policy, practice and recent research on reading fluency. Altwerger, et. al. not only note major research studies, but point out areas where little definitive research has been done. This book also reviews the authors' own recent research on fluency conducted with over 120 second grade students.

Initially the book provides a historical overview of oral reading and the development of the idea of fluency. This is followed by a review of the place of fluency in the National Reading Panel Summary and No Child Left Behind legislation, thus providing background for the research the authors conducted which comprises the main part of the book. Altwerger et al. also provide an overview of different conceptualizations of fluency and how those relate to educational theories as well as classroom practice. Along with Opitz (2007), Allington (foreword in Altwerger), and others (Padak & Rasinski, 2008; Troyka & Thweatt, 2009), the authors note that there is not one accepted definition of fluency and that fluency for any reader varies with the text being read. Charts depicting reading models from varying educational theories help the reader to visualize the different aspects of fluency.

Chapters 4 - 9 provide an overview of current accepted practice in elementary classrooms across the United States as well as the authors' own research study with over 120 second graders. They have looked at the tests currently being required in many school districts as well as classroom practice to try to determine if the tests do, indeed, measure fluency. DIBELS, among other tests, is critically reviewed for its strengths and weaknesses. They also reviewed the conceptualization of fluency being measured and whether or not a high score on the test of fluency correlated with proficient reading on the part of students. However, there are at least as many definitions of "proficient reading" and "proficient readers" as there are definitions of fluency! Nevertheless, Altwerger et al. provide some thoughtful commentary on the nature of testing versus the real task of reading, i.e. making sense of the printed word.

In the conclusion of the book, Chapters 10 - 12, the authors relate their research to the earlier literature review as well as relating their findings to current classroom practice. They also provide a look at the way tests of fluency are used to make instructional decisions in today's classrooms. They conclude that much of the testing currently being done probably tells the teacher very little he or she didn't already know about a child's reading based on daily work with that child. Much research still needs to be done both on the relationship between fluency and proficient reading and on the relationship between test scores and proficient reading. Challenging currently accepted views of testing and fluency, they also discuss other, possibly better ways than just using measures of fluency to evaluate student growth toward proficient reading .

While 120 second grade students is quite a small sample, this study does provide a brief look at current classroom practices and instructional decisions in relation to fluency. It is to be hoped that it will be followed with larger studies to validate the Altwerger, et al. findings. A major study of the relationship between assessment, fluency, and real-world proficient reading would be a good follow-up to this book.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who teaches young children to read or is interested in research on current policies and practices in the field of beginning reading. The book is filled with information on recent fluency research as well as suggestions for assessing fluency and making instructional decisions. This is an excellent professional resource.

References

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Padak, N. & Rasinski, T. (2008). *Evidence-based instruction in reading: A professional development guide to fluency*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Troyka, L. & Thweatt, J. (2009). *Structured Reading* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Reviewed by Dr. Lynda Robinson, Associate Professor, Department of Education, School of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Cameron University. She received her Ph. D. in Child Language and Literacy Development (Education) from University of Illinois in 1990. Her fields of expertise are early childhood, reading, and children's literature.

Bagnato, Stephen J. (2007). *Authentic Assessment For Early Childhood Intervention: Best Practices*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Pages: 315 Price: \$40.00 ISBN: 978-1-59385-474-4

Bagnato addresses many issues in which are referred to "best-practice issues" throughout this book. In order to relate them to authentic assessment for early childhood intervention, the first step is identifying what the standards are for assessment of preschool children. While this book is full of information for the broader spectrum of authentic assessment for early childhood intervention, it zeros in on the best practices for students who have already been identified as needing special assistance or have been labeled as students with disabilities.

Bagnato makes a very strong case that "new directions and professional standards for early childhood assessment must reflect eight critical qualities" (p. 4). The assessment must be useful, acceptable, authentic, collaborative, convergent, equitable, sensitive, and congruent. Educators will increasingly utilize assessments that meet these eight qualities, as they come to understand how the use of authentic assessment could prevent the mismeasure of young children. The authentic assessment advantage is presented along with the guidelines for authentic assessment in action. As educators become more comfortable with authentic assessments then researchers will have access to "real evidence of real child progress and program impact" (p. 37).

The text discusses authentic assessment principles for both typical and atypical early development. It also covers the best contexts for authentic assessment, along with definitions and features for different dimensions of authentic assessment. The dimensions of importance include structured recordings, developmental observations, ongoing assessment, natural competencies, familiar people, and everyday routines. Throughout the book, best-practice guidepoints are noted at the end of each chapter. These guidepoints help to summarize what has been discussed and serve as great references for those trying to understand assessment in early childhood intervention.

Bagnato delves in some detail into many other issues that are important for those searching for answers as to how to assess preschool children. These include the possibility of being able to test without tests for authentic assessment, how authentic curriculum-based assessment works, can clinical judgments guide parent-professional team decision making for early intervention, and how we can effectively assess for severe disabilities. More specifically, how is it possible to do functional behavioral assessment with preschool children?

It is no surprise that challenging behavior is often enlarged and maintained by the child's circumstances. However, with the use of functional behavior assessment (FBA) procedures it is possible to identify the triggers and consequences that support challenging behavior. Bagnato suggests that the goal of authentic assessment (e.g., an FBA) is to find the purpose of the unwanted behavior so that an alternative that is developmentally appropriate can be taught (i.e., a behavior that is socially acceptable and serves the same purpose for the child).

However, before one can teach a developmentally appropriate alternative one must consider the proper approaches to detect, classify, and intervene for temperament and self-regulatory behavior problems in young children. These topics are discussed at length in chapter 10. Chapter 11 goes on to discuss how one should forecast and plan for kindergarten transition and early school success. It is recommended that this be approached by having a plan, team building, needs assessment and transition planning, and implementation and monitoring.

Bagnato also talks about what should be assessed to determine the needs of young children prior to kindergarten entry, what kindergarten teachers want to know about young children as they enter their classrooms, what domains should be assessed to determine the needs of young children prior to kindergarten, what are the best methods of evaluating young children to plan for early school success, and how to conduct a comprehensive assessment that will facilitate planning for successful learning in kindergarten. The discussion of these topics could prove to be beneficial for early childhood and/or elementary educators.

The best part of the book can be found at the end within the Synopsis and Conclusions. This section is a compilation of the guidepoints for authentic assessment that are found throughout the book. It takes the most important points from each topic within each chapter and summarizes them so that they are easy to relate to a real world situation. This section could serve as a very useful reference for educators and parents, especially those whose children may have been labeled "at risk."

Reviewed by Melanie L. Shores, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, The University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education, Department of Human Studies.

Colby, Anne; Beaumont, Elizabeth; Ehrlich, Thomas & Corngold, Josh (2007). *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.

Pages: 364 Price: \$35.00 ISBN: 978-0-7879-8554-7

American higher education presents dual trajectories: a) the production of a democratic citizenry and b) the production of neo-liberal thought. On one path, higher learning offers flexible accumulation of knowledge and skills, which converge with pathways devoted to sustaining democratic values and dispositions. Encouraged by colleges and universities, the convergence of the courses serves to promote the basic values American democracy needs from its citizens. Current challenges faced by American institutions of higher learning, though, have curbed the propensity for ample civic growth.

Educating for Democracy weaves together the democratic purposes of higher education and research findings to present a plausible framework for cultivating undergraduate commitment to participate in political processes. Quantitative and qualitative results generated from the Political Engagement Project (PEP) produce salient civic themes and discourses. Suggested arguments propel the text beyond the customary promotion of superficial political knowledge for citizenship development. Co-authors Anne Colby, Elizabeth Beaumont, Thomas Ehrlich, and Josh Corngold, rather, expound on comprehensive measures to enhance the: (a) conceptual knowledge, (b) metacognitive awareness and skills, and (c) reasoning skills of post-secondary students.

Segmented into four parts, *Educating for Democracy* unearths those foundational and conceptual issues enveloping undergraduate education for political learning. A strategic assertion of the book is that education for political development is not legitimate in higher education unless it is conducted in a manner consistent with the core values of higher education institutions. These core values include intellectual pluralism, rational discourse, intellectual autonomy, open-mindedness, and civility. As the co-authors delve into questions concerning the core values of higher education institutions, they suggest ways to create a college or university environment that supports respectful engagement across differences of opinion. Hence, those instructional strategies put forward by the co-authors are not viewed as indoctrination. They are, rather, means by which to engage undergraduate students in thoughtful, informed political decision-making.

The co-authors posit their understanding of citizenship against one-dimensional definitions of civic engagement, where activism is viewed as a substantial piece in the political development puzzle. Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, and Corngold, however, advocate a wide-ranging political development process. In this process, undergraduate students' political knowledge, skill, motivation, and participation give way to responsible political engagement. The text provides detail on how faculty can actually approach political development goals and describes what political learning means in practice and how it is best supported.

Educating for Democracy characterizes undergraduate political development as the fundamental purpose of higher education. The co-authors, though, neglect to draw attention to how the political development process intersects with the globalized identity affixed to numerous American institutions of higher education. The new multicultural, multinational, and mobile populations occupying undergraduate classrooms may serve to extend American philosophical values globally. Yet, the normative structure associated with responsible political engagement instruction may produce new kinds of inclusions and exclusions both here and abroad.

A practical resource, the text brings into relief vital instructional methods for conveying responsible political engagement to college level students. A set of documents from twenty-one PEP courses and programs assist implementation and convert theory into practice. All in all, *Educating for Democracy* remains a powerful tool college faculty may use to impart responsible political engagement to their students.

Reviewed by Chrystal S. Johnson, College of Education, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

Conley, David T. (2008 paperback edition, 2005 hardbound). *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley/Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 350 Price: \$24.95(hardbound) \$19.95(paperback) ISBN: 0-7879-7397-1(hardbound) 978-0-7879-9675-8(paperback)

Despite its title, Conley's effort to distinguish between a student being "college-eligible" versus "college-ready" is a serious and comprehensive guide for school districts. The bases of his book are a research project he led to determine Standards for Success and a university-consortium project that developed Knowledge and Skills for University Success Standards. To his credit, Conley allows no process or stakeholder to escape his purview: assessments, counselors, time management.

Conley laments the lack of high school course alignment necessary to provide students with a cohesive understanding of academic disciplines and a lack of student awareness of what lies ahead in college courses. To Conley, "college prep" programs need to be carefully reviewed to insure their coherence, connections between classes, the systematic development of thinking skills and the cultivation of "habits of mind." Conley's use of these concepts is right on point.

Our current status? Conley reports a study that shows remediation rates at all but the most selective colleges approach the 40 percent mark, with over 60 percent of community college students having to take some remedial instruction.

College eligibility includes taking the right courses in high school to get admitted. Yet Conley notes a 2003 study that showed less than one third of students took four years of English, three years of math, and two years each of science and foreign language. He cites privileged students (no surprise) as being far more aware of eligibility requirements. Conley points to high school Mathematics as the best predictor of college success, but what skill sets or knowledge is useful is not identified.

Concomitantly, it appears faculty cannot agree about what is appropriate course content. AP courses are also poorly aligned to courses that precede them. He finds almost no districts have a common template for writing course outlines or syllabi; teachers view their courses as private property. Conley notes college faculty, too, fail to identify what must be included in courses like English.

Conley's book excels in capturing optimal standards for the knowledge and skills necessary for college preparation; to succeed in English, Mathematics and the Natural Sciences. His book breaks down the content and skill sets as well as action steps schools can take. His analysis of the Social Sciences may seem a bit vague. Practically speaking, standards are far different when one is required to understand the diversity of human beings for Social Studies as opposed to Geometry's knowing the difference between sine and cosine. As an aside, however, it is too easy an excuse to say the former cannot be more clearly stated (or taught) by the teacher.

Conley's inclusion of critiqued, college writing samples is eye opening. He points out high school teachers often times do not mark up a paper, nor identify evaluative criteria for measuring the knowledge or skill-level achievement found in a student's paper. He notes college instructors are far more scrutinizing and this shocks students. (As one who has worked in higher education for thirty-five years, I believe he assumes far too much here.)

Conley helps teachers identify where their courses can link with other courses to provide an intellectual connection among disciplines. Alas, teaching reading and writing across the curriculum, a movement dating back to the 1980's, never really made it. It is doubtful that overworked teachers will have the time or interest to apply Conley's research study templates and standards to their courses or even agree upon them.

This can be a book for policymakers, and Conley even thinks for parents. Conley assumes parents would be active participants in the processes, again a bit Pollyannaish on his part, that they would set quality standards for homework. His ambitious alignment efforts for districts assume that there would be district funding and professional development time to study his standards and assure compliance.

It is refreshing that Conley anchors teaching of "critical thinking" and "problem solving" within each academic discipline. There has been too much wasted time spent talking and writing about these concepts in the abstract.

Conley is right. The guide to student success in college is contained in this book. It is not faddish, nor cliché-ridden, but it is easily readable. The next steps are up to us.

Reviewed by Bill Roden, Executive Director of Insight Schools of California-Los Angeles, an online

public charter high school.

Doyle, Clar & Singh, Amarjit (2006). *Reading and Teaching Henry Giroux*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pages: 175 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-8204-8175-3

Henry Giroux is one of the leading critical theorists of our time; he is known and studied for his extensive works on pedagogy, cultural studies, media studies, and critical theory. Doyle and Singh explore how his work can be incorporated into the practice of teacher education and research, and the ways in which his readings can inspire further theories to emerge. Their book is divided into two sections: Part one, "Reading Giroux," looks closely at the foundational ideas in the work of Giroux. It lays the foundation for the authors' pedagogical work that they share in part two, "Teaching Giroux." Through this book the authors invite readers to join them to explore how one can journey from theory to practice, first reading Giroux, then teaching Giroux, finally developing models of how to incorporate Giroux. While embracing the power and complexity of critical pedagogy, the authors do not shy from including the voices of critics. By their comprehensive and multi-vocal approach to Giroux, they provide an invitation and a means for readers to follow their journey. Doyle and Singh offer a compelling argument for members of the educational community to fully engage in a workable commitment to the ideals and the practice of critical pedagogy.

In part one, the authors present a selection of Giroux writings from 1979 to 2005, and they try to let his work speak for itself through categories they have selected (p.7). The four chapters of this section are "Reading the Immediate," "Reading Place," "Reading Reality," and "Reading Promise," and together these chapters examine how Giroux has evolved and the importance of teaching about, and learning about, his writing. The authors stress the importance of teaching critical theory through Giroux, while acknowledging the difficulties students may initially have in reading his work. These chapters work together to call for student-centered curriculum and to encourage teachers to think of themselves and present themselves as intellectuals.

Part two presents the authors' pedagogical approaches to incorporating Giroux into our work with teachers. It consists of two chapters, "Pedagogy," and "Teaching Internship," which together focus on the ways college teaching can be transformed to see students as critical agents and to focus on the importance of critical dialogue in order to work towards transformative education. They incorporate teaching strategies that are very useful (pp. 91-92) and present their own model for the teaching internship based on the ideas of Giroux, the "Reflective and Critical Internship Teaching" (RCIT). This model positions the teaching internship as a reflective and critical pedagogical practice (p. 135), which they have developed to attempt to give teaching interns a voice. In addition to inspiring new ways to structure the teaching internship, this last chapter of the book can be useful for both cooperating teachers and teaching interns to read together.

The power of this book, lies in the chorus that the authors create as they skillfully meld theory and practice. Their approach of combining their voices with Henry Giroux's writing is an inspiring example of how theory can meet the world. The polyvocal dialogue of their argument fans outwards from Giroux, through Dolye & Singh, to theory and practice, ultimately resting on the agency of the reader. As the authors interweave different voices from within and outside of academe they create a space of habitable interplay. Ultimately they lead us (as readers) to finding connections between the world of emancipatory theory elucidated by Giroux and our own worlds of educators on the front lines. So often in teacher education, theory is removed from practice. The authors here connect Henry Giroux's theoretical writings with the practice of teaching and teacher education. Answering the question of how to make theory useful to practice; we see this book as invaluable to people teaching a graduate or undergraduate level education course. Additionally, we see it is applicable to in- and pre-service teachers who seek to renew their commitment to sustainable critical praxis. This is a book that can provide an infusion of hope to teachers of all levels. We would like to stress that this is not the "Cliffnotes" to Giroux. It is an inspiring book that inhabits a space between theory and text. Reading it you are invited to explore Giroux's works as they apply to our your own praxis. It is an invitation not to be ignored.

Reviewed by Christina Siry, Instructor, Manhattanville College School of Education and Carolyn Ali Khan, Graduate Assistant, Hunter College School of Education.

Dunbar-Odom, Donna (2007). *Defying the Odds: Class and the Pursuit of Higher Literacy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Pages: 160 Price: \$59.50(Hardcover) \$19.95(Paperback) ISBN: 978-0-7914-6971-2(Hardcover) 978-0-

7914-6972-9(Paperback)

In trying to understand more of the complex relationship people have with literacy, then, we should not accept the assumption that the experience of literacy is "life changing," but instead attempt to understand the larger historical and cultural narrative that would allow such assumption to emerge (p. 6).

Dunbar-Odom's *Defying the Odds* offers some distinctive perspectives on how people identify and associate with literacy. According to Dunbar-Odom, "the desire for higher literacy is teachable, but in order to teach it, I (we) need to have a better understanding of [from] where that desire comes" (p. 16). In order to shed some light on the emergence of desire for higher literacy, Dunbar-Odom presents personal literacy narratives of writers, academics, and her own experiences. Particularly, Dunbar-Odom scrutinizes the relationship between desire for higher literacy and class. The author notes, "I want to ask why some, especially those from seemingly unlikely backgrounds, determinedly seek higher literacy against all expectations and predictions, whereas others do not" (p. 45). The author provides numerous examples of those who have defied the odds, and how and what made them pursue higher literacy.

The book begins by presenting some common beliefs and assumptions about how literacy acquisition and practice is related to identification of class. Dunbar-Odom introduces the notion of "straddlers," those people who come from working-class homes but strive to be middle class, and she tries to examine what makes these straddlers desire and pursue higher literacy. The author identifies power as one of the prominent factors of desire for higher literacy (i.e. some measure of control over one's environment). In other words, "For many, the desire for higher literacy has no (direct) connection to desire to rise to another class status." (p. 17).

Dunbar-Odom goes on to enumerate various literacy narratives of those who have succeeded in academics against all the odds. For many, literacy (reading) served as an escape from their harsh reality, and an intimate relationship with the teacher motivated them to learn. In some cases, romanticizing positionality of the teacher engendered a desire for higher literacy. Some students idealized the teacher's socially established status. The author asserts the importance of personal literacy narratives; she believes that narratives help us to learn who we are, and what motivates us to desire higher literacy.

In an overview of current literacy, composition, and class theories that examines the relationship between literacy and class, the author synthesizes current research by stating that "working-class children, as a rule, do not desire higher literacy" (p. 45). She indicates that many working-class children are covertly educated to be working class, for the purpose of maintaining status quo. Literacy practice is limited by one's surrounding environment. Despite a detailed description of current research, Dunbar-Odom seems inclined to focus more on one side of research, speaking more for one end of the class-continuum.

Many times, the author's personal dissatisfaction about the inadequacies of the current educational systems gets overly represented, which may well upset readers who believe in the current education system. Overall, Dunbar-Odom does a good a job of revealing what motivates and hinders desire for literacy. She suggests that the desire for higher literacy is not easily predicted. However, we as teachers can initiate real dialogue with our students to talk about their literacy practice, its meaning and purpose. Dunbar-Odom states, "The goal ultimately is to become more conscious of the jobs we do as literacy sponsors, and to learn more about what our students desire from their moves to higher literacy" (p. 130). In other words, the desire for higher literacy can be better speculated and envisaged when it is accompanied by careful examination of students.

Defying the Odds may be a useful pedagogical reference, not only for teachers and educators, but also for the students, especially those from lower-class backgrounds. The book helps students and teachers to realize that higher literacy can be attained with desire and motivation, regardless of class background. The book would be a particularly good resource for counselors or advisers who are closely working with students in preparing them for admission to institutions of higher education.

Reviewed by Joon Yeol Yoon, doctoral student, University of Texas at San Antonio in the division of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies.

Fattig, Melinda L. & Taylor, Maureen Tormey (2008) *Co-Teaching in the Differentiated Classroom: Successful Collaboration, Lesson Design, and Classroom Management, Grades 5- 12*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.

Pages: 126 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-7879-8744-2

Fattig and Taylor's *Co-Teaching in the Differentiated Classroom: Successful Collaboration, Lesson Design,*

and Classroom Management for grades 5-12 is very well organized and impressively introduces using differentiated instruction in any content area. Differentiation instruction modifies the curriculum to meet the needs of the students in a co-teaching environment. Teachers working as partners share the teaching responsibility and reflect on ongoing methodology. Differentiated instruction may be delivered to a whole class or to various groups within a class.

In Part One the authors state their belief that every student can achieve a high level of learning through collaborative teaching. They hook the reader's attention by presenting a synopsis of their personal trials and tribulations in the classroom. The resulting inquiry for instructional strategies led to at their school's adoption of a new instructional program. The essentials for team teaching to meet the needs of special needs and general education students are given. In this section outlines the basics for teachers to determine expectations, classroom management, and discussion topics, with examples of class scheduling to accommodate a co-teaching program.

Although the book's major focus is on differentiated instruction in a co-teaching environment the suggestions given in Part Two can be used in a general education classroom just as effectively. The chapters in this section focus on easy to read and understand activity ideas for getting-to-know others, welcome letters, success graphs etc. for the first week in the classroom or for a new group of students. How-to instructions for planning differentiated lessons, activity ideas for building a community of learners and ideas for assessment are also presented. The reader will find sample templates, tiered activity plans, and examples of actual lessons. Even the non-experienced teacher in differentiated instruction will find the information included here easy to follow. The templates for contracts and menus can be used to guide student assignment progress and completion of activities. A brief focus on the purpose of grading as a means to communicate to students as well as their families about personal progress, growth, and performance is helpful. While the authors stress a standards based grading system that affords a clearer picture of what a student knows, they give no real explanation on how to execute the task. Other interesting ideas discussed are the student-led conferences in place of the traditional parent-teacher conference and parent forums.

Part Three focuses on the schoolwide implementation of a co-teaching differentiated program, stressing administrative support as the main emphasis in undertaking such a task. In this segment the authors reflect on several contributing factors essential to the success of a collaborative instructional environment, and how to address transitional changes.

Overall, the book is easy to read and understand, with a wealth of information for teachers who want to make changes in their instructional practice. The ideas, strategies, charts, activities, and templates can be very useful for those interested in developing differentiated lessons within any content area curriculum.

Reviewed by María I.V. Haase, Doctoral Student, Department of Bilingual Education, Texas A/M University, Kingsville. E-mail: isabelvhaase@hotmail.com

Harris, Karen R., Graham, Steve; Mason, Linda H. & Friedlander, Barbara (2008). *Powerful Writing Strategies for All Students*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 431 Price: \$34.95 ISBN: 978-1-55766-705-2

This compendium of research-based strategies offers teachers fully-developed, multi-step lessons for teaching students effective writing strategies. The authors begin with four introductory chapters that explain self-regulated strategy development (SRSD), how it can be integrated into the writing process, and the importance of self-regulation. The development of SRSD began as a way to address the needs of students with severe learning problems, but, over the years, the strategies have been taught to and proved helpful to struggling writers without severe learning problems. Struggling writers of all varieties have difficulty with self-regulation, comprehension of task demands, and attitudes and beliefs about writing. After using SRSD, the researchers have seen improvements in struggling writers' quality of writing, knowledge about writing, approach to writing, and self-efficacy. The basic stages of instruction for SRSD are carefully outlined in the introductory chapters.

The bulk of the book consists of chapters devoted to strategy lessons on: word choice; revision; peer revision; story writing; narrative, expository, and persuasive writing; writing to a prompt for a competency test; and reading and writing informational text. Rather than provide an overview of all of them, a close examination of one of these chapters will help the reader understand what this book offers.

Chapter 7 contains a set of seven lessons all related to story writing. The strategy is called POW + C-SPACE, which is a mnemonic for the targeted self-regulation strategy (POW = pick my idea, organization my

notes, write and say more) and the genre-specific pre-writing strategy (C-SPACE = characters, setting, purpose, action, conclusion, emotions). The first lesson in the sequence is designed to teach the strategy by identifying story parts in sample stories and memorizing the mnemonic. In lesson two the students review the mnemonic, find story parts in another story, and participate as the teacher models the use of the strategy for planning and writing a story. The authors provide specific suggestions for what teachers should say while modeling, which is useful to a teacher trying this out for the first time, especially because the suggestions include wording for the self-regulation strategies (ways to encourage yourself as a writer and remind yourself of steps in the process). In the third lesson, the students and teacher write a story together using the strategy. In lesson four, the students and teacher plan a story together, and then the students each write their own version of the story, with assistance from the teacher. In lesson five, the mnemonic is reviewed again and students plan and write their own story, independently, although the teacher is always available for support. In lesson six, the graphic organizer is removed as a support; students create planning notes without a pre-printed graphic organizer and then write their own stories based on their plans. Lesson seven, which is optional, teaches students to work with a partner. The authors point out that this lesson could be used before or after lesson five to provide extra support for students who are having difficulty.

The authors are careful to explain that these lessons should not be seen as strict scripts for teachers to follow. They also explain that teachers should feel free to combine steps, repeat steps, skip steps—anything that helps them meet the needs of their students. The authors' insistence on the flexibility of the plans is encouraging in this age of highly scripted curriculum. They also explain and repeat that one lesson cannot necessarily be accomplished in one day. Every chapter contains the necessary graphic organizers, charts, cue cards, lesson checklists, etc. as described in the lessons.

All of the sets of lessons in this book are built upon careful scaffolding. Each begins with an immersion into the nature of the task using explicit explanations, followed by modeling and collaborative work; all of this is a precursor to students' independent work. The lessons combine behavioral, cognitive, and social-constructive principles of teaching and learning that respect the struggling writer, while also providing careful support to increase the likelihood that they will write successfully. This is very different from the prescriptivist approach found in some curriculum materials designed for struggling writers.

Reviewed by Sylvia Read, Utah State University, College of Education and Human Services, School of Teacher Education and Leadership.

Kastberg, Signe M. (2007). *Servants in the House of the Masters: A Social Class Primer for Educators, Helping Professionals, and Others Who Want to Change the World*. New York: iUniverse.

Pages: 174 Price: \$18.95 ISBN: 978-0-595-46942-0

The educational elephant (classism) in the room has been addressed! In her new book, *Servants in the House of the Masters: A Social Class Primer for Educators, Helping Professionals, and Others Who Want to Change the World*, Dr. Signe M. Kastberg, higher educational professional and licensed mental health counselor, explores social class and its affect on individuals at the marginalized end of the socio-economic spectrum. Contrary, to popular belief, racism is not the driving force in educational discrimination and alienation; classism is a major factor in the educational and professional shortcomings facing many poor and working class members of our society. Kastberg begins addressing the role of classism in her book when she suggests the "myth of the meritocracy" (p.13). A meritocracy is a system in which individuals get ahead (or not) based on their actual skills and abilities, not because of various connections or unearned privileges based on class (p. 13). Kastberg believes that in our society, people in positions of power do not always arrive there because of hard work, sheer will, and determination. They are afforded opportunities because of who they know rather than what they know. Kastberg uses the example of "legacy admission" into prestigious education environments as a great example:

Typically an elite college will set aside about ten percent of the available spaces for incoming students who are the children of alumni and/or donors to the school...If John Adams went to Ivy university back in the 1800's because of wealth and privilege of his family (i.e., they could actually afford to pay his tuition, room, and board; and they could also afford to not have him at home doing labor on behalf of the family), then his son automatically had a better chance of being accepted, and the grandson, and the great grandson and so on. So, an advantage is given to people who are already advantaged. (p. 14)

Through these examples, Kastberg illustrates that our society has been designed to ensure that the masters

maintain special privilege and access while the servants stay in their place. A true example of the old saying, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

In my opinion, Kastberg's scrutiny of the low income, first generation experience gives this book a unique perspective and serves as its major contribution. Using personal accounts, interviews with participants from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and exceptional theoretical analysis; Kastberg illuminates the obstacles challenging working class and poor attempting to "change their stars" in a society that publicizes achievement based on hard work, dedication, and talent. Her work is so critical because it addresses the callous realities correlated with pursuing the American dream and it reinforces the fact that educators and service professionals cannot operate under a "one size fits all" model. To address the specific needs of individuals, American society must engage in a conversation about the impact of social class, and it is imperative to advocate for educational access and equality.

This reader-friendly book is divided into four sections, organized, and thought provoking. The first section provides a conceptual framework for social class and its relevance to our society. This framework is a starting place to challenge the notion that we live in a classless society. In section two, Kastberg demonstrates the influence of class on personal and professional development from infancy through acceptance into college and embarking on a career. Section three, through interviews, explores the lives of the participants and their experiences as individuals living on the marginalized end of the socio-economic spectrum. The final section of the book provides recommendations to create proactive policies and practices.

As an educational access professional who focuses on low income, first generation, and disabled students, I truly appreciate Kastberg's work. Too often I find myself in debates with colleagues in secondary and post secondary education positions regarding the performance and special circumstances of the students in my programs. Explaining the phenomena of the hidden curriculum in the classroom, embarrassment caused by a lack of resources, misunderstood family cultures, and the inability to advocate are not excuses for these students, but rather factors that have an adverse affect on their success. In addition to the barriers that these students face in their personal lives, they are also confronted with deficit thinking from the individuals charged with providing a rigorous educational environment and exposure to all viable career options.

Servants in the House of the Masters adds validity to my arguments but it also provides specific recommendations to address the cumulative disadvantages that social class can inflict on marginalized groups. Kastberg strays from the traditional practice of simply presenting findings to creating and presenting action items as well. The recommendations for action make this book an excellent training tool for class and diversity. Education and service professionals will walk away with specific techniques to advise students from the lower socio-economic class. Some of these tools are: a) future talk; the process of describing dreams in full detail, imagining reaching those goals, and not protecting students from failure if they reach too high, b) using concrete truth about abilities and performance, c) eliminating unnecessary costs such as text books (using library reserve books instead), d) valuing differences in public, and e) considering the possibility that lower socioeconomic families do not need to change; maybe social institutions need to change the deficit placed on the poor.

As I neared the books end I suddenly begin to have some concerns. Kastberg had devoted an entire chapter to recommendations, but she did not have a plan for implementation. My concerns were quickly relieved when, with the turn of a page, she introduced Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in the next chapter as a model of implementation. AI, an approach based on the work of David Cooperrider and the social construction work of Kenneth Gergen, is used to find the best in people, organizations, and the world in which they exist (Cooperrider, 1999). Using AI creates a climate of togetherness by bringing all stakeholders in, using affirmation to connect self-awareness, and best practices in class based knowledge to create environments free of bias.

Reflecting on this book, I have to admit my only criticism, which Kastberg addressed, was that the participant group was largely dominated by females. However, this is easily explained by Kastberg's interest in gender bias. Despite that reservation I enjoyed, related to, and learned a lot from this book. I recommend *Servants in the House of the Masters* to all educators and service professionals, especially those interested in issues of diversity, or those who consider themselves educational change agents. Kastberg has done a splendid job addressing the issue of classism and created a solid platform to continue this conversation.

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Reviewed by Ryan Ross, M.Ed; Director of Educational Opportunity Center, Community College of Denver; Doctoral Candidate (or Student) University of Colorado Denver.

Mooney, Jonathan (2007). *The Short Bus: A Journey Beyond Normal*. New York: Henry Holt.

Pages: 288 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 0-8050-7427-9

If you are an educator, or if you are a parent or a friend of a person with a disability, you will find reading *The Short Bus: A Journey Beyond Normal* to be an eye-opening experience. In his memoir, Jonathan Mooney describes a 4-month long journey he takes in his very own small school bus throughout the United States. He chooses this method of transportation because of what the "short bus" represents: he sees it as a symbol of students who are seen as different and who need to be taken to special schools, because they just don't fit in with normal students. The question the reader is then asked is "What is normal?"

When Mooney writes of the pain and shame of being a slower learner, he speaks from personal experience. He is dyslexic, and could not read until the age of 12. Throughout his school years, he struggled with attention and behaviour challenges. Although all of the odds seem to be against him, with a supportive mother, and a strong spirit, Mooney eventually makes it; he achieves an honours degree from Brown University, co-authors a book on learning disabilities, and enters the field of public speaking.

While these achievements could make Mooney happy, he finds that he is still searching for a sense of self-fulfillment. He still feels different and out of place, and troubled by what had happened to him in his school years. So, this journey on the short bus becomes a kind of journey towards self-awareness; a way for Mooney to see that he is "okay," and that everyone else who is different is okay too.

On his journey, the author meets with many individuals, both young and old, who have physical or mental challenges. Through these meetings, Mooney confronts his own prejudices about what it means to be different. He also sees how successful students can be, once they come to embrace what makes them different, and then stop trying to conform to societal expectations.

Mooney's work touches upon the history of special education and the need for educators to embrace the differences of students of all ages. That is a crucial and universal message, and one that deserves repeating.

Reviewed by Ms. Mary Shaughnessy, Instructor & Faculty Liaison, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

Rebell, Michael & Wolff, Jessica (2008). *Moving Every Child Ahead: From NCLB Hype to Meaningful Educational Opportunity*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pages: 164 Price: \$56.00(hardcover) \$22.95(paperback) ISBN: 080774851X(hardcover) 0807748501(paperback)

In *Moving Every Child Ahead*, Michael Rebell and Jessica Wolff offer an insightful, thought provoking analysis of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) that calls for a comprehensive re- conceptualization of the law's objectives, demands a stronger emphasis on equity, and seeks to clearly characterize and delineate what it means to provide "meaningful educational opportunities." The text is framed around the belief that NCLB's statement of purpose, to ensure that "all children have a fair, equal, significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on challenging state standards and assessments," is not being sufficiently met. The belief that "educational equity can and has been made when concrete steps are taken to provide meaningful opportunities to all students" reverberates throughout the book (p. 7). Beginning with a framework that situates NCLB within the context of both historical and contemporary educational challenges, the authors weave together a comprehensive perspective that captures why its initiatives are still necessary, which aims need to be reassessed because they are not working as intended, and provides clear, well-reasoned suggestions for how potential changes can be implemented successfully.

Using detailed evidence, Rebell and Wolff make a compelling argument that the attainment of the proficiency goal outlined in NCLB has received the largest portion of political attention, financial and human resources, and public awareness. Consequently, the other critical part of NCLB's statement of purpose is largely being ignored. "NCLB is falling short on achieving its ambitious goals because it mainly concentrates on accountability for results but largely neglects the resources and support that students need to achieve those

results" (p. 63). In the pursuit to critically discuss NCLB, the idea of what it means to provide "a meaningful educational opportunity" is established as a central theme. Although the authors clearly object to NCLB's current structure, implementation procedures and timelines, and assessment criteria, they refrain from partisan attacks or criticizing specific individuals; rather, they provide an explicit guide to mend a fractured educational policy. Rebell and Wolff offer a sincere, calculated approach for making revisions to NCLB. These changes, which include adding requirements for in-school educational resources and redefining what it means to be a highly qualified teacher, deserve immediate attention from policy makers, teachers, and parents.

The first few chapters present equity as an idealized element of education policy in the United States since *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954. In a historical review, the authors discuss various federal government initiatives such as Title I and Goals 2000, which, like NCLB, were intentionally designed to drastically reduce the achievement gap and provide an increase in meaningful educational opportunities for minority populations. However, few of these efforts have fulfilled their intended promises. The authors are neither bitter nor combative in their assessment of NCLB's inability to fundamentally improve the American education system. In fact, they clearly acknowledge that there is a framework in place that can effectively work. However, they are unwavering in their belief that sustained advancement in the areas of equity and meaningful education opportunities are still challenges that need to become a central focus of political and public discourse. To address these challenges, the authors point to specific problems within the law and suggest changes that need to be considered as the debate over NCLB re-authorization proceeds.

For those unfamiliar with specific parts of NCLB, this book is a valuable resource. Rebell and Wolff write expansively about the structural, fiscal, and ideological components of the law. In doing so, they provide a synoptic overview of an extensive piece of legislation that can be extremely overwhelming and difficult to understand. The authors suggest eight aspects of NCLB that need extensive re-consideration. These include educational opportunities, recruitment and retention of teachers, adequate funding, standards, assessments, and requirements, school improvement, and the federal — state partnership. Their analysis surfaces glaring inconsistencies, flaws, and pressing issues that should concern all Americans. For example, the authors draw attention to the fact that no state is on track to reach full proficiency goals by 2014, a number of states have lowered their academic standards and expectations in response to NCLB pressures, large numbers of poor and minority students are still being taught by minimally qualified teachers, and many state tests used to measure adequate yearly progress (AYP) are not in accordance with psychometric standards. While readers' views may diverge with the authors' approach to overhauling NCLB, the authors put forth a strong argument that major changes need to be made. These modifications, though, demand a sense of urgency, care, and a bipartisan approach.

Both Rebell and Wolff are distinguished within the field of education and have spent much of their professional career advocating for children and working towards justice, equality, and meaningful educational opportunities. Their extensive experience in the fields of law, advocacy, and public policy lends credibility to this analysis. To support both their assessment of NCLB and proposals for change, the authors rely on the work of well-established academic scholars, education organizations, and government policy reports. In addition to the overview of NCLB and the policy recommendations outlined by the authors, *Moving Every Child Ahead* includes an appendix that provides a 10 page, easy to navigate summary of their ideas. The inclusion of this section suggests that this book is not meant to sit on the shelf or to only be used in education classes; rather, it is intended for those who wish to push for a re-conceptualization of NCLB and have a genuine interest in the direction of education policy in the United States.

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Reviewed by Philip Bernhardt, Doctoral Student at George Washington University.

Simmons, Karen & Guinn, Cindy (2007). *The Bag Ladies, Primary & Perfect; Seasonal & Thematic Projects for K-2 Learners*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 197 Price: \$23.95 ISBN: 978-0-929895-62-8

The Bag Ladies, Primary & Perfect; Seasonal & Thematic Projects for K-2 Learners is the fourth book by Simmons and Guinn. This book is for primary teachers, especially brand new teachers who need to find quick creative teaching materials to keep elementary children's hands busy and their brains stimulated.

The Bag Ladies, Primary & Perfect is designed with a monthly format around a seasonal theme for each month of the school year from September through May, and includes a "summer survival" section. It is packed with theme-based learning activities; reading selections, creative writing, story telling, and a variety of other projects arranged according to the theme. For example, in November, students read about Thanksgiving, the Mayflower, and Native Americans. Next, students write "compare and contrast" paragraphs about the people at the Thanksgiving table now and the Native Americans at the first Thanksgiving feast. Students can also discuss the kinds of food on the Thanksgiving table that Native Americans introduced to the European settlers. Then students decorate a Native-American Vest Pocket Bag; a brown paper lunch bag to be used to store their November projects. These kinds of literacy activities using a seasonal theme are very motivating and appealing to the young student.

Each chapter contains instructions for creating organizational bags followed by three projects, writing suggestions, and six activity cards as follow up activities at the end of each thematic unit. New teachers may want to collect the activity cards for future use by filing them in a 4x6 card box. The content is consistent throughout the book. There are 40 different activities, monthly book selections, complete step-by-step instructions and even photographs of finished products. The instructions for each activity are easy to follow and layouts are simple and clear. The authors highly recommend adjusting the level of difficulty and selection of activities to meet students' needs. They also offer some helpful suggestions for kindergarten teachers, thus making this book very teacher-friendly.

One of the highlights of the book is the variety of writing formats for all levels of writers. Bold blackline masters at the end of the book can be used for a variety of skills. The suggested materials for the activities are inexpensive and readily available. Furthermore, students are encouraged to organize each unit's projects into monthly project bags that can easily serve as personal portfolios for an Open House, parent and teacher conference, or to show their work in progress.

Without any doubt, this book can rescue many new primary teachers who desperately need good, creative teaching materials for their students. Similarly, experienced teachers can incorporate these thematic units with others and have fun teaching them. The strength of this book lies in the fact that all the activities and suggestions are very easy to follow; creative and flexible for primary level students! This is a wonderful resource book for primary teachers.

Reviewed by Dongwol Kim Roberson, Doctoral candidate, Department of Bilingual Education, Texas A&M University-Kingsville. E-mail: dongwolk@yahoo.com

Taylor, Barbara M. & Ysseldyke, James E., editors (2007). *Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers, K-6*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pages: 249 Price: \$68.00 (Hardcover) \$31.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 978-0-8077-4822-0 (Hardcover) 978-0-8077-4821-3 (Paperback)

Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers, K-6 would be an outstanding resource for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers interested in becoming Reading Specialists, or as a reference for professional writing. It can be utilized in its entirety or each chapter separately for professional development. This text is an anthology of essays written by authors who integrated research with instructional suggestions to enhance the reading ability of struggling readers. Each chapter begins with reflective questions which could be used for dialogue or as an introduction to a presentation, and ends with activities to further develop the understanding of the strategies. Additionally, at the close of each chapter the authors provide the reader with a list of sources arranged by topic, allowing the reader to further explore the subject. The closing pages provide information about the editors and contributors.

This text is organized into four parts with eleven chapters. The first three parts discuss decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension; the final part addresses school wide practices to improve the reading of all students. In chapter 1, editors James Ysseldyke and Barbara Taylor introduce the subject of reading issues by providing a framework of factors that contribute to reading difficulties. As the text focuses on how schools and teachers can assist struggling readers most of the discussion is centered on instructional factors. They also highlight the characteristics of effective teachers and schools. This review looks in depth at chapters on early remediation and vocabulary, two ideas that have recently caught my attention. I think we will be hearing more about these two topics in the next few years.

In chapter 2, Darrell Morris examines decoding in early readers and how best to instruct emergent struggling readers. The author suggests a highly direct, systematic, intensive program to improve reading. He presents

an excellent argument for beginning interventions early due to biology and development, "The knowledge gap between low and average readers is smallest at the beginning of first grade: therefore intervene at this point" (p. 20). Morris examines the benefits and weaknesses of one of the first early intervention programs, Reading Recovery. He anticipated reducing the number of struggling readers by modifying Reading Recovery with additional teacher training and extending the program into second grade. The results of his study revealed, "... intensive, Early Steps tutoring in first grade allowed the children to establish a foundation ... tutoring in second and third grades built on this foundation, enabling most of the children to eventually become grade-level readers" (p. 33).

It has been well documented that children who don't learn to read early have a difficult time catching up later. Early intervention is essential for our struggling readers. Morris's research regarding an early reading intervention program is timely because No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB) states that all students need to be reading on grade level by grade three. Additionally, his intervention plan would comply with Response to Intervention (RTI), a model used for students who need extra support to improve academic performance. It is necessary for educators to find a way to lower the population of struggling readers while developing a solid reading foundation for future success; a high-quality intervention program can offer teachers a structure to assist them.

While I unconditionally agree with Morris regarding early intervention I question how the students are being identified. He begins his discussion with strategies for the "at-risk" student without first clarifying the methods or assessments used to make identification of struggling students. Assessment is an important component of an early intervention program, not just for identification, but for on-going assessments which guide instruction that addresses students' weaknesses while building on their strengths. I would be inclined to read his full document (Morris, Tyner, & Perney, 2000) to obtain the information.

Michael Graves, the author of chapter 4 makes a strong case for the importance of vocabulary. He states, "vocabulary instruction is absolutely crucial to success in reading..." (p. 55). This concept is compatible with the summary reported in the NRP Report, "reading comprehension is crucial to the comprehension processes of a skilled reader" (2000). In spite of the significant relationship between vocabulary and reading, vocabulary is not always given the same serious consideration as other comprehension instruction.

Graves organizes this chapter into an outline form. He first presents the assumptions underlying the program and then he presents an overview of a four part program. This program includes: teaching rich and varied language experiences, teaching individual words, vocabulary strategies, and fostering word consciousness. With each section he gives a brief explanation and examples. He suggests a minimum of 30 minutes of vocabulary instruction daily for struggling readers. Graves' chapter continues with the evidence that supports the underlying assumptions. "There is strong evidence that vocabulary knowledge is important—as an index of verbal ability, as a predictor of success in school, as a factor influencing readability of text, as a factor that can improve reading and comprehension, and to success in and out of school" (p. 73).

More research is needed on the topic of vocabulary. However, we know there is a correlation between word knowledge and reading. For our struggling readers to become better readers we must help them build a strong vocabulary foundation. It is time for schools to recognize that state standardized tests are essentially tests of vocabulary in context and reading comprehension; if they want test scores to strengthen they must first be willing to acquire skillful methods to teach words.

Throughout the book there is a persistent theme regarding professional development for teachers. It is suggested in many of the chapters that teachers and tutors be given opportunities to grow and reflect upon their teaching practices. Continuous, high-quality professional development of educators is vital to achieve progressive reading goals for every child and I am pleased to see it supported in this text.

No single strategy is effective for all struggling readers. *Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers, K-6* offers some specific strategies based upon solid research. When teaching struggling readers it is important for the teacher to be knowledgeable and flexible. Toward that end teachers should collaborate and develop their instructional practices. Struggling readers can and will learn to read if the educator recognizes each child as an individual with specific needs, uses varying strategies, and is persistent. Using the strategies in this book could be the first step in improving the reading skills of all students.

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Umstatter, Jack (2007). *Got Grammar? Ready-to-Use Lessons and Activities That Make Grammar Fun*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 384 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-7879-9387

Got Grammar? Ready-to-Use Lessons and Activities That Make Grammar Fun follows a long line of collected reproducible worksheets by veteran educator Jack Umstatter. Created for grades 6-12, *Got Grammar?* presents five sections of grammar lessons, each with initial diagnostic tests, practice exercises, enrichment activities, and summative assessments. The sixth section, titled "Meeting the Tests Head-On," reflects the author's emphasis on successfully navigating standardized testing.

According to the Introduction, the activities "adhere to the standards, benchmarks, and practices established by the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning" (p. 1). A grid illustrates how the six sections of *Got Grammar?* align with nationally accepted Language Arts/English standards of Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

The five main sections of the text include: the parts of speech, parts of sentences, [types of] sentences, usage, and mechanics. Designed as user-friendly and described as classroom-tested, the amusing activities in *Got Grammar?* range from labeling parts of speech, phrases, clauses, and sentences to completing puzzles, and crafting original sentences. To connect the study of grammar to composition, the author shares numerous writing tips throughout the text. The final section of practice tests promises to "prepare students for testing situations that will check their grammar proficiencies" (p. 2).

Umstatter's book provides convenient worksheets with popular topics. For example, there are references to notable Americans such as Bill and Melinda Gates (p. 77), John Glenn (p. 159), Elvis Presley (p. 107), Joe Torre (p. 94), and Mark Twain (p. 108). Contemporary concepts heighten interest in the grammar tasks. Thus, both the familiar content and skillful organization of the playful activities support student engagement in the study of grammar.

As a former high school English teacher, this reader recommends Umstatter's *Got Grammar?* for Language Arts/English teachers facing the challenge of preparing students for standardized testing situations. Though the book lacks suggestions for accommodations for specific populations, the text serves as a general resource in the study of grammar. Nicely sequenced with introductory lessons, review activities, and cumulative assessments, Umstatter's book supports isolated grammar instruction for busy classrooms. Teachers of all grade levels may benefit from the clear grammar explanations and entertaining exercises. Overall, *Got Grammar? Ready-to-Use Lessons and Activities That Make Grammar Fun* is a worthwhile purchase as a supplementary grammar text.

Reviewed by Amy J. Evers, a graduate student in Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. As a former high school English and German teacher and middle school Reading Specialist, Ms. Evers's background provides a wide foundation for further studies in literacy. Her areas of interest vary widely from enhancing teacher education at the university level to assisting both tutors and children in the UGA Reading Clinic while exploring theoretical frameworks within the constructs of qualitative inquiry.

Wormeli, Rick (2007) *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice Grades 6-12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 176 Price: \$23.00 ISBN: 978-1571107084

It is an unfortunate reality that schools are usually set up to push a varied student body through a range of

educational processes at the same speed, a view that Rick Wormeli argues is underpinned by "an assumption that we are working with the same raw resources, all in the same condition, all with the same needs, and all growing at the same rate" (p. 10). Increasingly, this approach has been rejected by practitioners who have emphasised the individual learning needs of each student, arguing that a differentiated approach to teaching is necessary to ensure that all reach their full potential. Such an approach meets students at whatever level they are, whether experiencing difficulties with a particular issue or needing more challenge, and ensures that every task is designed to maximise their learning — for Wormeli it is "simply good teaching" (p. 3). The approach does not mean that advanced students complete more work, and struggling students less. Instead, the nature of the work is differentiated, meeting the student at their particular level and challenging them to develop at accessible steps, building on their strengths and encouraging them to address areas of weakness. The aim is not to limit students to labels, but to be "attentive to students' readiness levels," and successful differentiation requires teachers to be open to changing their perceptions of students' levels during the course of each lesson (p. 50). In *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice* Wormeli provides a practical guide for those seeking to incorporate a differentiated approach in their teaching.

After a brief outline of the case for differentiation, Wormeli quickly turns to the centrepiece of the book — a detailed case-study of a single differentiated lesson, which outlines every stage of the lesson from initial conception, through design, implementation and post-lesson reflection. Although the particular example used is a history lesson on early explorers, it is discussed for the purposes of procedure, not content and the points developed can easily be extended to any subject area. The case-study offers a frame for reference, which is followed by a number of brief chapters which contextualise the approach. Chapter 3 outlines a series of differentiation practices, including the importance of adjusting instruction based on assessment, mixing models of instruction to meet the needs of diverse students and working with students to develop ideas for teaching. Chapter 4 offers a range of tips for better differentiation based on the latest research in cognitive science, as understanding how the human mind learns can help teachers reach all students. This includes the recommendation that students engage better with material when they have background knowledge and information does not appear in abstract and the outline of the primacy-recency effect that informs us that the mind absorbs best what is heard first and second best what is heard last. Chapter 5 offers twelve further case-studies of differentiated learning experiences concerning a broad range of subjects.

The structure of this book lends itself particularly well to the busy teacher. The writing is succinct with regular recap sections throughout chapters and prompts in the margin to ensure that the central points are made clear. The use of such a detailed case-study, the constant discussion of practical examples and the regular questions in the text ensure that all readers will be encouraged to reflect on the ways in which differentiation can be incorporated into their own teaching. The book is based on engagement with the latest pedagogical literature on differentiation and includes a comprehensive recommended reading list, which is divided into different thematic sections for those who wish to further pursue particular issues. Finally, there is a comprehensive appendix full of resources to help promote differentiation, which the author encourages teachers to photocopy and use directly with students or to encourage ideas when planning.

This is an accessible guide to a complex issue. The book is full of ideas for differentiation, and offers particular advice on promoting differentiated learning for teachers working on programmes of study that are strictly proscribed. Although such an approach to teaching can initially be arduous, Wormeli's practical advice will help both the early and experienced teacher ensure that their teaching addresses the needs of all learners. *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice* is not the last word on differentiation. Instead, it is a comprehensive discussion of the findings of the latest pedagogical literature, on which the author bases a sound practical guide to this approach.

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

Zitlow, Connie S. (2007). *Teaching the Selected Works of Walter Dean Myers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 80 Price: \$14.00 ISBN: 978-0-325-00886-8

This volume represents a new collection in the Heinemann "The Young Adult Novels in the Classroom Series." Judging from the title, one would expect it to be a handbook of unit and lesson plans with some critical author information about Walter Dean Myers. However, the conversational style of the book is more reminiscent of a supervisor's classroom teacher observation. The book is divided into chapters reflecting the many aspects of Myers' works of poetry, non-fiction, novels, short stories, his play *Cages*, and an in-depth study of his novel *Fallen Angels*. The book contains excellent summaries of Myers' works and critical

examinations of the themes therein. The author, Connie Zitlow, Professor Emerita at Ohio Wesleyan University, is a recognized authority on children's literature and education.

Zitlow has included many exemplary instructional approaches in this book. A multi-week middle school unit that is an excellent example of a collaborative approach by a librarian and English teacher is described in chapters 2 and 3. The described unit contains many elements such as a poster project (pp. 32-35) that might be expanded to include other instructors and disciplines. Chapter 4 covers high school level extension activities for *Fallen Angels*, Myers' Vietnam War novel. This chapter seems more organized than the others with clearly demarcated activities, even though as in the other chapters, instructors and students are often referred to only by their names without any role description. Often, the reader cannot tell whether a student, a classroom teacher or a librarian is being referred to without turning back to the preliminary pages in which Zitlow describes who she interviewed or observed for the book.

A few activity sheets are included within the chapters; others are described in paragraph form in the text. It would have helped if the activities, lessons, and student reactions were more clearly blocked out in the text by using a different layout and text style. An appendix of lesson plans, unit plans, and activity sheets described in the text also would have been useful. The book does contain a helpful bibliography of Myers' works listed by genre, as well as a general list of cited works.

Despite a few deficiencies in layout and clarity, this volume is a good starting point for education students and beginning teachers in need of creative teaching ideas, and for veteran teachers needing a fresh look at the works of a classic young adult author. Other volumes in this series cover the works of Robert Cormier, Katherine Paterson, and Mildred D. Taylor. Future volumes are planned on teaching the works of Gary Paulsen and Chris Crutcher. Although the conversational format might hamper a busy classroom teacher or teacher/librarian, this book would be a good choice for summer professional reading. It would also serve as a worthwhile addition to education and school professional collections, or as supplementary reading in Young Adult literature courses and Secondary English Language Arts education courses.

Reviewed by Sheila Kirven, Education Services Librarian, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ.



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