Brief reviews for October 2008

Bramwell, Wendie & Doyle, Brooke Graham (2008). *The Power of Repeated Reading in Small Group Instruction.* New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 96   Price: $15.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-01209-6

In response to the National Reading Panel's report many school districts and teachers have become more conscious of using scientifically researched based reading strategies. Based on the findings of the report, one of the critical factors necessary for reading comprehension is repeated reading. The authors of *The Power of Repeated Reading*, Wendie Bramwell & Brooke Graham Doyle, have compiled a list of strategies for a specific type of repeated reading known as "dialogic reading." Dialogic reading involves multiple readings, in small group settings, with questioning and responding to children during the readings.

Having an understanding that a critical component of dialogic reading is the interactive behaviors between teachers and students gives us a framework with which to read this book. The authors do a remarkable job offering guidelines for organizing the classroom as well as selecting appropriate stories. Additionally, they provide book recommendations, suggestions for home/school connections, and an examination of the research. At the back of the book are three hand-out sheets as well as teacher reflection pages. The hand-outs are worth the price of the book by themselves; they give the teacher some guidelines on how to become familiar with dialogic reading and helpful suggestions for creating reading questions.

I do not want to trivialize the importance of dialogical reading with a superficial look at the authors' research. The opportunities for emotional growth as well as literacy development are evident when teachers choose books for repeated reading. Stories with emotional-social content present models for problem solving, interacting, and decision making. It allows children to have the opportunity to develop as individual readers while participating in an activity that leads to social competence. Bramwell and Doyle augment their credibility with a summary of the research surrounding dialogic reading.

As a Reading Specialist who is frequently a coach for classroom teachers I would use this book as a resource when discussing essential elements in a literacy program. Dialogic Reading is a strategy which offers students the opportunity to develop as readers and thinkers while promoting positive social skills; and this book gives teachers the groundwork to use this researched based strategy instantaneously

References

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction. (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Watson ED.D. student in curriculum and instruction at St. Louis University; Reading Specialist at Jamestown Elementary School, Hazelwood School District, Missouri.

Brighouse, Tim & Woods, David (2008). *What Makes A Good School Now?* London: Network Continuum.

Pages: 158   Price: $34.95   ISBN: 9781855390843

In an updated version of a book written 15 years ago on school improvement, (Brighouse, 1991), Brighouse and Woods do an excellent job of outlining the components necessary for an effective school. As the title indicates, it is a book about what makes a good school, and it certainly meets that criteria. However, if the reader is looking for some new and revolutionary breakthrough in what constitutes a good school, they will be disappointed.

The book is an easy read that should be of interest to anyone wanting to improve education. The real meat of the book deals with the concept of butterflies—the old adage that if all the butterflies in the Amazonian forest flap their wings at the same time it would create a hurricane thousands of miles away. As systems do things right, they will have a positive impact on others. It is a very good analogy that should be of interest to the reader.

The book reinforces the idea that real leadership matters. The background and experience of the authors lends credibility to the findings in the book. They take a practical approach to fixing our age old problem of improving our schools. It's this real life approach that makes the book interesting and a must read for people responsible for creating good schools. The section on what the authors call, "messy business" is very appropriate and timely because how leaders handle their messy business is often the distinguishing factor that keeps them from achieving high performance. High performers do certain things right, and the book does an excellent job of pointing those things out.

References

Brighouse, T. (1991). *What Makes a Good School?* Stafford: Network Educational.

Reviewed by David E. Lee, The University of Southern Mississippi.

Christensen, Clayton M.; Horn, Michael B. & Johnson, Curtis W. (2008). *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pages: 230   Price: $32.95   ISBN: 9780071592062

In recent decades, many organizations and individuals have proposed reforms to education. The unending sequence of proposals is evidence the improvements promised by advocates for reforms are not realized. Christensen, Horn, and Johnson appear to be proposing another educational reform that will follow the familiar pattern, but their book differs from those to which educators have become accustomed.

Few will dispute the author's observations made to begin the book. Historical and cultural traditions that inhibit educational change and the changing understandings of intelligence and learning are recognized by most educators. The authors proceed to the reasonable conclusion that schools in the twenty-first century will differ significantly from schools in the twentieth century, and the future of education depends on the systematic adoption of innovative practices.

Many educators will find the subsequent review of research focusing on the spread of innovative practices in other businesses and industries informative; this treatment of innovation is the book's unique contribution to the field of educational reform. The authors describe how forces within a well-established field of endeavor (of which eduction is an excellent example) prevent reforms, even those that will lead to necessary improvements in the field. In addition to reviewing trends that have been observed in other fields, the authors review how innovative practices can become established and then spread throughout a field of endeavor.

The authors include several chapters to propose innovative educational practices they believe will be central to twenty-first century education. Whereas Christensen, Horn, and Johnson argue convincingly for the need to reform education in innovative ways and they provide valuable lessons for those who seek to understand how to innovate in education, their proposed educational practices are not necessarily innovative. Experienced educators will recognize the practices promoted as innovative because they have been included in the series of reforms over the past decades.

The proposed practices include individualized courses delivered via computer networks, renewed attention to early education, renewed focus on research, and charter schools. Whereas these practices are likely to be a part of twenty- first century education, the authors do not describe how each is or can be innovative. Delivering courses using computer networks may be an innovative way to reach future goals, but without updated goals computerized instruction will not spur the reform we seek. Similar criticisms can be leveled against the cases made for the other proposed practices; the details of how the innovative practices must differ from previous efforts to reform education through those practices are missing.

Christensen, Horn, and Johnson establish the need for innovative practices in education. They share insights to help educators understand how innovation has occurred in other field of endeavor. They provide a structure that will help educators develop and share their innovative practices. They do not, however, provide guidance on innovative educational practices. Read this book to understand innovation and how it is disseminated; read other books to understand innovative education.

Reviewed by Gary L. Ackerman, a doctoral candidate in educational technology management at Northcentral University who has extensive experience in K-12 education.

Conklin, Tom (2008). *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers: 15 High-Interest, True Stories That Invite Students to Infer, Visualize, and Summarize to Predict the Ending of Each Story.* New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 80   Price: $12.99   ISBN: 978-0-43989-738-9

Perusing the titles of some of Tom Conklin's stories included in *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* is like browsing the blockbuster section of a video store: "Mars Attacks!," "Jane of the Apes," "Going for the Gold" to name a few of the fifteen stories. If *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* succeeds in nothing else, it passes the most important component of lesson development—the "hook 'em (the students) with something compelling and interesting" component. Rest assured this is not the extent of the usefulness of Conklin's text … it is only the beginning.

By producing *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers: 15 High-Interest, True Stories That Invite Students to Infer, Visualize, and Summarize to Predict the Ending of Each Story*, Conklin has created a resource that is practical and easy to use for teachers and learners. Targeted for grades fourth through eighth, Conklin begins his book with a brief page-and-a-half introduction of how teachers might use the book to help their readers infer, visualize, summarize and predict.

As with any solid reading instruction, the suggested lesson plan template to use with each story includes the following elements: pre-reading, group reading (during reading), the cliffhanger, and follow-up/assessment (post reading). Conklin uses another page-and-a-half for listing "Hot Web-Links" for further investigation on the stories presented. The rest of the eighty pages he devotes to the fifteen engaging stories themselves.

At the beginning of each narrative, Conklin offers a "For the Teacher" page with brief explanations or suggestions for curriculum connections, activating prior knowledge, discussing the events in the story, as well as topics about which to write. Also on this page, Conklin gives a summary of the cliffhanger, the results of the cliffhanger and a sidebar of vocabulary words imbedded in the text.

Grouped together into four sections titled "Real-life Heroes," "Explorers," "Eureka! Science Breakthroughs," and "Weird but True," Conklin's stories cover a variety of historical events, both recent and long ago. The stories cover a variety of content areas from physical education to media studies with all the regulars (social studies, science, language arts, etc.) in between. If ever there was a text geared for reading across the curriculum, *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* fits the bill. Furthermore, although it is far from being a "guys only" book, the nonfiction/high-action stories may appeal especially to male readers.

Conklin keeps the length of his paragraphs short and the pace of the stories quick. In fact, the longest story is a mere three pages, which may be another draw for reluctant readers. What's most impressive about the book, though, is how well written Conklin's retellings of the nonfiction stories are. Conklin adroitly blends the elements of strong narrative prose with the facts of history. Instead of merely describing historical accounts or reciting lived memories, Conklin engages the reader with the elements of fiction: character, setting, a conflicting situation that grows worse, and, of course, the climax, at which point Conklin suspends the story and inserts some form of a "What do you think happens next?" question. Conklin's lucid prose makes it inviting for readers to step inside the story world, which is something that most proficient readers do. The more cues a reader takes in to visualize a "secondary world," the more information that person has to make inferences and predictions.

On the other hand, as these stories are nonfiction about "real life" and real life is not very predictable, neither are the endings of Conklin's stories. Although some of the endings are upbeat and happy, like when the University of California Golden Bears football team returned a kickoff for a touchdown after time had expired, some endings don't turn out so well for the featured person. Take for instance the account of Robert Falcon Scott and his exploration's team quest to be the first people to visit the South Pole. These men overcome incredible obstacles of nature and physical limitations to arrive at the South Pole … only to find the Norwegians have beaten them. What's more, Robert Falcon Scott and his entire team were caught in a blizzard on the return trip to their base camp and froze to death in their tents. Their bodies weren't recovered until a year later.

An additional treat after each narrative in *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* is the follow-up information Conklin provides. Similar to Paul Harvey's "The Rest of the Story," this additional information affords readers the opportunity to explore topics further and deeper. The information also makes connections with the past to the present. For instance, in the follow-up to the account of the landmark lawsuit Brown v. Board of Education, Conklin makes the point that Americans still live with the effects of "separate but equal." This is especially relevant to our current presidential election in which a person of color and a woman are candidates for the highest elected positions in our country.

If Conklin were to revise *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers*, I would like to see a few print resources listed alongside Internet sites in the "Hot Web-Links" section. Although America certainly has arrived in the technological age, not everyone has access to the Internet and not everyone that has access to the Internet prefers to use it. Conklin does warn teachers that Internet locations and content can change over time, which can actually be a good thing if new information is learned about an event.

Bottom line, I recommend *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* to most teachers regardless of the grades they teach, or their content area. Although the suggested use for the text is fourth through eighth grade, Conklin's nonfiction narratives are interesting and engaging enough to be used with an even wider range of ages and certainly across the curriculum. Since reading is a skill necessary for all subject areas and one that we never stop developing, used correctly *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* possesses the potential to be a powerful tool. This I know to be true for I have made *Nonfiction Comprehension Cliffhangers* a part of my upper- division university reading/writing methods class.

Reviewed by Shannon D. Collins, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Literacy, Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville, TN.

Culham, Ruth (2008). *Inside the Writing Traits Classroom K-2 Lessons on DVD.* New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 48 pp. +34 minutes   Price: $24.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-04639-8

Inside the Writing Traits Classroom K-2 by Ruth Culham consists of a 34-minute DVD and a book of accompanying lesson materials. Six lessons, covering ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and presentation, are the focus of the video. The book contains an additional lesson not shown on the video. It is on writing conventions and discusses punctuation.

All of the lessons were videorecorded in first grade classrooms with real teachers and real students. The lessons are intended to demonstrate for teachers how to explain, in terms that first graders can grasp and remember, the writing traits that have become known collectively as "six traits" (though there are seven, now). In the lessons, the students also get the opportunity to try out the trait in a way that is appropriate to the level of most first graders. Because the DVD is only 34 minutes and covers six traits, the viewer doesn't get to see the students enact the learning in much detail, though an attempt has been made to compress time so that the outcome of the lesson is apparent. Additionally, for each lesson, appropriate children's literature is used to exemplify the trait, and the resource book suggests other titles that could be used to extend the lesson.

The DVD and book provide an adequate introduction to the six traits as they apply to primary classrooms in which the focus is on teaching students the meaning and vocabulary of the six traits, rather than on using the traits as an assessment tool. Additional professional resources are listed (including a more comprehensive set of DVDs covering the traits in more depth) so that teachers can learn more.

Reviewed by Sylvia Read, Ph.D., Graduate Faculty Advisor, Utah State University.

Cushman, Kathleen & Rogers, Laura (2008). *Fires in the Middle School Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from Middle Schoolers.* New York: The New Press.

Pages: 219   Price: $24.95   ISBN: 978-1-59558-111-2

A much sought after follow up to a similarly titled book for teachers of high school students, *Fires in the Middle School Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from Middle Schoolers* identifies the differences between middle schoolers and high school students in their responses to the social issues and pressures they face in school. Like their high school counterparts, middle schoolers "bring their social world and their many personal preoccupations into the classroom with them" (p. 5). Cushman and Rogers have written a book whose appeal crosses socio-economic boundaries to speak to big-city public middle school teachers as well as their

suburban, rural and independent school counterparts.

Any teacher who has wondered how best to meet the seemingly inconsistent needs of early adolescent students will benefit from hearing the students' words on what they need from their teachers. The authors, recognizing the inconsistencies in the ways the students "frame their concerns," "place what middle-grade students say into the frame of early adolescent development" (p.4). They understand that this stage in adolescent development is rife with "complicated thoughts, feelings and interactions" (p. 4). For example, they show how the same students who want to be treated as mature and serious students, still want to have recess like they did in elementary school. Another example that illustrates what the authors have labeled "the continual back-and-forth" is that of students who want the teacher's acknowledgement and recognition for something they have done right, but would rather the teacher did not show this in front of their peers. Cushman and Rogers encourage teachers of middle schoolers to keep these ambivalences in mind as they read the text.

The layout of the book, including the choice of font, seem to have been deliberately chosen to not only reflect the ages of the subjects, but to appeal to middle school readers who may be curious to learn what their peers are saying. I believe this makes for easy reading for young adolescents who would not ordinarily pick up a text written for teachers. I commend the authors for their decision to "remain true to [the students'] voices" (p. 7). Readers of this book will enjoy hearing from children who are the "experts" on what they need from their teachers. It goes without saying that if this book were written by middle school teachers, their notion of student needs would be markedly different. For example, when students talk about instruction, it is not in the same context that their teachers would have. Instead, their discussions of instruction center on feelings— mostly how they feel about their teachers and how their teachers make them feel (p. xiii).

In order to bridge a possible disconnect between the students' suggestions and actual implementation, the authors include exercises to aid teachers in lesson and classroom planning. For example, on p. 34, the authors provide an example of what middle schoolers want to know on the first day of school. By hearing from the students what their first-day-of-school needs are, teachers are better equipped to make the adjustment process a smoother one for their students. In other words, they are able to plan with the students' suggestions in mind. Another example of an exercise is "Who Are You?: A Questionnaire for Students" (p. 47), which will help teachers get to know their students better with questions like "Do you like this subject?" and " Is there anything that makes this class especially hard for you?"

The authors address the limitations of this study which are inevitable since the study "rests firmly on the words of the students" (p. 7). These limitations are mainly the seemingly narrow treatment of issues that middle school teachers may consider most important, but I believe this has been remedied by the major theme that runs through the text—that these students will be better served when teachers know what they are thinking.

The book ends with a reminder to teachers that they will all have to eventually discover their own best practices. Since "the statements and behavior of early adolescence do not organize into neat categories or simple prescriptions" (p. 194), teachers will have to closely observe the students they teach over time and use the voices of the students in this book as a guide to understanding what their students are doing and saying, even as their students shift and change with time.

Reviewed by Chinwe Okpalaoka, doctoral candidate in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership, College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University. Her areas of interest include immigrant education, ethnic identity development and curriculum reform.

Delpit, Lisa & Dowdy, Joanne K., Editors (2008). *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom.* **New York: The New Press.**

Pages: 229   Price: $17.95   ISBN: 978-1-59558-350-5

Delpit's work never ceases to impress me. In this compilation, Delpit and Dowdy present various essays on the perceptions of language and the roles such perceptions can play in the classroom. The editors and contributing authors suggest that language is as visible a marker as skin color. The book's premise is that people make assumptions about a person's class, status, intelligence, etc. based on their language. Given that standard English is the language of power reflecting the culture of dominance, any other language whether it be ebonics or a foreign language is deemed as secondary or even, inferior. The implications for such thinking in schools can be detrimental to non-standard English speakers in regard to equity and expectations.

The book is organized into three main parts: (1) Language and Identity, (2) Language in the Classroom, and (3) Teacher Knowledge. In addition to Delpit and Dowdy, other contributing scholars include Ernie Smith,

Judith Baker, Michael Stubbs, Asa G. Hillard III, Gloria J. Ladson-Billings, Victoria Purcell-Gates , Herbert Kohl, Geneva Smitherman, Shuaib Meacham, and Joan Wynne. This is a pertinent collection of articles that can be used in any methodology or research course, addressing culture and language. I found each article to be well-written, concise, and common sense. Having stated this, my biggest question is: How do we change people's attitudes and beliefs? Such action requires a shift in paradigm from deficit to difference. How do we successfully and effectively do this? The book provides a good rationale but it doesn't offer a systemic plan of action, a policy.

The book does, however, present a lot of anecdotes and practical implications; as such, it will appeal to practitioners and pre-service teachers as it is very practitioner-friendly and oriented; it's not heavy on the research and theory. Collectively, the authors offer suggestions for schools to be more responsive; these suggestions include changing teacher attitudes toward languages by adopting a more additive approach, connecting students to the school curricula, having students conduct language studies, etc.

In today's educational political climate in which a lot of attention is being paid to English language learners, this book has a lot of applicability even though it focuses more on ebonics. One can draw many parallels. African- American children practicing ebonics have similar issues to English language learners practicing their native languages in regard to how they are treated in schools. The book posits that one of the biggest obstacles to these children's learning is public perception. Teacher attitudes, in particular, play a significant role in the language learning of children. Delpit writes, "I propose that the negative responses to the children's home language on the part of the adults around them insures that they will reject the school's language and everything else the school has to offer" (p. 47).

There were several common threads weaving all the essays. First, as aforementioned, language is a cultural marker in that it allows people to make judgments about one's cognitive ability and socio-economic status. Second, there is an understanding that social and economic success depends upon the ability to learn and acquire the language of power. Third, to that end, educators must have a respect for and encourage the maintenance of the mother tongue. Fourth, children ultimately decide whether or not they want to learn another language; this is not a choice a teacher makes. Thus, appealing to their needs and interests would be much more effective than traditional, prescriptive, teacher-oriented practices. Fifth, language consists of more than just knowing and speaking words and phrases. Language is in itself a culture in that it consists of various language behaviors and linguistic competences (p. 21). In other words, pragmatics are essential, as evidenced by code- switching. As practitioners, we need to support children in navigating between three types of English (Baker): home, formal, professional. Children are naturally adept at code-switching as some of the anecdotes intimated; however, practitioners are not employing their natural abilities effectively. In general, schools need to do a better job of educating children whose first language is not standard English.

I was very excited to be reviewing Delpit's work and I am happy to write that *The Skin That We Speak* did not disappoint. I am a fan of hers and continue to be. This book is a must-read for teachers who work with non-standard-English speaking students.

Reviewed by Virginia S. Loh, who received her doctorate in education at SDSU- USD. Her dissertation was a qualitative study on the cultural authenticity of Asian-American children's literature. She is a published children's book author with Candlewick Press, an adjunct professor at the University of San Diego and National University, and a former elementary school teacher.

Doyle, Mary Beth (2008). *The Paraprofessional's Guide to the Inclusive Classroom: Working as a Team.* **Third edition. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.**

Pages: 173   Price: $29.95   ISBN: 01-55766-924-4

This book serves as a timely and valuable resource for school teams. Paraprofessionals are being hired in increasing numbers to support the needs of students receiving special education services in our schools. Of current concern is the high rate of turnover among paraprofessionals resulting in loss of productivity, inconsistent programming for students, and increased costs incurred by the school districts, school, and classes (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007). Critical in the retention of paraprofessionals is "creating a culture of respect and collaboration, striving for manageable assignments and schedules, and fostering job-embedded learning" (Ghere & York-Barr, p. 30).

Author Mary Beth Doyle, Associate Professor of Education at Saint Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont, has written a practical, comprehensive book for educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals. The utilization of paraprofessional support to deliver special educational services to students identified with disabilities is growing at a steady rate in schools today and yet their roles are often not clearly communicated or supported. Schools rely on the support and sometimes instruction that paraprofessionals provide. Doyle's purpose seems clear from the outset of the book; *The Paraprofessional's Guide to the Inclusive Classroom:*

Working as a Team (3rd Edition) is offered as a tool for bringing together teams, particularly, engaging paraprofessionals in the process. A clear message is continuously given by the author: paraprofessionals need clear communication regarding their roles.

The six chapter book is recommended by the author as a guide for professional development for all members of the team to engage in together. The discussion generated from the text is meant to guide K-12 teams in identifying their own needs and solutions while offering numerous probing questions, activities, suggestions, examples, vignettes, and research findings. The professional team would include the general education teacher, the special education teacher, and the paraprofessional. Topics for discussion include the changing role of the paraprofessional, being a team member in an inclusive classroom, supporting students through instruction and positive behavior support, and confidentiality issues.

The book has several strengths. First, each chapter offers explicit support for paraprofessional self-advocacy. The author provides exact wording to help paraprofessionals engage with teachers in a professional and positive way to get the guidance they need to best support students. A foundation for continual communication is set early in the book when the teachers and paraprofessionals sit together to complete assessments and checklists on roles and expectations. These are included as reproducible forms in the text. Second, promoting self- advocacy for paraprofessionals through communication is a key construct, giving paraprofessionals specific ideas with examples on communicating effectively with teachers. And finally, practical and clear examples provide readers with an actual plan (e.g. making accommodations, problem solving "on the fly," and defining roles).

The role of paraprofessionals utilized to facilitate instruction in classrooms is a critical one, particularly with schools increasing reliance on their support. This book serves as a valuable tool for school teams to begin building open communication between paraprofessional and teachers.

References

Ghere, G., & York-Barr, J. (2007). Paraprofessional turnover and retention in inclusive programs: hidden costs and promising practices. *Remedial & Special Education, 28,* 21-32.

Reviewed by Wendy P. Oakes, Doctoral Fellow in Special Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, Arizona State University.

Green, Reginald Leon (2009). *Practicing the Art of Leadership: A Problem-Based Approach to Implementing the ISLLC Standards.* **Third edition. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.**

Pages: 288   Price: $39.00   ISBN: 9780131599734

I have had the pleasure of utilizing Reginald Green's *Practicing the Art of Leadership: A Problem-Based Approach to Implementing the ISLLC Standards*, 2nd edition for the past two years and am looking forward to using Green's 3rd edition of the text this fall. Green's book is one of the secondary texts in my graduate level Introduction to Organization Leadership course at Rider University. Unlike many other texts on leadership, the book provides a comfortable balance between the presentation of various leadership theories and opportunities for students to apply the leadership theories presented to real-life scenarios and vignettes.

I have found that my graduate students are able to easily understand fundamental leadership theories because Green is masterful at clearly summarizing the essence of each theory. However, if it is the intent of the instructor to use a text that provides a great deal of depth and detail regarding leadership theory, *Practicing the Art of Leadership* alone would not suffice despite the fact that Green has added more leadership theory to his third edition. The Green text can and should be viewed as the perfect supplemental text because of its scenarios and vignettes where students are required to apply leadership theories to their decision making process.

The presentation of leadership theories is organized into seven chapters based on the following themes: standards and school leadership, creating a framework for leadership, developing a collaborative school culture, enhancing leadership through effective communication, decision making, managing conflict, and instructional leadership and change. This thematic organization of topics and leadership theories helps facilitate the organization of the essential topics that should be addressed in any introductory course in school leadership. Each chapter also includes two school scenarios related to the overall theme of the chapter, providing the instructor with several perfect opportunities for small group discussions followed by a large group debriefing.

Green's third edition of *Practicing the Art of Leadership: A Problem- Based Approach to Implementing the ISLLC Standards* features a number of quality upgrades. In addition to strengthening the theoretical concepts

presented in each chapter, additional scenarios have been added to each chapter. Suggested readings are updated and this edition adds website addresses. Ancillary support materials such as tables, charts, and PowerPoint presentations can be accessed by instructors on the Companion Website.

Overall, I am extremely pleased with the revisions made in the third edition of *Practicing the Art of Leadership: A Problem-Based Approach to Implementing the ISLLC Standards* and would highly recommend this text for use in any introductory leadership course. It is both a theoretical and practical resource.

Reviewed by Dr. JoAnn P. Susko, Assistant Professor, Department of Graduate Education, Leadership, and Counseling, Rider University.

Hoyt, Linda & Therriault, Teresa (2008). *Mastering the Mechanics, Grades 2-3: Ready-to-Use Lessons for Modeled, Guided, and Independent Editing.* New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 192   Price: $21.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-04878-1

Mastering the Mechanics is a useful tool for literacy coordinators and classroom teachers alike who work with second and third grade students. In this user-friendly book, Hoyt and Therriault walk readers through several teaching cycles designed to scaffold students toward successful independent use of the editing process, conventions of print, grammar, and spelling. In addition, the book provides helpful resources to use in the lessons and to assess student progress. Throughout the book, the authors frame attention to conventions and mechanics as tools that students can use to improve the communicative value and quality of their own writing, not as tools to fix "mistakes." Additionally, a large portion of the book is grounded in students own writing or trade books teachers use in the classroom, making this a natural addition to existing instruction in writing, reading, and the content areas.

Mastering the Mechanics is divided into five sections: section one introduces the purposes, features, and structure of the book; section two addresses the skills continuum, giving the reader an idea of when it is most appropriate to introduce or teach the skills and strategies presented; section three provides a multitude of instructional cycles designed to scaffold students knowledge and use of various mechanical processes; and sections four and five provide resources to support instruction and assessment. The layout of the book makes it easy to quickly find and read about topics of interest—ideal for busy teachers.

Section one begins by stating the authors' goals in writing this book, which are to guide teachers to "'nurture writers who understand that rich, well- crafted messages are their first and most important focus"(p. 7) and to help them guide children to understand that the purpose of working on mechanics and conventions is to build a battery of tools that help them enhance their messages, not fix what is "wrong" with their writing. They go on to make recommendations about focusing on meaning, viewing reading and writing as reciprocal processes, the importance of modeling, creating a rich environment for writing, and teaching and assessment cycles. Throughout the section, each point is illustrated with relevant anecdotes, illustrations, and sample work, making all suggestions concrete and easy to visualize in a working classroom. The second section introduces the skills continuum, outlining the approximate development and appropriate instruction time frames for each of the skills in the book, as well as other complimentary skills. The majority of skills listed as appropriate for second and third graders are addressed in the book, and corresponding page numbers are conveniently listed next to each.

Lesson Cycles for Mastering the Mechanics is the next section, comprising the bulk of the book. In this section, a three day lesson cycle is introduced for each teaching point, which includes modeling the focus point, guided practice, and independent practice. In addition, each cycle includes suggestions for assessing student progress and extension ideas. Lesson cycles cover the editing process, capitalization, grammar, punctuation, utilization of page space, spelling, and combining strategies. All lessons are designed in a way that allows authentic student, teacher, or class writing samples to be used, but alternative writing samples are also included as resources. The sections are arranged by topic, but need not be read/taught linearly. One of the strengths of this book is the fact that the lessons can be rearranged by teachers to fit the needs of their students and school curricula. While teachers can certainly use any of the lessons, it is also possible to pick and choose specific lessons based on student, teacher, or classroom needs.

The final two sections of the book provide a variety of resources to support teaching and assessment. The teaching tools section includes resources designed for student use such as high-frequency word lists, templates that students can fill in and use as resources (e.g., lists of transition words and examples from text, classification of verb types, classification of parts of speech, etc.), and interest inventories, as well as teacher planning resources. Section five, Assessment and record keeping, also includes resources for both students and teachers. For students, there is a wide variety of pre-made editing checklists and self-assessments. Teacher assessment resources include cloze passages, checklists for each lesson cycle, and sample sentences that students can edit in order to assess their learning of specific lesson content.

Mastering the Mechanics is an accessible resource to supplement writing instruction in grades 2 and 3. While it is certainly not a rigid or scripted resource, readers will appreciate developmentally appropriate examples of language to use when introducing and explaining each concept to students in meaningful ways. This book is a valuable library addition for any second or third grade teacher looking for lesson ideas that ground students' learning of conventions and mechanics in the writing and reading that happen everyday in their classrooms.

Reviewed by Kathryn Roberts, a former elementary school teacher and a doctoral student in the Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy Program at Michigan State University. Her research interests include early literacy, authentic literacy, and family involvement.

Hoyt, Linda & Therriault, Teresa (2008). *Mastering the Mechanics, Grades 4-5: Ready-to-Use Lessons for Modeled, Guided, and Independent Editing.* **New York: Scholastic.**

Pages: 192   Price: $21.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-04879-6

Many books on literacy (Hennings, 2002; Buckner, 2005) emphasize the importance of using mini-lessons. Although the concept seems simple, that is, a brief lesson, usually 5-10 minutes, which includes modeling, guided, and independent practice; it has been my experience with both pre-service and in- service teachers that writing mini-lessons can be difficult. An effective mini- lesson is focused, each part must relate to the essential question, and, by definition, must be "mini" or brief. For some teachers, writing a regular lesson plan appears to be less challenging than writing a mini-lesson because of the time constraint and focus required of a mini-lesson. Writing daily mini-lessons can be time consuming for teachers. Fortunately, for both experienced and novice teachers, resources, such as the series *Mastering the Mechanics: Ready-to-Use Lessons for Modeled, Guided, and Independent Editing* are available. This review is for the book aimed at grades 4-5. The stated goals of *Mastering the Mechanics* (p. 7) are:

1. To nurture writers who understand that rich, well-crafted messages are their first and most important focus.
2. To help children understand that a study of mechanics and conventions is about adding tools that enhance our messages, not just about correcting and being "right."

Hoyt and Therriault offer a quick review of why strategies, such as rereading during drafting and editing, using an editing checklist, and lifting text, are important before moving on to the main purpose of the book: providing ready-to-use mini-lessons. Although the focus of the book is on editing and mechanics, defined as "periods, capital letters, and so on" (p. 7), in reality, the stages of the writing process often blur. Editing is more than mechanics; editing and revising are often recursive and not linear. The mini-lessons in this book are designed to help students become more engaging writers. The authors seem to have a broader view of writing than is indicated by the title of the book.

As mentioned earlier, writing mini-lessons can be challenging and time consuming for teachers. Hoyt and Therriault provide writing samples for modeling. However, the samples are not provided in the appendix or on the Scholastic website. They suggest that teachers use their own writings in these lessons. Some pieces are meant to be "think-alouds" and created during the lesson. However, when the lesson includes a piece written ahead of time, one might expect a "ready-to-use lesson" to be just that, ready to use. Student samples in the guided practice section are provided, but many of them show editing and revisions. Again, it is probably better to use student samples from the teacher's own classroom. However, for the teacher who wants to incorporate more mini-lessons during writer's workshop and does not have student samples from either current or previous years at his/her fingertips, it would be helpful to have some provided that are not already "marked up."

Mastering the Mechanics is a relatively inexpensive, easy-to-follow guide for the teacher who is searching for minilessons for improving student writing through editing. As mentioned, the teacher should be aware that some of the ready-to-use lessons may require some advance preparation.

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Reviewed by Janet Lewis, an elementary school literacy coach in Gwinnett County (Georgia) Public Schools and an adjunct professor at Brenau University, Gainesville, Georgia. Dr. Lewis earned her Ph.D in Language Education from the University of Georgia.

Killgallon, Don & Killgallon, Jenny (2008). *Story Grammar for Elementary School: A Sentence-Composing Approach, a Student Worktext.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 120   Price: $12.00   ISBN: 978-0-325-01246-9

Story Grammar for Elementary School is an extremely useful and welcome work designed to teach some of the most elusive aspects of writing, such as the very structure of our language itself. This text is an informative, supportive and interactive book valuable for any student in upper elementary school. The language used in the teaching components is clear, directive and humorous. It could also be used in middle school settings where there is student need.

The process of a sentence-composing approach drew my attention immediately. If there is one area of English and writing which provides blocks and hurdles for students and teachers alike, it is grammar. The familiar didactic teaching approaches are often so unhelpful, turning the attention of writers to narrower and narrower aspects of language. They lead to little more than tedious and taxing enterprises for all. These approaches rarely address the concerns of students most in need. This book solves many such problems and opens the way for important learning.

The Killgallons have created a text in the likeness of William Strong's (1973) sentence-combining approach to teaching grammar, but with welcome and needed additional features. Students are led to create complex sentences in a manner similar to Strong's method of providing models and then short sentences to combine. In this case, there is greater guidance and more interesting pieces with which to work. *Story Grammar for Elementary School* uses complicated sentences from the very best works of children's literature as model sentences and in the exercises. The reference list at the back of the text provides several pages of the best children's and young adult reading which seems to emphasize J.K. Rowling's advice to aspiring writers, "Read as much as you can, I think that there is nothing as important, because that will really show you what makes good writing in your opinion…" (2005, ¶28).

Chapter 1, "Story Grammar," introduces the importance of grammar as the structure which holds together the language of a story. Next "Imitating Story Sentences" provides models of excellently written sentences broken into meaningful chunks and practice for students in making the divisions. Then, instead of providing three short sentences to reconstruct into a composite one, as the sentence-combining approach typically demands, the Killgallons separate pieces of excellent sentences and ask the student to reconstruct them by putting the pieces in the correct order.

For example, after a model such as "Tobias, the remaining member of our group, was about a hundred feet above us, floating on a nice warm current of air"(p. 5). The student is asked to re-order sentences such as the following, "a. was a step behind us, b. Vera, c. the shortest girl in the class, d. struggling with her loose, new pair of shoes"(p. 5). The student would then write a sentence in the manner of the model, "Vera, the shortest girl in the class, was a step behind us, struggling with her loose, new pair of shoes." Thus the student is led to observe the model closely and recreate similar sentences based on that model, without having to generate those sentences from scratch. The book models an excellent approach to providing gradually increasing difficulty in learning and creative responsibility for the student.

The "Sentence Parts" chapter begins with a simple explanation and a set of practices with subjects and predicates, moving on to "tools"—a word, phrase, or clause qualifying something to make the sentence "more interesting and stylish" (p. 18). The authors demonstrate the power of tools with sentences from well-known works compared to what the same sentence would be, stripped of the tools. For example, compare these two:

> 4a. Stanley thought about his great-grandfather.
> 4b. Walking across the desolate wasteland, Stanley thought about his great- grandfather, the guy who was robbed by Kissin' Kate Barlow. (p. 18)

The practice activities which follow use matching, unscrambling, and adding tools to lead the student-reader towards progressively more complex identification and creation of well-written sentences. Next, the Killgallons identify increasingly challenging tools to add; from word, to phrase, to clause. This is followed by practice identifying sentence types and imitating authors' use of these, adding tools to base sentences. A review ends this chapter and every other, reiterating the ideas demonstrated and practiced and transitioning nicely into the next chapter.

"Sentence Positions" demonstrates the next important aspect of adding tools to sentences: their placement as an opener, subject-verb split in the middle of a sentence, or as a closer at the end. Again, practice develops steadily from identification of which sentence model is being used, to matching, and finally creating new sentences modeled on the use of similar tools. Integration is achieved with the previous chapter by

demonstrating and providing practice using word, phrase, and clause tools in varying positions. This leads students neatly from modeling and imitating well-constructed sentences to experimenting with creating their own.

The work is summarized and put together in "Writing Story Sentences," where overall planning including setting, character and plot, is demonstrated. With the requirement to use some of these new writing tools, students are directed to create their own story paragraph to practice the skills of writing learned through working with this text.

Story Grammar for Elementary School is a highly useful text providing powerful tools for learning some of the most complex aspects of good writing in a comfortable and interesting manner. The Killgallons are to be commended on their excellent student worktext. I am sure this text will be put to excellent use in many classrooms where the ending list of books in "Your Invisible Teachers" will also be read and re-read many times.

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Reviewed by Thomas A. Caron, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, East Carolina University

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Obiakor, Festus E. (2008). *100 Multicultural Proverbs: Inspirational Affirmations for Educators.* **Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.**

In *100 Multicultural Proverbs: Inspirational Affirmations for Educators*, Professor Festus E. Obiakor shares with his reader thought- provoking proverbs and notes that help advance their meaning. Divided into four chapters, the book is expertly written, confirming what Jacob U. Gordon asserts in the foreword; that the author's "selection of proverbs and the conceptual framework for the book are, to say the least, powerful" (p. xi). As a reader and reviewer, I find this book to be of exceptional value. Beyond the assembling of proverbs from different cultures and countries, this book will serve as Obiakor's contribution to humanity's search for peaceful coexistence in both the classroom and intellectual discourse. THe proverbs can be used to examine the human character, the universality of wisdom, leadership and education.

The concept behind the book is fascinating. I believe Obiakor's book embodies his ideas as summed up in the Preface, "My belief is that the complexity of the world's problem calls for new ways of thinking, discussing, sharing, teaching, and learning. In addition, I am convinced that we need to go back to… traditional and multicultural ways of using words, sharing ideas, and solving problems to build and sustain communities" (p. xiii). With this book, Obiakor has published material that will surely challenge us, inspire us, and make us find new ways of interpreting our differences as human beings.

As I read the book I was satisfied with the author's selection of proverbs, and the brief explanations that provide key meanings for readers. For example, in chapter 1, where we are introduced to proverbs that teach self- responsibility, the first proverb stated covers a classic case of the human character. "If everyone loves you, you will not know who poisoned you" is a timeless example of the way human nature dictates people's actions. Obiakor's explanation to this proverb: "In education and in life, people make tough decisions that are sometimes unpopular. Good leaders are frequently respected for their ability to move the system or organization forward, even when their decisions are not popular" (p. 1). This statement is true, and it can be linked to a myriad of events that have social, political, cultural and historical ramifications. Nelson Mandela led the ANC party during apartheid's reign in South Africa, despite being unpopular in the eyes of the ruling class.

Chapter 2, titled "Proverbs That Teach Collaboration and Consultation," is the perfect antidote for students, educators, and professionals who fail to find value in listening or collaborating. This section of the book provides many useful ideas that might help build healthy relationships in the workplace, the classroom, and in administration. Take, for example, the proverb "Life is in the ears." Common sense teaches us that listening is the link to understanding. I believe this is what the author attempts to explain in his brief note that interprets this proverb: "Active listening is one of the basic ingredients of human communications and interactions. When we listen, we build communities. Great educators and leaders listen to students, parents,

colleagues, supervisors, communities, and governments" (p. 26). The author's message here is clear: active listening helps to establish effective human communication and interactions that involve more than one viewpoint or group.

Chapter 3 deals with proverbs that teach spirituality. I read the proverbs in this section with keen interest. Although most of the proverbs referenced in this section are linked to Christianity, they are readily assessable and meaningful to readers of any religious affiliation. For example, the proverb "When you eat with the devil, you must use a long spoon" is explained as: "You must be careful about your actions and how these actions positively or negatively affect you and others" (p. 51). For me, this is a universal truth. Steadfastness in one's dealings with the world, and absolute awareness of what Obiakor terms one's "strengths and weaknesses" are key lessons shared by this proverb.

In chapter 4 we are introduced to proverbs that teach other life lessons. As in previous sections, the quests for universal truths in human interactions come into play. However, the author's infusion of humor and the range of topics in this section provide a diversity of helpful lessons for people of all ages and professionals from different walks of life. For example, the proverb "When a poor person is told what it takes to be rich, he might prefer to remain poor" is both a piece of wisdom and a note of warning. In the author's notes he states: "It is always important to speak the truth; however, the truth can be scary to hear sometimes. There is difference between fact and fiction. Good educators must look for innovative ways to confront reality; and good leaders must be tactful and empathetic on how they tell the truth" (p. 78). This proverb is inspired by the need to share the value of truth.

In conclusion, *100 Multicultural Proverbs: Inspirational Affirmations for Educators* fulfills the author's purpose and provides a healthy read for any reader seeking education, leadership guidance, and wisdom. I enjoyed reading this book. The proverbs selected have meanings with lasting effects and provide readers with learning tools that enhance human life.

Reviewed by Dike Okoro, a critic and scholar of African literature, and a professor of World Literature at Olive Harvey College, Chicago. HeÊstudied atÊChicago State University, where he received his MA (African American literature) and MFA (Creative Writing) degrees.

Opitz, Michael F. & Ford, Michael P. (2008). *Do-able Differentiation: Varying Groups, Texts, and Supports to Reach Readers.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 148   Price: $19.50   ISBN: 0325012830

Do-able Differentiation provides a research-based look at the many facets of differentiating instruction. Information in this book can be adapted to almost any grade level or content classroom. Chapter 1 contains the major definitions currently being used in schools as well as an overview of all the different ways children might need instruction to be modified. Definitions are based upon the work of Tomlinson (1999) who defines differentiated instruction as the teacher's response to student needs, and Jensen (2007) who considers learning styles, "learning modalities, social conditions, complexity of the content and available resources" (p. 1). Schwartz and Kluth's (2007) work also looks at the affective needs of students. Therefore, throughout the chapter, learner characteristics are charted by learning styles, thinking styles, affective styles and developmental levels. Separate charts are included for characteristics of English Language Learners in all the varying stages of acquiring a new language. Finally, the eight common characteristics of exemplary teachers are discussed. Charts give a reader profile, reading characteristics of that profile, and on some charts, suggestions for intervention. All charts are explained in more detail throughout the chapter. Subsequent chapters also contain excellent charts which clearly delineate the important ideas and information within those chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a general overview of possible classroom grouping structures; relating those structures to the learner characteristics charted in Chapter 1. Subsequent chapters discuss the commonalities and differences between various ways of organizing reading instruction. Information on Jigsaw grouping, literature circles and readers' workshop are highlighted. The authors feel that these organizational structures for teaching reading are not used by some teachers who are less familiar with how they work and how to match them to student needs. This text explains clearly how to do just that by relating information on the organizational structures to the information provided in chapters 1 and 2 about learner needs and characteristics as well as teacher characteristics and grouping suggestions. Each chapter on organizing for instruction also contains sample lessons and suggested texts

The final chapter in the book provides answers to questions posed by many teachers trying differentiated instruction for the first time. The text authors point out that it is impossible to differentiate every lesson for every possible minute of every day!! There aren't enough hours in the day! In a question/answer format, they cover how to put all of the information together to meet the needs of children in an on-going fashion

throughout the school year.

Appendices provide professional resources, a compendium of children's literature cited in the text, and blank lesson plan forms which teachers may copy for classroom use. Professional resources are divided by category so it is easy to find information on a given topic. Some topics included are flexible grouping, learning centers, and web sites which deal with differentiation. Lesson Plan forms are included for each of the organizational structures for teaching reading that this book covers.

This is an excellent book for a teacher's professional bookshelf. It is easy to read and easy to understand. The many charts allow information to be found quickly and utilized easily in a classroom setting. Suggestions throughout the book can be implemented in most classrooms even by inexperienced teachers. At the same time, this book could easily be used as a supplemental text for college courses on the teaching of reading at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. I highly recommend this book to teachers at all levels as well as anyone who teaches methods courses in reading at the college level.

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Tomlinson, C. (1999). The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reviewed by Dr. Lynda Robinson, Associate Professor, Department of Education, School of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Cameron University. Her fields of expertise are early childhood, reading, and children's literature. She been instrumental in developing the graduate program in Reading at Cameron University and teaches Primary Reading in the Undergraduate Elementary Education program. Her current research interests involve multicultural children's literature and early literacy.

Pollock, Mica, editor (2008). *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real About Race in School.* **New York: The New Press.**

Pages: 389   Price: $24.95   ISBN: 978-1-59558-054-2

> Could the underlying cause of minority male students wandering school halls be the racist policies or assumptions of school faculty and staff? (Chapter 5)
> Should the ability of an ESL student to translate/explain lessons in his/her classmate's native language be valued as an academic skill? (Chapter 19)
> Is silence a sign of a minority student's disengagement, lack of understanding, or reflection? (Chapter 40)
> Is it the duty of an antiracist educator to call attention to colleagues' lack of respect or unconscious racism, to be a lone crusader for equality? (Chapter 61)
> Could the underlying cause of minority male students wandering school halls be the racist policies or assumptions of school faculty and staff? (Chapter 5)
> How does an educator, especially a non-African-American educator, respond to students' use of the "n" word? (Chapter 51)
> Should we use the term "Caucasian"? (Chapter 3)

These are some of the questions addressed in *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real About Race in School*. This collection of short, accessible essays examines many aspects of race through the perspectives of practitioners, teacher educators, researchers, and other academics. Mica Pollock, author of *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School* (20094) edited the collection whose goal is as she writes in the "Suggestions for Using This Book" section (p. xiii),

> Every day educators trying to deal with race in school encounter a classic American quandary. If we want schools to be vehicles for countering racial inequality, when and how should we be "colorblind," and how and when should we be "race conscious"? For this book I asked over sixty researchers to get real about this basic question.

Each chapter covers a different aspect of anti-racism and is followed by a series of questions under the headings: "principle" (the core principle of the essay); "strategy" (strategies mentioned in the article that may be useful); and "try tomorrow" (actions or solutions the reader would try in his/her educational situation to foster antiracism).

The selections often contain references to other parts of the volume that cover related topics or aspects of the subject making the book seem to be an integrated whole rather than a pastiche of articles. Excellent resource lists of recent articles, books, media, and websites also follow each essay. The end of the book contains a compendium of antiracist strategies culled from all the chapters. There is also a list of footnotes, a reference list, and an index.

The book is arranged in sections that begin with an examination of the concept and theory of race. Then the disparate national and linguistic groups who make up racial groups such as those designated as Asians, Arabs, Caucasians, Indians, Eskimo, African-Americans among others and the effect of race theories and racial beliefs on them are examined. The sections that follow explore how race and perceptions of race affect school experiences, curriculum, school community members, and communication between students, educators, and local communities. Because race can be an amorphous, fluid concept, the book also covers members of various ethnicities and their changing racial identification, and members of non-valued linguistic groups. The diversity of experiences, perspectives and research covered in these essays matches the diversity of experience and backgrounds of the sixty-four contributors. In several instances the contributors are members of the group being discussed. These often personal reflections which have engendered research and reflective practice create some of the most incisive essays.

The information in this volume allows readers to critically examine and reflect on their racial beliefs, assumptions, and practices without demonization. The activities within the book precipitate contemplation and consideration of strategies for change and action. This volume is a good beginning point for introductory courses on multicultural education, intercultural communication, and global cultures. The concise essays many of which are no more than four to five pages in length are accessible to undergraduates and the general reader, and would be good preliminary reading for books such as "White Teacher" by Vivian Gussin Paley (1979). Practitioners would welcome this book for school climate discussions, and school change projects. This is an essential purchase for education libraries and school professional collections.

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

Prashnig, Barbara (2008). *The Power of Diversity: New Ways of Learning and Teaching Through Learning Styles.* **Third edition. London: Continuum Publishing Group.**

Pages: 365   Price: £24.99   ISBN: 9781855394414

Barbara Prashnig's *The Power of Diversity: New Ways of Learning and Teaching Through Learning Styles* introduces readers to the uniqueness of each learner's brain and shows how understanding learning styles can help teachers, parents, and corporate trainers tap into learners. Prashnig describes learning styles, her tool for assessing individual styles, the importance of knowing styles and how learning style approaches are working in learning situations all over the globe.

The author's learning styles concept is adapted from research by Drs. Rita and Kenneth Dunn. The Learning Style Analysis, a collaboration between Prashnig and Kenneth Dunn, provides a description of a student's preferences, flexibilities and non-preferences during the learning process (p. 13). The tool assesses 49 individual elements in the following six areas: 1) left/right brain dominance; 2) sensory modalities like auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic preferences; 3) physical needs like mobility, intake/mouth stimulation and time of day preferences for learning; 4) environment preferences for sound, light, temperature and work area; 5) social grouping like pairs, teams, with authority figures or without a group; and 6) attitude factors like motivation, persistence, conformity, structure and variety.

Prashnig highlights how a teacher's learning style affects how he or she might teach and provides a Teaching Style Analysis. If a teacher likes to learn by reading in a quiet, brightly lit room while sitting erect at a desk, he or she might assume this is the best way to learn. The author explains how students with differing styles may prefer to be on the floor in a not-as-brightly-lit room with the radio humming in the background and parents or siblings nearby. Prashnig admits to forcing her own learning preferences on her daughter before they identified each one's learning styles. By forcing learners into situations that counter their preferences, frustrations will ensue and can lead students to believe they can't learn something. In one chapter, the author investigates underachievers, drop out candidates, misfits, student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and gifted students, as ones who may not learn just like their teachers or parents.

Prashnig says teaching based on learning styles and "a better understanding of how the brain works, have re-inspired teachers, re-energized students and given parents new hope" (p. 319). She supports this with anecdotal evidence from her work in New Zealand and all over the world. She even shares very personal accounts about her daughter and how understanding her different learning style, while discovered almost too late, made a difference in their relationship. In a section about learning styles, personal styles and relationships, Prashnig says understanding her own personal styles and her husband's different styles revived a marriage that was unraveling. The basic premise is to "know thyself" and understand diversity in learning and personal styles.

To those who say teachers can't cater to every individual in a classroom, Prashnig offers advice. Individual analyses can be combined to see what a group's learning style looks like. This could guide teachers or trainers to fit a teaching strategy to the group. A teacher might find that a class has an overall tactile approach to learning and can create touch-based tools for instruction. Work groups could be created that link students with similar learning preferences. Parents can use their child's learning styles to supplement learning at home and finish homework according to his or her style. Corporate trainers can better tailor sessions for employees.

Other topics that Prashnig addresses are learner flexibility, learning and personal style effects on parent-child relationships, how schools can begin to use a learning-style approach, and outlines for staff training.

The book's design practices what Prashnig preaches and lends itself to several approaches. The left-hand pages are reserved for graphics, quotes, photographs, mind maps, worksheets and other stimulants. She uses a "suggestopedic" model. The right-hand pages are divided into two columns. The left column contains the actual text of the book. The shorter column width helps the reader move along without much eye movement from side to side. To the right, readers' eyes will see selected keywords in their peripheral vision. One could use the keywords as a preview or review of the information. If this is a reader's first experience with this format, he or she can experiment with various approaches based on learning styles. An introductory section gives helpful recommendations on how to use the book as a workbook.

Prashnig is generous with her recommendations for texts that inspired her and provides additional resources for readers. Her Web site (www.prashnigstyles.com) is informative and includes enhanced versions of graphics that were used in the text.

The author presents a motivational book. It urges readers to match learning styles with teaching and to embrace diversity in learning styles. Parents, educators, administrators and corporate trainers would find stimulating concepts in the text. In the end, what readers actually do with this new understanding will impact students, children, employees and themselves.

Reviewed by Sarah Maben, a doctoral student in the Higher Education program at the University of North Texas.

Reed, Susan (2008). *Baker's Dozen: Dance Recipes for Any Occasion.* **Milton, MA: Susan Reed.**

Pages: 39   Price: $20.00   ISBN: n/a

Baker's Dozen: Dance Recipes for Any Occasion, by Susan Reed, is a collection of original and traditional songs and folk dances, specifically aimed at "community dancing." Reed does a good job of grading the dances, from simple to more complex, gradually adding figures as the book progresses. This is an important strategy to ensure success as teachers and dance leaders introduce community dancing in the classroom or the gym. Her instructions to the leaders are accurate and appropriate and she provides a "glossary" of dance figures. Although Reed states that the singing of the songs will be closely linked to the dance figures, she is inconsistent. Both youngsters and adults may become confused or overwhelmed if they have not only to follow the dance moves, but remember unrelated words, as well.

Reed uses a "recipe" format for the concept of her book. Besides being contrived, it seems to have no function in either clarifying community dancing or adding to people's enjoyment of the experience.

In her acknowledgements, Reed mentions the Amidons but she does not give specific sources for her material. Other books and media for community and school dancing instruction are available from: New England Dancing Masters Production, 41 West Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301. These include books and cassettes or CDs compiled and adapted by experts in the field: *Jump Jim Joe: Great Singing Games for Children*; *Chimes of Dunkirk: Great Dances for Children*; *Down in the Valley: More Great Singing Games for Children, Schools and Communities*; *Listen to the Mocking Bird: More Great Dances for Children, Schools and Communities*. I have used material from all these books in the classroom and in workshops for teachers.

I highly recommend them.

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Reviewed by Laura Cooper Stein, musician, dancer and retired early childhood educator.

Smith, Miriam W.; Brady, Joanne P. & Clark-Chiarelli, Nancy (2008). *User's Guide to the Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation, K-3 Tool.* Research edition. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 104   Price: $30.00   ISBN: 978-1-55766-948-3

This *User's Guide* gives educators the detailed and practical support necessary to utilize the new Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation K-3 (ELLCO K-3). With this goal in mind, the authors have included helpful elementary school vignettes to aid educators in learning of the key components of literacy, and in understanding the connections between the components and specific items of ELLCO K-3. Also included in this book are research-based practices for increasing phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and vocabulary development. Guidance is given on gathering necessary evidence and making scoring decisions for ELLCO K-3 items. Finally, there is a discussion on how the ELLCO K-3 can be used in both research and professional development situations.

This book should not be confused with the similarly titled 2002 edition, (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anastasopoulos) which covered grades PreK- 3, nor with its recently issued companion covering PreK groups (Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulos, 2008). There are three features which make this book different from the original ELLCO. First, compared to the original ELLCO, the ELLCO K-3 is streamlined and more condensed. Where the ELLCO has three parts, the new ELLCO K-3 has only two parts: a classroom observation and the teacher interview. Second, this *User's Guide* contains more information about conducting classroom observations, scoring accurately, and limiting bias then the original ELLCO which should aide educators in using the ELLCO K-3. The authors have also included "helpful new descriptors for all five levels of the rating scale that are more specific to elementary school settings and show professionals what to look for" (n.p.). Third, this version of the ELLCO K-3 has been designed specifically for elementary school students (K-3). Information related to pre-school students has been published as a separate companion volume (Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulos, 2008). This edition is a better book than the original ELLCO (user's manual) due to these improvements.

This book is user friendly for educators: it includes clear and concise writing as well as many examples which theoretically should guide educators through using the ELLCO K-3 instrument. Possessing this book however is not the same as having a copy of the ELLCO K-3, this book is merely the user's manual for that instrument. Also worth noting is the fact that although the ELLCO K-3 Observation Tool is based upon a body of work done at the Center for Children & Families at the Education Development Center, Inc. from 1997 onward, there are no completed studies which assess its reliability and validity. The only statistics remotely related to this instrument can be found in the technical report at the end of the *User's Guide to the ELLCO K-3*, and are based on the original ELLCO Toolkit, Research Edition (2002). The lack of reliability and validity studies on the ELLCO K-3 is particularly troubling given today's educational environment. Educators now more than ever need valid, reliable, research-based assessments. Perhaps a future version of the User's Guide to the ELLCO K-3 will contain this much needed information.

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Classroom Observation Toolkit. (Research ed.) Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Reviewed by Christine Wiggins, Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Utah.

Smith, Miriam W.; Brady, Joanne P. & Anastasopoulos, Louisa (2008). *User's Guide to the Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation Pre- K Tool (ELLCO Pre-K).* **Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

Pages: 90   Price: $30.00   ISBN: 978-1-55766-946-9

Researchers, evaluators, and supervisors have a number of observation tools to choose from when evaluating pre-kindergarten classrooms. The advantage of the Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation Pre-K Tool (ELLCO Pre- K) over other tools is its definite focus on early language and literacy, processes which have been demonstrated to help prevent later reading difficulties (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Although the *ELLCO Pre- K* clearly focuses on language and literacy, it can also be used as a measure of global quality as it contains sections centering on general classroom environments and processes. Users of the *ELLCO Toolkit* (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anastasopoulos, 2002) will find the *ELLCO Pre-K* comparable but will notice that items from the Literacy Environment Checklist and Literacy Activities Rating Scale have been incorporated into the observations, thus reducing the bias towards classrooms with more materials and resources and allowing the focus to remain more exclusively on the processes and the use of the materials rather than their simple presence. The *User's Guide to the ELLCO Pre-K* provides background information about early literacy, the structure of the *ELLCO Pre- K Tool*, specific directions for conducting observations in classrooms using the *ELLCO Pre-K Tool*, information about how the tool can be used for a variety of purposes, and the psychometric properties of the *ELLCO Toolkit*.

The *User's Guide to the ELLCO Pre-K* is essential for anyone planning to administer the *ELLCO Pre-k Tool*, even those who have used the *ELLCO Toolkit* in the past, but could also be useful for someone seeking general observation information. The most essential chapters "How to Conduct an ELLCO Pre-K Observation" and "A Review of Sample Items" provide straightforward directions for administering the observation and determining scoring for each item. Additional chapters present information on using the *Pre-K Tool* for professional development and research purposes. Additionally, the *User's Guide to the ELLCO Pre-K* contains a technical appendix. Unfortunately updated psychometric information for this younger age group is apparently not available, all of the psychometric properties detailed in the appendix are for the *ELLCO Toolkit* (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anastasopoulos, 2002), not the *ELLCO Pre-K*.

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Reviewed by Maria Cahill, The University of Tennessee.

Sobel, David (2008). *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators.* **Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

Pages: 168   Price: $17.50   ISBN: 978-157110-741-1

In his monograph *Beyond Ecophobia* (1996), David Sobel critically examines the strategies employed in environmental education. He notes that curriculum often plays out in ways that may inadvertently deter many young people from active engagement with environmental issues. He posits that educators, in their haste to inform students of the range of impending and ongoing environmental disasters, are filling young heads and hearts with a sense of fear and dread that may overwhelm students rather than inspire them. He points to the developmental inappropriateness of failing to initially focus on connecting young people to their environment before asking them to understand the dangers that threaten it

In his latest book, *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators*, Sobel focuses on the ways that programs may be designed to match the developmental needs of students with the broad goals of environmental education. He explains a framework for curricular design that proceeds from the notion that prior to teaching children the concepts and content of environmentalism we must provide experiences which foster relationships with the natural world. The book is composed of eight previously published articles which

broadly describe and illustrate the design principles upon which his framework is based. The initial three chapters of the book were crafted for the current book and serve as a transition from the warnings of *Beyond Ecophobia* to a plan for reforming education.

Sobel lays out seven design principles that help to frame the developmental and environmental foundations upon which education about the natural world should stand. He explains that the seven principles are based on his own naturalistic/phenomenological observations of the ways that children relate to nature. These principles will resonate for most early childhood educators as well as others who have observed the outdoor play of young children. Sobel claims that regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity or ecosystem, children will interact with the natural world in similar ways. This is a bold statement that the book fails to fully discuss and substantiate. Additionally, further discussion of possible gendered differences in interaction with nature would have lent greater strength to his framework.

Sobel explains each of the principles and illustrates them with anecdotes from the experiences and writing of his family, students, and environmental thinkers. The author's first principle may be viewed as the one which drives the other six: Adventure. Sobel notes that activities that present students with a physical challenge and a sense of adventure will engage and stimulate children in ways that may be concretized later in the classroom. In one of the examples that are presented, students' curiosity about the source of a stream on school property led to an expedition to follow the stream through the woods. The adventure inspired students to observe, journal, draw maps, and to make inferences about topography. This activity led to further engaged learning in several domains. The activity/adventure provides what Sobel calls a "transitional metaphor" that can bridge the gap from experience to abstraction.

Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators is an inspirational book, reminding educators of the power of place-based education in educating children about the world that they live in and nurturing their connection to that world. Sobel grandly likens this education to the quest for the Holy Grail, seeking to inspire children to find meaning in the natural world through direct interaction with it. In our current discourse of standards and accountability, Sobel points us towards the larger issues of meaning, purpose, and engagement.

Reference

Sobel, D.T. (1996). *Beyond ecophobia: Reclaiming the heart in nature education.* Nature Literacy Monograph Series #1. Great Barrington, MA: The Orion Society.

Reviewed by Eric Gidseg, Ph.D., kindergarten teacher, Arlington Central School District.

Students from Bronx Leadership Academy 2; O'Grady, Shannon; Ferrales, Kristin & Cushman, Kathleen (2008). *SAT Bronx: Do You Know What Bronx Kids Know?* Providence, RI: Next Generation Press.

This unique book is a social commentary. It compares what students from the Bronx consider important knowledge against a standardized test used by educators to test student intelligence. The authors clearly make the point that what contemporary students from an area such as the Bronx consider important knowledge and appropriate decision-making are worlds apart from what traditional educators would consider. While educators can make tests that make sense from their world-view, those taking the tests might wonder why such seemingly unimportant issues are being tested. Moreover, if adults consider these right answers an indication of intelligence and an avenue for their students' entry into college, the students are left questioning their own supposedly inadequate abilities.

The book demonstrates clearly how important the *content* of the learning is. The social, cultural, economic, ethnic backgrounds of the students impact every aspect of their lives, their knowledge, their behaviors, and their decision-making. The authors even included a list of commonly used words and phrases that students use regularly in the Bronx; I knew very few of these. This reinforced for me the importance of learning, understanding and using the everyday language of our students. I'm unsure if it means that we should use this contemporary language in our tests, however.

This book is published by the aptly named Next Generation Press, because it reflects, in my opinion, the way books focusing on and for youth will be written (both in content and in style) in the future. This book is written in a new format that is structured around seven themes presented not in chapters, but in sections beginning with one or two vignettes. These scenarios are then "tested" using a multiple choice format (similar to what is used in SAT or most other "intelligence" tests). Answers are given at the end of each section. The final feature in each section is discussion questions from two different perspectives: from youth (for whom the

learning is intended) and from the adults' perspectives (presumably because this group is the one assessing or making some judgment of the students' intelligences).

The seven sections or themes of the book reflect issues that are important to contemporary Bronx students: colloquialisms used by students today in their daily communication; the cultural, ethnic, and family backgrounds of the students and how they describe themselves to others; different philosophies of when to take part in a fight and why; how students make decisions in terms of getting to school, to work, and then home based on both economic and social factors; the factors that students consider when contemplating enlisting in the armed forces; the factors that the students identify when consider college and their anticipated level of success; and what counts as "smart" in the world of a Bronx high school student vis a vis some of the criteria that educators use in assessing intelligence. I was quite surprised at learning what these issues were; they would not be on my (an educator's) priority list.

Together, these seven sections helped me develop a picture of the typical students in Bronx classrooms -- students who are intelligent and thinking human beings who are trapped in a time warp by educators who live, think, and evaluate differently. What a lot of work that we educators have to do in order to maintain currency so that we are able to accommodate to the needs of our learners! This book made its point all too clearly.

Reviewed by Ruth Rees, PhD, Professor, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Whitaker, Sandra R. (2008) *Word Play: Building Vocabulary Across Texts and Disciplines, Grades 6- 12.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 192   Price: $22.00   ISBN: 978-0-325-01372-5

At first glance one might think that Whitaker's book, *Word Play: Building Vocabulary Across Texts and Disciplines, Grades 6-12* is just another source of easy-to-apply "worksheet" activities reconstituted for secondary level students. However, that assumption would be wrong. Whitaker has thoughtfully examined, adapted, and designed vocabulary-building strategies for middle and high school teachers. She aims to incorporate instruction into academic classrooms which supports student learning of concepts and content outside of the English language arts classroom.

Each of the three sections begins with a brief scenario that makes a point about how youngsters create, research, and understand words and their multiple meanings, nuances, and contextual uses. Section I discusses how and why to teach word structures; Section II examines how and why to teach conceptual meaning, and Section III focuses on how and why to teach academic vocabulary. In each section, Whitaker defines, explains and exemplifies components of language development in ways to support student understanding and ownership of words. Every chapter within the sections presents the "Set Up" for teaching followed by a "Step Into A Classroom" application of the strategy. For most of the presented strategies, Whitaker adds suggestions for differentiation that support student investigation of vocabulary origins, development and obsolescence. Her discussion of the theoretical aspects of vocabulary development and the particular research behind each strategy not only educates the readers, but challenges readers to evaluate their own practice.

The personal anecdotes scattered throughout allow for reader connections. Plus Whitaker shows how teaching conceptual links between words applies across disciplines, such as a physics class writing a descriptive paper about an unsafe amusement park attraction using physics terminology or a health class composing poems based on food categories showing relationships between food and nutrition. One connection involves the author watching a national spelling bee with her husband and his question as to why a contestant asked for the etymology of a word. She explains that the origins of word spellings are influenced from Greek and Latin. Another connection readers may have experienced is when students think the solution to finding an answer is to "just Google it." This exemplifies how new words, such as "google," "blog," or "texting" become part of everyday vocabulary. Whitaker states that teachers need to guide students in linking appropriate web-found information to overarching subject-matter concepts.

Even veteran teachers and literacy coaches will find applicable and varied strategies and practices that "focus on pre-teaching and emphasizing those words that make meaning for a wide-range of text-the conceptual meaning makers" (p. 87). Some applicable strategies include Perpetual Notion which Whitman acknowledges is based on a Pressman Toy Corporation game (1993); 8-Count Rule, Cascade Poems, Adaptable Probable Passage (Beers 2003), and the Frayer Model (1969) concept map for vocabulary. The detailed and illustrated examples of these and other activities from real classrooms using student work exemplify the effectiveness of these strategies. Equally important is that Whitaker's work is founded on scholarly research.

This is a practical book for teachers in every discipline.

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Perpetual Notion. (1993). New York: Pressman Toy Company.

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

Yellin, David; Blake-Jones, Mary & Devries, Beverly A. (2008). *Integrating the Language Arts.* **Fourth edition. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.**

Pages: 608   Price: $56.00   ISBN: 978-1-890871-84-0

Now in its fourth edition, *Integrating the Language Arts* by Yellin, Blake-Jones, and Devries is newly outfitted with the latest research, teaching practices and additional contents. A new chapter on "visual literacy and multimodal communication" and new sections on particular chapters have been added to meet the needs of our ever-changing classrooms. While this is an extensive and comprehensive overview of teaching language arts, it is written and organized in a manner that readers can easily follow, allowing readers to efficiently locate necessary information. The book provides a balanced combination of theory and practice.

The first part of the book focuses on introducing a generic description of the field of language arts and its related conceptual and theoretical background. This section outlines underlying principles and theories that all language arts teachers should be familiar with. In addition, the authors present a wide range of factors that may impinge upon overall teaching practices, such as children's family background, legislative involvement in education, etc. The authors explicitly assert that despite all these factors, the competence and positionality of teachers are most influential to the success of students' learning.

The bulk of the book presents various components of language arts, and suggesting the importance of each component to overall learning. Along with the traditional four curriculum areas, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the book introduces, "viewing" and "visually representing," the newly implemented components from the scholarly community to familiarize teachers with the latest addition to the field of language arts (see chapter six). One of the most noteworthy arguments of the authors is that language arts curriculum should be integrated in the content areas. The authors contend that this integrated approach makes language arts curriculum more authentic and meaningful as opposed to mere and discrete language arts skills.

In the last part of the book, the authors dedicate a chapter to describing the ways teachers should work with a diverse population. The idea appears to be to make the book more inclusive of non-mainstream populations; however, the section seems underdeveloped and underrepresented given the fact that minority students take up a large portion of our language art classes.

Every chapter of *Integrating the Language Arts* is packaged with a richness of information and practical features such as Activities with Children, Vignettes in the Classroom, related readings, technology, and websites. The book would be a handy and comprehensive reference for current and future language arts teachers, and teachers in other related content areas.

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

Zucker, Andrew A. (2008). *Transforming Schools with Technology: How Smart Use of Digital Tools Helps Achieve Six Key Education Goals.* **Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.**

Pages: 260   Price: $49.95(hardcover) $26.95(paper)   ISBN: 978-1-891792-83-0(hardcover) 978-1-891792-82-3(paper)

Today's educational setting, framed by instructional technology, is an ever- changing landscape. Zucker's, *Transforming Schools with Technology: How Smart Use of Digital Tools Helps Achieve Six Key Education*

Goals, provides the essential "how-to" manual for all educational leaders. Zucker conceptualizes his book around six key educational goals which can and must be achieved with the aide of instructional technology.

The six goals Zucker masterfully articulates are increasing student achievement, making schools more engaging and relevant, providing a high- quality education for all students, attracting, preparing, and retaining high- quality teachers, increasing support for children outside school, and requiring accountability for results. Thoroughly discussing each goal in turn, Zucker examines the historical and current state of technology relative to achieving it. For example, in the section on requiring accountability for results, on page 161, Zucker describes a "teacher dashboard" where classroom teachers have ready access to vital student performance data, and can adjust or modify instructional interventions required for student success. The notion of a "teacher dashboard," complete with ample student performance data at a teacher's fingertips was unthinkable only a few years ago. Now, making instruction more relevant and interventions more immediate, the timely display of student performance data can be a reality for all teachers.

Zucker's treatment of innovation and educational transformation is equally compelling. The author sets forth an exciting case for virtual high schools, virtual labs, and quality distance learning in helping to facilitate the effective redesign of the American high school. No longer restricted by the four walls of the classroom, Zucker argues for a more comprehensive conceptualization of what a learning environment, for teachers and students, is and can become in the 21st Century. Commonly assumed to serve as a powerful means of enhancing and facilitating student achievement, instructional technology tools must also be an integral part of a professional development program helping teachers share successes, ideas, and strategies with one another. Again, no longer bounded by the walls of the teacher workroom, teacher-to-teacher professional dialogue regarding student achievement can serve as an amazing catalyst in a division's growth plan.

While Zucker presents a compelling case for the reconceptualization of teaching and learning through the lens of instructional technology innovation, he fails to fully appreciate the many challenges which face teachers, principals, and school boards. The political and financial issues surrounding the consideration of such foundational redesign efforts for school boards and central office personnel are monumental, and deserve a much more lengthy treatment.

Using specific case studies from school divisions around the country, Zucker illuminates the potential pitfalls educational leaders may face in the quest to fully and adequately prepare our students with 21st Century learning and skills. Required reading for any educational leader concerned with improving student achievement, Zucker's, *Transforming Schools with Technology: How Smart Use of Digital Tools Helps Achieve Six Key Education Goals*, is truly a force multiplier, and the lessons and insights shared are essential for central office, as well as site based practitioners.

Reviewed by Stephen P. Covert, Ph.D., Principal of Ni River Middle School in Spotsylvania, Virginia.