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reseñas educativas (Spanish)  
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## Brief reviews for July 2008

**Bellamy, Thomas G.; Fulmer, Connie L.; Murphy, Michael J. & Muth, Rodney (2006).**  
***Principal Accomplishments: How School Leaders Succeed.* New York: Teachers College Press.**

**Pages: 208    Price: \$64.00(cloth) \$24.95(paperback)    ISBN: 0807747432(cloth) 0807747424(paperback)**

There is no doubt that today's schools are not prepared to face the many challenges brought upon them by a web of political and social factors. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act has transformed the way in which schools, principals and teachers are expected to perform. Schools have the responsibility to ensure all students get an equal opportunity to learn and, in theory, all students must succeed. In reality, schools that lag behind the expected performance matrix face tough sanctions at first and then a total makeover, if and when continuous improvements do not change test scores.

I highly recommend this book for anyone in a leadership position. While it is a book that focuses its practical theories and concepts on school principals, it can also be a great resource for managers in private businesses or scholars who may be interested in the topic of leadership. There are three parts to *Principal Accomplishments*. Each part is broken down into easy to read and understand chapters, which typically fit logically into the topic of the part. All chapters are composed of several defining sections that maintain a sense of continuity throughout the volume. Within the text of the chapters, there are assortments of figures or tables that describe a conceptual framework, a contextual road map or detailed steps that can help leaders be propitious in shaping their schools.

In the three parts—twelve chapters—of *Principal Accomplishments*, Bellamy et al. make the case for a new approach to improving schools' performance and student learning. Part I introduces the authors' understanding of school leadership as accomplishment-minded practice. Part II addresses problems of practice and provides suggestions for leadership for sustainable purposes, and Part III shifts from a focus on principals to focus on the knowledge they need to be effective.

### Accomplishment-minded Leadership

Few doubt, anymore, that school leaders can make a difference in their schools, (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Witziers, Boskers, & Kruger, 2003). Most, though, agree that there are daunting challenges facing school leaders and that performance in the face of these demanding challenges becomes very difficult. The authors of *Principal Accomplishments* present a model for these changes called "accomplishment-minded leadership". They argue that we must fundamentally re-design schools as places where both adults and young people learn. "Principals succeed only when they act in ways that provide both effective support for student learning and vigilant stewardship for school conditions" (p. 27). The model places responsibility on principals to create conditions that meet the larger community's needs and results in improving student learning. This is done when principals view accomplishments as positive results that school stakeholders look forward to creating. For principals to create these conditions, they need to be engaged actively in designing the school's goals and objectives and deciding which of these should receive their ongoing attention, take charge of the school's daily operations to foster those conditions, and be stewards for the social culture through which school work is done.

### Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Goals

In today's environment, organizations are attentive to efficiency. Leaders focus on how they can improve and sustain the bottom line of their organization by focusing on collective improvement. *Principal Accomplishments* focuses on this very important aspect of leadership for sustainable goals. It explains the how to and recommends that school leaders engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process. This collective and engaging strategy is the most effective type of leader-employee engagement I have experienced in my professional career. "The ability to understand the perspectives of many different religious and cultural groups is essential to leadership for sustainable goals" (p. 79). Perhaps the greatest challenge of all comes with the awareness that managing change includes managing the reactions to that change which means assuring that every stakeholder's concerns have been addressed.

A change can be said to have been implemented successfully if a collective agreement was reached in regards to the change intended and positive results were achieved. "Effective principals engage in an ongoing effort to understand and influence the guiding values and priorities in their school's various communities" (p. 67). The ongoing improvement cycle and the continuous focus on what's important for the school's bottom line support student and faculty learning. "Leadership for effective action supports student learning by influencing the constantly changing course of events" (p. 103).

In order to make all of this happen, principals and leaders need to build stable social capital around them. The authors define social capital as the social structures and relationships that consist of networks, norms and trust (p. 51). For example, teachers know their student's parents and family members by name; teachers are able to share ideas and information with each other and the school leaders; teachers go above and beyond supporting an after-school program or event. None of this can be done if these leaders do not attend to the needs of their people and the environment from around them. "Social capital is central to school success" (p. 119).

### **Building a Knowledge Base**

One of the major strengths of the book is that it conceptualizes the problems of practice as potential positive accomplishments. This concept in itself motivates principals and leaders to focus their full attention on the bottom line. Also, the authors' conceptual framework provides a practical and a new approach that, in my opinion, adds a value to the profession's knowledge base. The model provides a body of knowledge, a structured way, for achieving positive results.

The model is a Framework for School Leadership Accomplishments (FSLA). "The FSLA is our effort to define such a set of accomplishments and organize them in a theory of action that connects the daily work of principals with the school's goals" (p. 34). The FSLA introduces four dimensions that shape the establishment of a theory of action for school leadership: (a) attending to both ends and means, (b) leading from the entire school, (c) a pragmatic and eclectic approach, and (d) flexible, locally developed theories of action (p. 35). Through these domains principals will be able to create a structure in which attention is shed on all important school accomplishments.

The model provides a strategy for school leadership in which continuous learning is documented and when combined with other strategies it provides a perspective across multiple players. For example, the authors provide an annual case outline and questions to guide the development of a road map for the school before the year begins, after school start-up, during school and at the year's end. I consistently use this evaluation and health check-up approach. I find it very useful in helping me stay focused on the bottom line and develop a prioritization strategy for the day-to-day problems. The authors argue that building a shared knowledge for the principalship is important, however, individual knowledge is most critical when it comes to a successful principalship practice. *Principal Accomplishments* sheds light on the importance of possessing the right skills, tools and techniques and the role of Principal Preparation Programs in transforming this knowledge.

### **References**

- Leithwood, K., & Montgomery, D (1982). The role of the elementary principal in program improvement. *Review of Educational Research*, 52, 309-339.
- Witziers, B., Boskers, R., & Kruger, M. (2003). Educational leadership and student achievement: The elusive search for an association. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 398-425.

**Reviewed by Amir Al Nizami**

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**Blaz, Deborah (2008). *Differentiated Assessment for Middle and High School Classrooms*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.**

**Pages: 162 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 9781596670778**

In my experience working in classrooms, assessment is a challenging topic for novice and experienced teachers alike. Deborah Blaz has written this teacher-friendly resource to complement other books about differentiation, which tend to focus on the content or process of lessons rather than on assessment. Blaz begins with a discussion of differentiation including useful and easy to understand explanations of assessment terminology, such as scaffolding, graphic organizers, rubrics, fairness and standards. In this first section, Blaz makes a strong case for differentiated assessment and clarifies many of the assessment terms frequently used in the literature and in other teaching resources. Although the book is intended for middle and high school teachers, most of the suggestions could be easily adapted for the younger grades.

In the following chapters, Blaz addresses preassessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, using technology for assessment, and implementation strategies with numerous concrete examples of assessment tools and strategies in every section. She makes suggestions for using Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's multiple intelligences as tools for assessing student work. The book ends with three appendices: the first is useful lists to help teachers design assessments; the second is a glossary of differentiated assessment terms; and the third section contains sample checklists for specific types of tasks and reference to an on-line checklist generator.

I found some of the language in the book problematic. For example, a teacher evaluates "student work" or "student performance" rather than "students" (p. 1), and referring to student work as either "right" or "wrong," as Blaz does (p. 5), seems outdated in this era of focus on supporting growth and improvement. She suggests that by using Bloom's Taxonomy, teachers might provide students with "choice of difficulty level" (p. 44) rather than encouraging teachers to use the taxonomy to assess higher level thinking skills. Blaz has chosen to use the terms assessment and evaluation interchangeably although she knows they are different, and this caused some confusion for me as I read the book since there has been a clear distinction made throughout the assessment literature in the past few years between these two different processes.

The first few pages of each chapter are worth reading closely, but this is not the type of book a teacher would likely read from cover to cover. Because it is full of helpful examples, rubrics, charts, graphic organizers, checklists and other assessment tools, it would be a useful guide for beginning teachers or for experienced teachers seeking to diversify their assessment skills and strategies.

**Reviewed by Melanie Tait, Ed. D., a preservice instructor in the Faculty of Education at York University in Toronto, Ontario. Melanie is interested in novice teacher development, mathematics education, and inner city education.**

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**Fullan, Michael (2008). *The Six Secrets of Change: What the Best Leaders Do to Help their Organizations Survive and Thrive*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 151 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-7879-8882-1**

As you read Fullan's book, you will be asking yourself how his ideas fit into "your" situation. If you are in certain fields, such as education, you may initially find it difficult to grasp his ongoing dialogue about businesses such as Toyota. However, a closer read illumines the personal thoughts of this acclaimed international authority on organizational change and presents an extensive review of pertinent literature.

Fullan has addressed six strategies that he refers to as secrets of change: love your employees, connect peers with purpose, capacity building prevails, learning is the work, transparency rules, and systems learn. According to him, the suggestions are not really secret, but are hard to understand in their fullest meaning, and in combination are difficult to appreciate and act on. Among the points he stresses are the value of reflection, the importance of morality and humility, and investing in your employees. He concludes by telling how to maintain the secrets for sustained success.

Readers from most any organizational structure can benefit from the book. The text is rich with stories about leadership, ensuring that those in both the private and public sectors can connect with what the author considers to be key to helping an organization survive and thrive. Those in education will find it valuable as it offers another venue for understanding how education can learn from successful practices and leadership in the corporate world.

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

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**Gillham, Bill (2008). *Small-Scale Social Survey Methods*. London; New York: Continuum.**

**Pages: 111 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 978-0-8264-9630-0**

This book is part of the Real World Research series. Its main thrust, as referenced in the title is to help the reader better understand small-scale social survey methods.

The author presents 15 chapters designed to hone research skills. The book is relatively short, highlighting key components of the research process. Multiple references to the UK will provide American and other readers with an appreciation of the common global nature the research process.

The narrative is brief, but pertinent examples are provided. The concise text expands the awareness of the reader about challenges and concerns that might occur during the process. Researchers with limited experience will find the book helpful in supporting and extending their existing base of understanding; however, novices may find themselves in need of a more detailed description of the research process and opportunity for more applied exercises.

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

**Hammersley, Martyn, Editor (2007). *Educational Research and Evidence-based Practice*. London: Sage Publications.**

**Pages: 295 Price: \$130.00(hardcover) \$32.95(paperback) ISBN: 9781412945615(hardcover) 9781412945622(paperback)**

*Educational Research and Evidence-based Practice* is a compendium of lectures, responses, and papers that tear at the flesh of educational research and its relevance to the practice of classroom teaching. While not explicitly directed at teachers, we argue that teachers who struggle to try and reconcile the research they read and hear with their practice will find in this book an echo to their own efforts.

This edited volume is a collection of previously published articles and chapters that allows readers to have a window into the British version of the current debate on the nature of educational research and its link to practice. The text is divided into two themes: it starts with the debate over evidence-based practice and later changes into a more fundamental discussion of the nature of educational research.

The book opens with the 1996 David Hargreaves Teacher Training Agency Annual Lecture in London. In this lecture, Hargreaves made several points that serve as a point of departure for several exchanges as well as the impetus for this volume. Hargreaves laments the disconnect between educational research and practical application of the results of research in British classrooms. Based on his professional experiences Hargreaves makes a comparison between educational research and medical research; and the accessibility of research information for teachers. Central to this theme, Hargreaves asserts that in medicine, doctors are also the researchers, researching that which they see as pivotal to making positive change in their area; while university researchers who are far removed from the classroom declare their research as valid and applicable to the teacher, without the involvement or input of the teacher. In medicine, Hargreaves cites the accessibility of current research information to every physician as a stark contrast to the teacher for whom current research is costly and less accessible.

This eye-opening lecture sparked a colorful debate among researchers that Martyn Hammersley, the volume's editor, not only documented, but in which he also partook. Subsequent responses illuminate the difficulty of applying the medical model to educational research highlighting variable contexts and challenges. Multiple perspectives shed light on the difficulties and challenges of transferring research results into educational practice.

As the debate develops the volume shifts to discuss the types of research that are likely to move education from status quo. A brief history of educational research is followed by a description of different types of research methodologies and their prudence as related to moving education forward. Especially illuminating is Janet Schofield discussion on increasing the generalizability of qualitative research. Instead of replacing qualitative research with experimental studies she suggests approaches that make qualitative research more meaningful for evidence based practice. The focus is on studying what is (the common classroom practice), what may be (sites that represent future trends), and finally studying what could be (in which we know of changes and excellence). This discussion highlights how qualitative studies can serve as excellent guides to teachers contemplating practice in their own classrooms.

The text is an excellent companion for graduate research methods courses in the field of teaching and teacher education. It thoughtfully provokes the researcher to find pathways to make research meaningful and generalizable to the classroom practitioner. The text is also a carefully edited volume that opens a window to an academic exchange as it unfolds and draws growing reaction. In that way the text reveals something about the process of academic debate as it plays out in lectures and publications.

For a classroom practitioner and a graduate student (Lesa), much of what is argued throughout the text strikes a chord. Classroom teachers sense in frustration the gap between university research and their own personal classroom reality. This text brings into light that gap and ways to possibly illuminate researchers to a more thoughtful consideration of their ultimate audience. For a professor of education (Guy) the book is a great example, exposing students to the way academic exchanges are molded while discussing the charge and challenge of educational research.

**Reviewed by Lesa Brand Lesa and Guy Trainin, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.**

**Helterbran, Valeri R. (2008) *Exploring Idioms. A Critical-Thinking Resource For Grades 4-8*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.**

**Pages: 133 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1-934338-14-8**

Because fluency is an important linguistic element for 4-8 grade students, it should be incorporated into everyday classroom activities. One strategy that can help to improve not only vocabulary but also high-level thinking skills is the use of idioms. This fun strategy for learning to infer and understand non-literal meanings of words can be employed by teachers in a daily five-minute routine. With this in mind, Valeri Helterbran presents a handbook for instructors, parents, and special education teachers who teach English and ESL or EFL teachers that is full of meaningful critical-thinking resources. The purpose of the book is to orchestrate learning, not to control it (p. vii). *Exploring Idioms* uses a simple model to teach idioms in a flexible way according to age and learning style and demonstrates their integration using students' interests and needs.

The author uses an uncomplicated language, ingenious expressions, and rational organization in this book: the first section explains what idioms are and why it is important to learn them; then she reviews where they came from, including their origins and some contextual factors that give students a sense of the historical backgrounds of language. The next section outlines how to use the book, giving brief, interesting ideas for integrating idioms into lesson plans and extracurricular activities. These specific applications are followed by general ideas which are presented as ten intelligent tips on how teachers can vary the daily idiom diet, and finally, the author shares her philosophies about the collaborative learning process from her perspective as a successful teacher.

The originality of the book's organization resides in how the author uses idioms to inspire teachers to use this set of creative tools. Each idiom is presented with a brief definition, a short historical background which stresses time-line and context of the origin of each idiom, then applies idioms—providing entertaining examples. The author's use of a "Chewing the Fact" exercise give students the opportunity to work cooperatively and to interchange ideas, meanings, and understandings. In the following section, "The Proof is in the Pudding," students evaluate real situations and decided where to use or not to use the idiom.

As an experienced teacher, Helterbran knows well how important it is to awaken students' critical thinking skills. Exploring the timeline using either a deductive or inductive approach and letting students arrive at their own conclusions without imposing the teacher's criteria is without a doubt an example of one of the key assumptions of modern active pedagogy. Another interesting aspect of this book involves the constant interrelationships among idioms and the variety of the respective cooperative learning activities. This facilitates an active learning role by the students and stimulates student motivation in the learning process. In other words, this active approach helps students to build critical thinking skills, to find hidden meanings or structures, and of course to build their self-confidence for the improvement of vocabulary and pragmatic meanings of words by employing independent learning strategies.

*Exploring Idioms* is an interesting book that can prompt teachers and educators to promote knowledge and self-awareness. The simple yet intelligent organization and hands-on strategies in this book make it an inspirational choice. Proof of wisdom and academic common sense abound within these pages—don't hesitate to explore it and refine and expand the techniques of teaching and learning with your students.

**Reviewed by A. A. Saucedo-Medina, Graduate Research Assistant in Bilingual Education Doctoral Program at Texas A & M-Kingsville and Professor at Benemérita Escuela Normal de Coahuila, México.**

**Kane, Sharon (2008) *Integrating Literature in the Content Areas: Enhancing Adolescent Learning & Literacy*. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.**

**Pages: 328 Price: \$38.00 ISBN: 978-1-890871-80-2**

In the provocatively titled *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, French psychoanalyst and literature professor Pierre Bayard argues that in many contexts, broad knowledge of the "library" of literature is more valuable than deep knowledge of individual books. There simply aren't enough waking hours in a human lifetime to read everything worth reading that's ever been published, let alone keep up with new publications or have an opportunity to share one's accumulated knowledge. What the knowledgeable librarian and English teacher need is a Virgil to guide them through the inferno and paradise of literature, reliable and encyclopedic resources to help them understand the scope of the world's literary output so that they can, in turn, better serve as trusted advisors for young readers.

The content area teacher faces an even greater problem in this regard. Convinced by literacy experts of the value of incorporating a wider variety of narrative and informational texts into their curricula, yet compelled by policy makers to maintain deep, specialized knowledge of their field, content area teachers have little time or opportunity either to add much literature into their personal reading diets or to design engaging instruction around it.

Enter Sharon Kane's marvelous *Integrating Literature in the Content Areas: Enhancing Adolescent Learning & Literacy*, a cornucopia of lesson ideas and book recommendations to support content area teachers, librarians and anyone else interested in enriching the minds of middle and high school readers. As she notes in her introduction, Kane aims her book at a wide audience, and she delivers with an engagingly written, information packed handbook for crafting innovative, literature-rich instruction.

Kane's opening chapter lays out a concise and persuasive argument for including a wide range of literature in content area instruction. Readers familiar with Harvey Daniels' exuberant advocacy for exploding content area reading out of its textbook-centric shackles will find themselves nodding along with the review of the literature here. While Kane does describe how reading widely from a variety of genres can support adolescents' mastery of the vocabulary and conceptual knowledge base in the content areas, the bulk of her case rests on the affective side of the educational process. What a reading diet rich with literature and authentic texts most strongly affords the content area classroom is an expanded curricular space for stimulating discussions, student-driven inquiry and active construction of knowledge from multiple sources. The second chapter, a veritable playbook of best practices from the language arts, continues the emphasis on methods that promote affective engagement with text. Daniels' Literature Circles model receives detailed treatment, as do book clubs and independent reading programs. A description of a week-long, school-wide interdisciplinary unit on the explorations of Lewis and Clark (with activities in literally every content area, including music, physical education and home economics) ends the chapter with a taste of the grand possibilities afforded by the recommendations to come in the rest of the book.

With a conceptual framework for integrating literature into content area teaching firmly in place, Kane launches into the heart and soul of her book, an extended consideration of five major genres from which reading material can be drawn: informational books, fiction, biography/autobiography/memoir, poetry and how-to/hands-on books. Each genre gets its own chapter, which is broken down into four parts. The first section provides a brief essay, well-grounded in the research literature, exploring the importance of including the given genre in students' reading diet. The second section gives a host of ideas for how to engage students with the genre, with general procedures and sample "Walk- Throughs" of the strategies as implemented in real classrooms. Kane describes how each method is ideally suited for supporting students' mastery of content area standards in multiple disciplines, and all of the suggested strategies align well with one or more of the larger instructional frameworks provided in the previous chapter.

As valuable as these practical suggestions are, most readers will likely turn straight to the third and fourth sections of each genre-focused chapter, where Kane discusses a handful of authors who are well-regarded within the highlighted genre and provides an exhaustive annotated bibliography of notable books in the genre, organized by content area. The author studies, while brief, nonetheless give sufficient biographical detail, critical testimony and lists of selected works to support a respectable book talk or author showcase. The annotated bibliographies are impressive for their recency (few titles pre-date 2000) and for the entertaining book talks that Kane provides, several of which are presented in the voice of characters from the books. Appropriate age ranges for each book are given along with lots of ideas for additional cross- disciplinary connections and suggested book pairings. The concluding chapter gives another tantalizing description of a coordinated cross-disciplinary investigation, this time into autism spectrum disorders with Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* as the central text and expanding to include not just a whole

school, but an entire community. Expect a spate of community reading programs to follow Kane's lead in the near future.

Content area teachers, librarians, parents and any other readers with an interest in this topic would be well advised to devour Kane's book as soon as possible, because as up-to-date as her annotated bibliographies are, they will become outdated as the accelerating pace and volume of children's and young adult publishing quickly bring several new volumes' worth of material to the world's library. The reader's dilemma between knowing the library and knowing individual books, as detailed by Bayard, will continue, but with resources like Kane's *Integrating Literature in the Content Areas*, we who take up the cause to be conduits between children's minds and the world of books are well served.

## References

Bayard, P. (2007). *How to talk about books you haven't read*. New York: Bloomsbury USA.

**Reviewed by Dr. Sean Kottke, Reading/Language Arts, The Robert B. Miller College, Binda School of Education, Battle Creek, MI.**

## **Kluth, Paula & Chandler-Olcott, Kelly (2008) ) "A Land We Can Share": Teaching Literacy to Students with Autism. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes..**

**Pages: 220 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-1-55766-855-4**

The Center for Disease Control's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network released data in 2007 indicating that about 1 in 150 8-year-old children in multiple areas of the United States had an autism spectrum disorder. Although there may be some dispute about the exact percentage, there can be little doubt that the number of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders has risen dramatically over the past few years and that they constitute a significant percentage of children who qualify for special education services in our public schools. For many years, children with autism were basically considered uneducable. Although that situation is changing as educators have come to understand more about autism and have been exposed to examples of autistic persons who have succeeded academically, proven pedagogical approaches have been difficult, if not impossible, to find. This book should prove a welcome resource to the many teachers who are looking for ideas and techniques to try in their own classrooms.

Readers may be familiar with the work of author Paula Kluth, who also wrote "You're Going to Love This Kid!: Teaching Students With Autism in the Inclusive Classroom. Both Kluth and Chandler-Olcott are former teachers, and their book combines the practicality and passion of the teacher with the perspective of the researcher. It is also a highly readable book which includes numerous personal stories. The title of the book, as is explained in the introduction, is taken from a poem by a person with autism who considered learning to write to be her salvation. This touching testimonial sets the tone of the book.

The first two chapters of the book are What Is Autism? and What Is Literacy? The authors explain that they take a rather broad view of the definition of literacy. Perhaps more importantly, they share their strong commitment to the concept of "presumed competence," by stating emphatically that all students with autism spectrum labels should be viewed as capable of literacy learning. The next four chapters (Promoting Literacy Development in Inclusive Classrooms, Assessing Literacy Learning, Focus on Reading, and Focus on Writing) present specific suggestions and include lists of additional resources. The last chapter, Literacy Learning for Students with Significant Disabilities, returns to the theme of presumed competence and is an impassioned plea that all learners, even students with the most significant physical, movement, sensory, and communication problems must and can gain literacy. Although readers will be inspired and instructed by this book, they should also come away with a sense of the awesome responsibility that they have as teachers.

This is a book that academic libraries supporting special education programs will definitely want to purchase. It should prove to be an important resource for students and teachers looking for strategies to use with their own students. However, students are frequently looking for sources of empirical research, and they may be disappointed. The authors present many good ideas, but empirical data remains limited at this point. Hopefully, this book might provide the ideas to spur some much-needed research.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *What is the prevalence of autism?* Retrieved May 30, 2008, from [http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/faq\\_prevalence.htm#whatisprevalence](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/faq_prevalence.htm#whatisprevalence)

Kluth, P. (2003). *"You're going to love this kid": Teaching students with autism in the inclusive classroom*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

**Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University.**

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**Pavlidis, Merope (2008). *Animal-Assisted Interventions for Individuals with Autism*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley.**

**Pages: 208 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 978-1-84310-867-2**

With the significant rise of children diagnosed with autism, becoming informed about promising interventions for individuals with autism seems of essence. This book provides information about different types of animal-assisted therapies; when, where, why and how to access them; and what to expect. The information is explained clearly in a manner that can be understood by all, regardless of prior background knowledge or experience in this area. It is "essential reading for families, teachers, and anyone interested in using service animals to help individuals on the autism spectrum" — from the foreword by Temple Grandin.

The author, Merope Pavlidis, begins the book with an introductory chapter that provides her personal history, which involves her son who was diagnosed with autism. This is followed by an explanation of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). She then leads the reader into an overview of animal-assisted interventions.

The section on dogs begins by providing the definition of a service dog and differentiates service dogs from therapy dogs. One difference noted: service dogs are allowed in public places; whereas, therapy dogs are not. The author discusses the roles of autism service dogs, which include keeping children from eloping, alerting parents of injurious behaviors, and search and rescue of children who have eloped, to name a few. Despite the various pros, she covers reasons for not getting a service dog as well. However, the families she interviewed that received service dogs were pleased with their decisions. She then discusses the practical aspects of service dog use. Several profiles of families who received service dogs are provided, along with quotes from parents and anecdotal information that demonstrate to the reader how service dogs can make a difference in the lives of individuals with autism and for their families. A similar structure or format is seen in the following chapters as well, which makes comprehending the subject matter easy.

Pavlidis reviews the history and value of animal-assisted therapy. A few of the potential benefits listed include: an increase in participation in therapy sessions, providing social support, and the encouragement of attachment. She notes an increase in schools partnering with animal-assisted therapy organizations. Using dogs in schools helps to keep students with autism calm and focused when they are feeling overwhelmed or stressed due to too much stimulation. They are also helpful for socialization purposes because people are more inclined to talk to someone with a dog; thus opening the door to conversation. This is especially important for students with autism because part of the purpose for them to attend school, part of their education, is learning how to socialize. Despite the increase in service dog use in many schools there is still a need for parents to advocate and ensure their child can bring their service dog to school. Educators need to understand the importance of service dogs for students with autism. These students may not be able to be a part of the classroom otherwise.

The remainder of the book covers service uses of other types of animals. It begins with the definition and history of therapeutic riding, and then delves into the procedures and values of therapeutic riding. Professional standards by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association are outlined. Ideally, instructors are also special educators, social workers, or behavior analysts. The discussion includes how to access services and provides in-depth profiles of two centers.

This is followed by a chapter dedicated to dolphin therapy. The author notes how more scientific data needs to be collected, provides the reader with background information about dolphins, and provides a brief history of dolphin therapy (which began in the early 1970's). The purposes of dolphin therapy vary greatly, from physical therapy to language development. Stories about different individuals' experiences are provided and make the methods come to life. Pavlidis comments on criticisms and concerns about the therapy related to animal activists who are concerned about "employing animals to work" (p. 167), noting that the dolphins she observed "appeared to be interested and engaged in their work" (p. 168). The risks involved in swimming with dolphins are outlined and the necessary precautions addressed.

A key feature about this author's dialogue throughout the chapters is how one size does not fit all. She points out how individuals' needs should be assessed, and therapy should match their specific needs. This is the case for any type of therapy attempted for individuals with autism. As an educator (and reviewer for this book), this is a very important component to highlight because many people seek a simple solution. They



yearn to purchase one method that will work. As the author states, it is not that simple. Many factors can influence the outcomes of different types of intervention. Within each type of intervention, different variations should be used based on individual needs.

The author presents facts using research-based information, for example about the pros and cons of each intervention, and includes her opinion based on her own experiences. This allows the reader to understand how theory leads into practice, and how it has or has not worked for her. Various profiles of individuals with autism throughout the text also justly allow the reader to understand precisely how these interventions can (or cannot) work. Pavlides explains that animal-assisted therapy provides a potential intervention that if nothing else, may provide an individual with happiness. Happiness and quality of life, in particular, are areas of research that interest her the most. She believes that "we must learn to be truly creative in providing opportunities for individuals with autism to build lives based on supported independence and options for meaningful activity and personal fulfillment" (p. 186).

References to organizations, journals, support groups, etc. are made in the appendix, making this text a useful reference. In conclusion, this book is well organized, practical, and truly provides families, educators, and community members with essential information about animal-assisted therapy for individuals with autism, just as the title states.

**Reviewed by Gilda Martinez is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education at Towson University in Towson, Maryland**

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**Rief, Linda. (2007) *Inside The Writer's-Reader's Notebook: A Workshop Essential*.  
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

**Pages: 208 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 9780-325-01190-5**

Personal, real, individual, and insightful—these words describe Linda Rief's newest book, *Inside the Writer's-Reader's Notebook: A Workshop Essential*. Drawing on nearly 25 years of classroom experience, Rief offers readers a well-designed book that serves as a guide to the accompanying blank *Writer's-Reader's Notebook (W-RN)* based on "suggestions, previous experience, and knowledge gleaned from using" (p. 8) the notebook with her students. With detailed explanations, plentiful student examples, and helpful appendices, Rief offers teachers an outstanding text that guides them through the structure of the *W-RN*, an "academic journal that reflect[s] students' thinking and learning as they live, act, and grow in school and the world" (p. 29). The *W-RN* offers students "a place to be personal, individual, and real as they take notice of themselves and their world" (p. 3). Rief's guiding text provides teachers of writing with a useful tool to help them develop meaningful ways to incorporate the *W-RN* into their classrooms.

The design of the *W-RN* is a result of a meticulous process of trial and error where Rief "tried all kinds of designs and ... paid close attention to what organizational frames, what size, what materials, and what expectations best help kids" (p. 8). The design, developed out of both Rief and her students' personal needs, is intended to enable students to learn and grow as readers and writers; functioning as a space where teachers can encourage student learning. The physical design of the *W-RN*, with a sturdy cover and spiral binding in addition to thick cardstock pages that allow for writing and drawing on both sides, is intended to "endure the abuse of overstuffed lockers and teenagers' bedrooms" (p. 6). The *W-RN* is organized into five sections: (1) front matter with introduction and expectations, books I am currently reading, books I want to read, and ideas for writing; (2) response; (3) notes; (4) vocabulary; and (5) spelling matters.

Rief does exceptional work around developing the aforementioned five sections in Chapter 4 of the guiding text. With clear rationale, mini-lessons, and ideas for each section, Rief equips teachers with constructive ways to create a space "where very specific kinds of learning c[an] happen" (p. 6) for students. It is especially useful to read this chapter while referring to the blank *W-RN* so that one can imagine how these pages might be filled by future students. Chapter 6 is also particularly instructive for practicing writing teachers, as Rief describes how she assesses each section of the *W-RN*. Rief thoroughly explains how she grades for both quantity and quality as well as how she responds to student work. The reader can view how she supports student learning with thoughtful responses that both "confirm and extend their thinking" (p. 31) in the Student Notebook Section.

Well over half of the guiding text is dedicated to the Student Notebook Section where Rief includes a variety of examples to show the realms of thinking produced when students and teachers make use of the *W-RN*. The reader is able to see how real students use the *W-RN* to "catch their breath and figure out what they notice and are thinking about themselves and the world" (p. 39) and view the "one-sided conversation

students have with themselves" (p. 29) about books, writing, and their lives. In addition to student examples, Rief provides an insightful example of how she uses the *W-RN* to reflectively think about her teaching, writing, and reading practices. Not only do these examples serve to demonstrate how Rief and her students use the notebook, but the examples can also be used as models to students when a teacher incorporates the *W-RN* into her classroom.

Another point worth noting is that Rief includes *W-RN* samples from students of both genders, students with special needs, and ELL students. In the contents section of the Student Notebook Samples, Rief notes how she made modifications for students with autism and fluency difficulties. One of the key practical values of this work is the *W-RN's* flexible and realistic organization, one in which multiple student needs can be met, where most, if not all, students can "notice the world...mak[e] connections...ask questions...participat[e] by thinking" (p. 35).

Rief encourages making variations to the *W-RN* whether it is for different subject matters, grade levels, ability levels, linguistic needs, or even modifying the *W-RN* to a digital format. Chapter 5, though brief, provides sufficient information on modifications. However, it is this reviewer's hope that other teacher-researchers who read Rief's guide and use her *W-RN* in their classrooms make modifications and write their own book or article about the modifications they made. Because Rief provides a guiding structure for the *W-RN* in a middle school environment, and especially because the writer's notebook is typically used in writer's workshops, readers will surely benefit from the ways in which other teacher-researchers made modifications for different subject areas and grade levels. Chapter 5, along with appendices that include references, recommended resources, and classroom examples, will guide teachers through making modifications in order to individualize the *W-RN* for teacher and student needs. The classroom examples may be particularly illustrative for teachers new to writer's and reader's workshop because two of the components are an eighth grade curriculum map and notes for teachers to help guide student responses. The references and recommended resources will be especially helpful to teachers looking to extend their knowledge about writer's notebooks.

*Inside the Writer's-Reader's Notebook* is an excellent addition to the literature. It offers a method to help students "be more productive and more insightful" (p. 4), as well as providing teachers with "evidence...of [student] growth over time" (p. 10). Rief has developed a way to organize the *W-RN* that enables students to engage in rigorous thinking about the world they live in, the books they read, and their ideas for writing. Furthermore, Rief's careful text equips teachers with a structure to implement the *W-RN* into their classrooms. Rief's "*personal, individual, real, and so insightful*" (p. 36 emphasis added) structure will be a strong asset to any teacher of writing.

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

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**Strachan, Wendy (2008) *Writing-Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.**

**Pages: 290    Price: \$29.95    ISBN: 978-0-87421-703-2**

A book-length study tracing the process of preparation for new writing requirements at a post-secondary university, this work follows from start to finish, sharing trials, triumphs, successes and failures. While the focus is a school in Canada, Simon Fraser University, the experience will assist any school considering the change to a new approach, particularly the concept of a writing-intensive curriculum that is cross-disciplinary.

Eight chapters begin with discussing "An Old Mission in a New Context," followed by a discussion of rules and reasons (or possibly both) of criteria for writing-intensive courses. Next is addressed how to defend the stumbling that will definitely occur, and reflections from three perspectives on what happened in a course. The specific genre approach to teaching writing is addressed in chapter 5, focusing on the consulting, collaborative process. The faculty involved, also known as the *W-Faculty*, provide their reflections in chapter 6, while chapter 7 looks at the broader picture of the institutional context, which is based on a faculty forum held addressing how the Writing Curriculum Initiative can be helped or hindered. The work ends with a chapter on seeking stability in the transition.

A set of twelve appendices enable other schools to follow along on their own initiatives, while the researcher can see the data used as the basis for this book and that occurred from this implementation of the writing-intensive curriculum. The appendices include the proposal, a pre-course questionnaire, an in-class memo assignment and peer review guide, assignment questions summary for a specific class, survey data from a

third year W-Course, categories for analyzing students' written responses, questions for structured interviews, a survey of arts faculty, a post-course questionnaire, CWIL Mandate, a constitution for a proposed Schedule A center, and the stages of a writing program development. An extensive list of references and a comprehensive index enable one to refer back to this work again and again to gain additional knowledge when considering or actually implementing such a program in their own university or college.

Written by the chair of a committee charged with evaluating the undergraduate curriculum and making recommendations to improve the education acquired by students, the work emphasizes "the essence of a good education lies in the acquisition of the ability to write well (which entails thinking clearly and communicating one's ideas in ways that can be understood by others), the acquisition of quantitative abilities (which implies an appreciation for logic), and exposure to the ideas and modes of inquiry in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities" (p. xi). The program developed and reported upon in this work assists other universities to support tax-payer expectations that students "acquire an expanded breadth of knowledge and an improved facility with numbers and words" (ibid).

A lengthy book with chapters that can become cumbersome to read without a more detailed table of contents, it at times feels as one is reading a technical report or a dissertation / thesis rather than something that can be read cover to cover. However, one can also look at this as a way to follow along with the experience at another institution, so as to almost "share" what is happening and see how someone else might have dealt with the issue. Filled with tips on what to do (and sometimes what not to do) and the order in which to proceed, this can be a valuable source, although parts might not apply to one's own institution, particularly as the higher education differs from country to country.

**Reviewed by Sara Rofofsky Marcus (saramrofsky@gmail.com), Queens College/CUNY.**

**Wise, Bob (2008). *Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth And Our Nation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

**Pages: 235    Price: \$24.95    ISBN: 978-0-470-18027-3**

A book written by a former governor and legislator, *Raising the Grade* offers real solutions to the declining performance of the nation's high schools. The candid view offers concrete data, examples, and a road map for our educators to follow if we want real secondary school improvement. Decades of neglect by our policy makers have left secondary schools struggling for life.

It is a call to action, so to speak, to get our federal government involved to adequately fund secondary education. Great examples are given where the majority of federal and state dollars are targeted to our elementary schools creating a huge gap in school performance. The author's observations are research based and the data supports his recommendations for the future. Readers are encouraged to use their influence to get the policy makers to take action. The author knows first hand that if real change is to take place, it will have to start with elected officials. Federal and state support is essential for critical issues to be addressed.

*Raising the Grade* should motivate us to take an active part in shaping the future of secondary schools. Wise clearly points out that we have a crisis in our high schools and there are serious implications for our nation if action is not taken. The author knows first hand how politics works, and his strategies for improvement can be accomplished if the policy makers get involved to make things happen at the secondary level.

Researchers and educators are working diligently to improve the schools, but more support and funding are necessary. It is essential that we, as a public, let our elected officials know that we want good high schools. The book also includes an Advocacy Action Matrix that outlines action steps to use when trying to influence policy makers.

A must read for educators, parents, politicians, and concerned citizens wanting to improve the quality of education for all students. It equips you to be an advocate for school improvement. Loaded with all the ammunition you will need to get your point across to those who vote to determine our educational future.

**Reviewed by Dr. David Lee, University of Southern Mississippi.**



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