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Brief reviews for October 2009

Bitz, Michael. (2009). *Manga High: Literacy, Identity, and Coming of Age in an Urban High School*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Pages: 196 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 978-1-934742-18-1

In his landmark essay "The School and Society," John Dewey describes four instincts that drive children's activity and that the progressive educator would be wise to harness in the service of learning across all the disciplines. Children, he argues, are motivated by impulses to communicate with others, to construct things, to investigate the natural world, and to create art. Dewey then describes several curricular initiatives that start with common objects and activities within children's everyday experiences—like clothing and cooking—and engage children in hands-on inquiries that integrate learning across subject areas as diverse as history, mathematics and the fine and manual arts, to name just three. These inquiries, which culminate with children preparing meals and weaving clothes, Dewey labels educative; not only do children learn a great deal through such activities, their minds are also opened and prepared for further learning by them. Mastery of particular knowledge and skills is not the end of instruction, but rather the beginning of deep learning and growth.

If John Dewey were to read Michael Bitz's *Manga High*, he would no doubt be excited that the torch of his ideas has passed to a new generation of educators, yet perhaps also saddened that over a century since the original publication of "The School and Society" such ideas still sound revolutionary. *Manga High* describes in rich detail one particular incarnation of The Comic Book Project, an after-school club pioneered at (appropriately enough) Dewey's own Teachers College that mentors adolescents in the composition, publication and dissemination of Japanese *manga* comics. Readers unfamiliar with manga will learn plenty about the style and history of this wildly popular medium in Bitz's book through close encounters with students at Manhattan's Martin Luther King Jr. High School and the manga that they create. The key to the success of this highly motivating program, described as "a life raft in a sea of school turmoil" (p. 82) for its participants, is that it revolves around one of the students' already deeply held passions. With or without the club, the students would read a great deal of manga and compose their own comics, with characters and storylines reflecting many of their most pressing concerns about home, school, peers and social justice. However, with the club, the students' passion for manga becomes a scaffold from which to launch into meaningful, "socially relevant learning" (p. 156) in social studies, mathematics and, of course, the full range of the language arts. In his descriptions of group composing and publishing sessions and in the profiles of individual participants, Bitz demonstrates how the comic book club fully engages all four of the instincts Dewey described in the service of helping adolescents forge identities and envision possible futures as well as supporting intellectual development across a broad spectrum of disciplines. While the book does not offer quantitative support for the claim that participation in the extracurricular comic book club was associated with deeper engagement or greater success in the classroom, Bitz does provide ample qualitative and anecdotal evidence throughout to demonstrate some transfer of learning to academic contexts. To cite but one example, Keith, a highly at-risk student who composed some of the most intense manga stories shared in the book, began incorporating a more sophisticated vocabulary into his for-school writing after having learned words like "forsaken," "tranquility" and "dimensional" through reading his favorite manga series and using the words in his own manga creations.

What is most remarkable about *Manga High* isn't so much that it provides a template for a project that could be replicated in other high schools, but rather that it provides a powerful case study of a permeable curriculum (Dyson, 1993) in action at the secondary level, albeit in an extracurricular context. Bitz's big message is that teachers should actively seek to understand the passions that students bring to the classroom and then lead students in finding pathways through those existing funds of knowledge toward the sanctioned knowledge and skills they hope to nurture. Whether those pathways go through video games, *The*

Simpsons, hip hop music or manga is less important than a teacher's willingness both to acknowledge that students arrive in the classroom as experts in fields rich with potential entry points into the official curriculum and to take on the role of a facilitator, rather than a font, of content area learning. Bitz admits that this will not be an easy transition for many teachers to make, especially in a climate of standardized, quantitatively-driven accountability. However, if the goal of education is to prepare young people to embrace fruitful and fulfilling identities as adult citizens of the world, educators and policy-makers ignore such powerful examples of the intersection of literacy, identity and coming of age as offered in *Manga High* at all of our peril. Methodologically rigorous yet highly readable, *Manga High* is destined to become a classic in the adolescent literacy canon.

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Reviewed by Dr. Sean Kottke, Chair, Binda School of Education, The Robert B. Miller College, Battle Creek, MI.

Carver, Lin. & Pantoja, Lauren. (2009). *Teaching syllable patterns: Shortcut to fluency and comprehension for striving adolescent readers*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 184 Price: \$27.95 ISBN: 978-1-934338-39-1

Carver and Pantoja offer the instructional plan in this book as a possible intervention for adolescent readers who cannot decode words and suggest that the lack of decoding ability may be because the students "haven't internalized the six basic types of English syllables" (p. v). Acknowledging that for many adolescent readers comprehension is the issue, the authors also believe that for some students decoding must first be addressed and believe their proffered instruction to be capable of meeting that need.

While fluency and vocabulary certainly affect comprehension (Allen, 2002), to promote this book in its subtitle as a "shortcut to...comprehension for striving adolescent readers" surely seems suspect. Rather than reading from real text and including comprehension strategy instruction in student learning, *Teaching Syllable Patterns'* proposal includes no authentic text. Instead, students read from passages filled with nonsense words. So, while this syllable pattern practice might in fact increase fluency, to claim comprehension is affected is possibly one step past certain.

The authors write that they themselves "have personally seen how quickly the patterns are internalized, providing a true shortcut to improved fluency" (p. v), but present no empirical research to support this plan. An *Education Full Text* search of "adolescent literacy" and "syllable patterns" limited to peer-reviewed articles did not list any empirical research to support this type of syllable pattern instruction with adolescent readers. Those interested in possibly using this instruction as a tiered intervention for struggling readers in a small group or one-to-one setting would be advised to proceed with caution because of the lack of a research base.

The book itself is well-written. Carver and Pantoja provide a well-organized scope and sequence provided for delivering this instruction involving a fifteen-week plan requiring between ten and twenty minutes of instructional time per day. The materials address a variety of learning styles including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The post-test at the end of a week of instruction would allow a student's progress or lack of progress to be determined. The directions provide almost scripted support for the teacher as she conducts the instruction. Phrases like "remind students", "write the following words on the board", and "explain that the letter y..." are very supportive to the instruction. A CD is provided that allows for the printing of the reproducible, assessments, and full-color game materials needed for each lesson.

But will this ease in delivery lead to misuse? The supreme concern for this well-written and supportive text for teaching syllable patterns is that, in the hands of the wrong teacher, administrator, supervisor, or, heaven forbid, politician, adolescent readers will be dragged through an instructional program for which many of them have no need. While there truly may be adolescent readers who would benefit from this instructional approach, the implementation must rest in a pre-assessment attempting to identify which students may profit and which students may not. Allington (2006) writes of research (Buly & Valencia, 2002; Leach, Scarborough, & Rescorda, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) indicating that as few as one in ten adolescent struggling readers need support for decoding. So, the caution is that this is definitely not for every student. This is not a "bell ringer" activity that teachers should use because it will not hurt anyone and someone might prosper.

With the amount of content reading adolescents daily, is adding any instructional method that does not include the reading of authentic text an informed choice? If the goal is to increase fluency and vocabulary so that comprehension and an appreciation for reading increase, Allen (2002) suggests guided reading. Allington (2006) offers ten pages of "Interventions to Develop Fluency in Struggling Readers" (p. 96), not one of which resembles the instruction in this book. Real reading is engaging. Real reading is motivational. Engaged, motivated learners are essential for high school success. Shortcuts, while tempting in a jam-packed standards-driven curriculum, sometimes take students off the main path of reading and learning down winding roads involving games and activities that do not support their needs.

The instructional plan described in *Teaching Syllable Patterns: Shortcut to Fluency and Comprehension for Striving Adolescent Readers*, while well-organized as presented in this book, should be examined and implemented guardedly. It is a treatment that may help to heal the reading ills of just a select group of students. It should be prescribed with caution.

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Reviewed by Kandy Smith, a doctoral candidate in literacy studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Culham, Ruth & Coutu, Raymond. (2009). *Getting Started with the Traits: Writing Lessons, Activities, Scoring Guides, and More for Successfully Launching Trait-Based Instruction in Your Classroom, Grades K-2*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 112 Price: \$19.99 ISBN: 978-0-545-11191-1

Culham, Ruth & Coutu, Raymond. (2009). *Getting Started with the Traits: Writing Lessons, Activities, Scoring Guides, and More for Successfully Launching Trait-Based Instruction in Your Classroom, Grades 3-5*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 112 Price: \$19.99 ISBN: 978-0-545-11190-4

The Six Traits are not a writing curriculum. But they do provide a vocabulary to describe what good writing looks like AND they can be used for assessment. On that foundation, Culham and Coutu delve into what the traits are and why using them is so beneficial for both teachers and students. Interspersed with this information are many tactful ways to encourage students to raise the bar in their writing.

Even though each book is similarly laid out, let me begin by focusing on the book for younger students (Grades K-2). Let's suppose you, as a teacher, are introducing the trait Ideas. The book gives three whole-class lessons to get this point across to your class as well as three independent or small group lessons. Five picture books are reviewed which model this trait. There is a "Quick Check List for Ideas" to help the students remember the three specifics, i.e., "I have one clear topic. I narrowed my topic. I used interesting details" (p. 108)

Teachers are not only given a "Scoring Guide" from 1 to 5 to assess the students' writing, but there are samples of writing already graded. You may want to score these yourself and then compare your scores with the authors. Each sample paper (nine in all) also comes with comments to the writer. These comments are very positive applauding the student for what he or she is doing well. Nestled in the positive remarks are ways to help the student improve. Often these are in the form of a question. Another method of feedback is a form with a continuum. For Ideas, the question is "How strong is your idea?" The continuum shows "1-Beginning, 2-Developing, 3-Strong." By putting an "x" in the appropriate place and writing out one suggestion, the student is able to learn how close he or she came to fulfilling this trait.

Two more things need to be said before moving on to the second book. First, after taking a look at the picture books the authors suggested, I couldn't have agreed more with their selections. Most of them illustrate the six traits well. With practice teachers will be able to fit some of their own favorite picture books into the lessons. Culham and Coutu encourage teachers to use their book as a starting point in stretching the teacher's imagination. Second, since children often remember songs more easily than prose, there is a song describing each trait set to a popular tune. This could be a fun way for students to initially remember each trait and its significance.

As mentioned before, the second book (Grades 3-5) follows the same format. Again, the lessons, picture books, and scoring guides are age appropriate. Albeit, picture books are used in this manual as well, there are not quite as many choices.

One lesson under "Organization" is well worth touching upon. Bold beginnings are important for writers to use in order that readers do not hit the snooze button. One lesson includes seven ways to begin writing—all defined in easy-to-understand language. Asking students in groups to come up with similar beginnings is a simple way to get writers to write outside their comfort zones. It wouldn't take too much imagination on the teacher's part to have books on hand illustrating these methods.

These two books are aptly named *Getting Started with the Traits*. If you are looking for a how-to manual for teaching the six traits minus the research, these books are for you. On the other hand, I have been teaching the traits for several years, and I also found new and applicable material for my students. One of the reasons for this may be the expertise of the authors. Ruth Culham received the English Teacher of the Year award in her state, a highlight of her 19-year teaching career.

Reviewed by Carol Brooks, Eastside Christian School, Bellevue, Washington. She currently uses her Master degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Seattle Pacific University to teach second grade.

Genishi, Celia, & Dyson, Anne Haas. (2009). *Children, Language and Literacy: Diverse Learners in Diverse Times*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pages: 163 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 0807749745

In another successful collaboration, Celia Genishi and Anne Haas Dyson masterfully weave real-life stories with theoretical insights declaring difference and diversity as the new normal (p. 10). Genishi, of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Dyson, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, highlight the discrepancies between current educational trends and the developmental realities of early childhood to create a book that is intellectually stimulating as well as pedagogically relevant.

Children, Language and Literacy provides specific considerations about diversity and the unique learning paths of children and cover such topics as the importance of play, written language development, and assessment considerations. Chapter one highlights the troubling landscape of today's educational environment with its regulations that push children to move at adult speeds and attempt to narrowly define them, not by their interests, but as "readers" (p. 8). Genishi and Dyson point out, "There is a very puzzling contrast – really an awesome disconnect - between the breathtaking diversity of schoolchildren and the uniformity, homogenization, and regimentation of classroom practices, from pre-kindergarten onward" (p. 4). Instead of uniformity in pedagogical practices, they emphasize a view of learning through a rich sociocultural lens setting forth a particular focus on the importance of sociolinguistic theory, that is, language as a mediator for understanding the world.

Chapter two links theoretical perspectives related to the language learning process and to ideas about the political ramifications of dialects which have more power than others. It shows examples of typical differences speakers of certain dialects, such as African American Language (AAL), have and how these can be misread by teachers, causing confusion for children. This chapter asserts that effective teachers are those who attend in a straightforward way to issues of dialect, not devaluing children's vernaculars, but teaching them to be sophisticated communicators with the linguistic flexibility to code-switch (p. 27).

The theme of linguistic flexibility is continued through several powerful vignettes of students who are emergent bilinguals (EBs). Readers will appreciate the discussion on the terms commonly used to refer to these children, such as English Language Learners (ELLs) or limited English proficient (LEP), which inherently emphasize the weaknesses of the student rather than the emerging process of learning another language and the exciting potential for these students to speak multiple languages. This chapter also provides an introduction to another theme of the book, *time*. The authors frequently make reference to "panoptical time" or "NCLB time" (p. 56) which sets regimented guidelines for children to meet that often are unrealistic. Genishi and Dyson instead argue that the inner clocks of children are inherently different from one another, unhurried, and cannot be simply defined by standardized measurements.

The importance of play to the learning of written and oral communication is masterfully illustrated in *Children, Language and Learning*. Rich examples of children mingling the unofficial world of play with the official world of school and learning provide educators with the opportunity to reflect on curriculums that are becoming increasingly narrowly defined and standardized. Genishi and Dyson warn, "There is a false assumption that uniformity of instruction yields equality of outcome" (p. 108). When instruction is narrowed, educators risk the possibility of limiting some students' opportunities for engagement and success with the curriculum.

Rather than uniform instruction, Genishi and Dyson address the need for educators to implement a foundation of observing children as crucial to successful teaching. Interview excerpts with an experienced educator are used as an exemplar for assessment practices which seamlessly align with instruction. The authors poignantly address the current warped ideas related to assessment and "NCLB time" which force educators to label children as struggling or at risk in order to receive funding. Readers will come to appreciate a definition of assessment which includes sitting beside students in ongoing, interactive, multiple situations which aim to move them forward rather than narrowly label them at one point in time.

The final chapter summarizes important themes addressed throughout the book, offering readers final take-home points. While the focus on play in the book was perhaps a bit elongated, the authors make a strong point that play is a teaching method which naturally addresses issues of diversity within the classroom and should be added to early childhood classrooms rather than removed. Reading from a practitioner perspective, I wish the book would have included an appendix with children's books or other resources that would support instruction to the diverse populations mentioned in the book such as EBs or AAL students.

On that note, the ideas in the book were intellectually stimulating and with thought applicable to the classroom. Practicing teachers, especially those in early childhood, may find it interesting as a title for a book club where they can talk about ideas with one another and digest the theoretical pieces together. Overall, it will be a book of interest to a variety of audiences, beyond practitioners. Genishi and Dyson's work would be a good choice for graduate students learning theoretical ideas, as it clearly defines different concepts and provides ideas from a variety of theorists including Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Heath. Furthermore, researchers would benefit from the content as well as observation of the skillful writing which fluently incorporates theory, definitions, and practical ideas.

Overall, this book offers an important addition to the literature surrounding early childhood and issues related to diversity. It offers rich application of theoretical concepts, strengthening the work of viewing teaching as a profession where educators should be allowed to make decisions about what is appropriate for the children in their classrooms. I would recommend educators interested in diversity, the impacts of standardized testing, theoretical ties to teaching, or early childhood add this book to their library.

Reviewed by Lindsay Grow, doctoral student in Literacy at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY. She is currently a teaching assistant with the department of Curriculum and Instruction and previously was a fifth grade teacher in Iowa.

Johnson, Tara Star. (2008). *From Teacher to Lover: Sex Scandals in the Classroom*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pages: 189 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 978-1-4331-0342-1

While it provides plenty of grist for the tabloid media mill, educator sexual misconduct (ESM) is the third rail of teacher education and research. Any discourse on the topic – whether casual or professional – that does not presuppose that a teacher who crosses the line is an evil sexual predator, regardless of the particular context, is bound to elicit a strong, visceral response that “conflate[s] messenger and message” (p. 8). To attempt to seek an objective understanding of the phenomenon (if that is even possible) almost inevitably raises suspicions in even the most open-minded corridors that one is sick, amoral and/or hiding something. Not surprisingly, no education monograph in recent memory has needed to be as forceful in defending not only the importance of its topic but the very legitimacy of the researcher’s interest in studying it as Tara Star Johnson's bold *From Teacher to Lover: Sex Scandals in the Classroom*.

Johnson's work is ultimately less salacious—yet far more provocative—than its E! tabloid documentary-style title would suggest. The book is not an exposé on pedophiles and sexual predators in American classrooms, but rather a scholarly case study of the stories of two female high school teachers who had affairs with male students, both above the age of consent. Two additional high profile cases – those of Mary Kay Letourneau and Heather Ingram – are introduced for comparison and added support to illustrate a particular kind of ESM, that in which the relationship between teacher and student develops into a mutually consensual affair. In clear, engaging prose that rarely indulges in the linguistic excesses a reader might expect, given the author’s post-structuralist lens, Johnson gives her participants ample room to tell their own stories. Compassionate without condoning their actions, Johnson’s book is a stellar exercise in methodological belief (Elbow, 1986)

as it describes and analyzes a complex web of conflicting gender norms, philosophies about teaching, power relationships, and physical dynamics that form the specific contexts in which her participants' ESM occurred.

Indeed, it is in this last area that *From Teacher to Lover* provides the richest food for thought to educators. So much educational research and theory treats learning as a discourse in which disembodied minds and voices engage and classrooms as spaces to be engineered for maximum psychic comfort and managerial efficiency. The physical bodies populating those spaces and conveying those voices are not simple machines with predictable responses to stimuli introduced by more rational beings, but rather free-willed organisms fueled by a complicated interweaving of appetites, emotions, higher thoughts and subconscious drives. To ignore this is to pathologize impulses that may naturally arise in the educational process and to poorly equip new teachers to cope with such situations should they occur. The truly provocative ideas in Johnson's book are not about sex per se, but rather about achieving a better understanding of the literal embodiment of teaching.

Johnson does not offer much in the way of practical advice on how teacher educators might explore this subject with pre-service teachers in this volume. However, *From Teacher to Lover* breaks ground on a too long ignored area of the psychology and sociology of teaching, and one hopes that it serves as a catalyst for further discussion and research toward that end. While many readers may, as Johnson herself acknowledges, dismiss this line of research a priori on the grounds that its participants (and by extension, its investigator) are self-evidently deviant, this reviewer prefers to evaluate the research by the yardstick of intersubjectivity proposed by Peshkin (1982). As he writes, "the conclusions drawn from my case study ... are left in the public domain, open to the reactions of other persons, scholars and laymen alike, who can affirm or deny by virtue of their own data and experience. In a sense, each reader may evaluate my reconstruction and conclude with a confirming 'Yes, this is the way it is' or a denying 'No, this is all in the writer's head'" (p. 63). Having served as an educator of hundreds of minds and bodies in my career, I can say unequivocally of Johnson's conclusions that yes, this is the way it is, and there is no higher praise I can give.

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Reviewed by Dr. Sean Kottke, Chair, Binda School of Education, The Robert B. Miller College, Battle Creek, MI.

Klentschy, Michael and Thompson, Laurie. (2008). *Scaffolding Science Inquiry through Lesson Design*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 133 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 978-0-325-01154-7

Klentschy, author of *Scaffolding Science Inquiry through Lesson Design*, was the principal investigator for the Valle Imperial Project in Science an initiative in Imperial County, CA funded by the National Science Foundation. The initial goal of the Valle Imperial Project in Science (VIPS) was to increase the number of high school students enrolling in and successfully completing challenging high school science courses. VIPS recognized that guided inquiry is a process that is impeded when students lack an understanding of content, experience with inquiry and classroom resources; overall, students lack the ability to make inferences from data. Klentschy felt that student understanding could be best achieved through Scaffolded Guided Inquiry (SGI) using science notebooks structured around pre designed lessons and state standards.

Scaffolding Science Inquiry through Lesson Design presents SGI as an intended, implemented, and achieved curriculum. The intended curriculum expresses what is to be taught; guiding questions are aligned with content goals and State Standards. Klentschy and Thompson organize SGI around four phases of the implemented curriculum: (a) setting the stage for learning, (b) formulating questions and predictions to be investigated, (c) planning and conducting an investigation, and (d) making meaning. The achieved curriculum is conveyed through student science notebook entries. These ideas reference Marzano's (2003) idea that there must be a connection between what is taught and what students learn through the design of the classroom. Klentschy and Thompson further discuss the importance of activating prior knowledge through questions, connecting lessons and concepts to big ideas in science, student metacognition, and using evidence to explain student understanding of science content. Furthermore, effective feedback is described as occurring through guiding questions provided on-the-spot or in writing within the student notebooks. Klentschy and Thompson's (2008) SGI approach to learning incorporates important theoretical elements of

learning which include the activation of pre-existing knowledge, developing inquiry competence, and active learning through metacognition which prepares students for transfer to new problems and settings (Bransford, 2000).

Marzano (2003) presented three principles from cognitive psychology which leads to effective classroom curricular design: a) clear learning goals, b) learning tasks structured for effective transfer of knowledge, and c) multiple exposure and interactions with knowledge. Klentschy and Thompson's intended curriculum encompasses a big idea, standards addressed, lesson content goals and guiding questions; the structure of SGI establishes clear learning goals. The implemented curriculum begins with an engaging scenario detailing a problem, a focus question, a student prediction, planning and data collection, and making meaning; this structure activates pre existing knowledge in relation to a problem which is revisited through making meaning. Klentschy and Thompson (2008) provide a structural template which leads to a transfer of learning back to the scenario's problem. Perhaps where this template falls short is that there is little discussion about multiple exposures and interactions with knowledge. The template, however, does end with reflection of next steps, new questions, what else the student would like to know about his content, and any connections to past lessons. To improve upon SGI, I would propose that either another problem scenario follow a completed lesson or unit template as a formative assessment measure for transfer of knowledge.

Klentschy and Thompson present SGI as an application for the K-6 classroom. I have been teaching science (8-12) for the past 15 years. I was interested in this approach and its incorporation into the 8th Grade Science curriculum in the Cherry Creek School District of Colorado. I began a Physics Unit with an engaging scenario describing a roller coaster that gets stuck on the track at the bottom of the hill. Students formulated a prediction in response to a focus question of what might have influenced the cart getting stuck on the track and what could be done to avoid the problem. Within the physics unit, students explored simulations, applied principles of potential and kinetic energy while on a bowling field trip, and constructed a simple version of a roller coaster model calculating its potential and kinetic energy. The unit concluded with reflection back to the initial problem presented in the scenario. I found that the 8th grade students, were able to successfully revise their initial response while incorporating concepts such as energy, velocity, and friction. One student commented that he "now knows how to answer the question." I frequently observed this with most students in my classes. Students' use of elements from Klentschy and Thompson's SGI in the 6-8 classroom resulted in student transfer of new knowledge to the roller coaster problem revising their initial perception that was tied to their prior knowledge.

SGI shows promise for its application in the K-6 classroom. SGI also has potential application in the 6-8 classroom as well. I found the incorporation of learning goals, an engaging scenario, focus question along with an initial prediction, multiple learning opportunities, and a revision of the initial prediction based on what was learned a full circle approach for the teaching of science. The attributes of SGI is that clear learning goals are established in alignment with standards outlining the intended curriculum. The implemented curriculum entails an engaging scenario detailing a problem, a focus question about the scenario, a student prediction about the answer to the focus question, planning and data collection, and making meaning; this structure activates pre existing knowledge in relation to a problem which is again revisited at the conclusion of the lesson or unit. Klentschy and Thompson provide a structural template which leads to a transfer of learning back to the scenario's problem. SGI is a structured approach incorporating elements of Marzano's (2003) intended, implemented, and achieved curriculum.

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Reviewed by Natalie Peitsmeyer, Doctoral student in Leadership for Equity in Education at University of Colorado Denver.

Louv, Richard. (2008). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. New York: Algonquin Books.

Pages: 390 Price: \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-56512-605-3

In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv explores the "increasing divide between the young and the natural world, and the environmental, social, psychological, and spiritual implications of that change" (p. 2). The book focuses on the beneficial impact experiences in nature have on children. This volume is an expanded and updated edition of Louv's 2005 book of the same name.

The 2008 version maintains the same structure and content as the original with a few additions, including "reporting on, and citations for, research that has emerged since the book was first published in 2005" (author's note). Louv also includes a field guide, discussion questions, suggested readings, and practical actions for change.

Louv's work is not well supported by academic research despite the statement in the aforementioned author's note; however, it contains numerous anecdotes that further his argument. Readers should take Louv's comments about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder at face value, but realize that he is not a psychologist. However as a place-based educator of science, I find his message both meaningful and encouraging. This work is of significant value to educators and parents, with the latter appearing to serve as the target audience. Although there are shortcomings, in the end Louv makes a strong case for reconnecting children with nature.

Last Child in the Woods is divided into seven parts. The first four focus on the relationship between children and nature. They include a historical look at how children played in nature, today's barriers between children and nature, and the manifold benefits of outdoor experiences. While replete with anecdotes from the 3,000+ interviews Louv conducted in preparation for this work, research in the field remains scant. Although Louv "describes the accumulating research that reveals the necessity of contact with nature for healthy child – and adult – development" (p. 2), he also calls for more research on the "restorative quality of nature" (p. 264). The lack of long-term research, no fault of Louv, inhibits his message.

Louv extensively cites the work of Kuo and Taylor from the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign. Much of their work suggests that children benefit from increased time in nature, but Louv does not refer to specific findings, rather general hypotheses that have not been corroborated on a large scale. An in-depth longitudinal study of children who have been exposed to experiential education programs would help to solidify some these claims. Louv reiterates the need for "controlled experimental studies... Such research could show that nature not only promotes healthy childhood development, but does it more effectively than the methods commonly used in place of nature" (p. 312).

Louv reviews a wealth of texts (including the biographical works of environmentalists) as well as anecdotal vignettes from his own childhood. He strongly advocates increased experiences in nature, unstructured time for children to explore, and the return of nature to our cities, schools, and communities. The implications of this book apply to a wide range of people, both children and adults. While Louv focuses on children and the impact nature has on the youngest members of society, he goes on to argue for the benefit that green urbanism, a movement well underway in Europe, has for all individuals regardless of age. He stops short of looking at non-Western societies, although he does argue that all children (inner-city, suburban, and rural) would benefit from more access to nature.

Louv's appeal to schools, governments, and families to experience nature comes at a time when budgets are stretched, priorities are squarely on testing, and stress is high. His fundamental idea—a reengagement with nature—could hold the key to rectifying some of these issues. Groups, nonprofit and governmental, as well as educational and religious have begun the work to ensure that the next generation has experiences in and an appreciation for nature.

As a journalist, author, and father of two, Louv has become a de facto expert in the area of children and nature. He currently serves as the chairman of the Children and Nature Network and honorary co-chair of the National Forum on Children and Nature. He is however, not a trained psychologist. While Louv's ideas resonate, his claims lack verifiable support. Still, as a science teacher who has worked in experiential and environmental education, I have seen the power of nature and its effect on children. I have seen 5th and 6th graders from the urban settings of Southern California as well as middle school and high school students from New York City in various outdoor venues. It is clear that exposure to nature provides children with an entirely different perspective from the urban milieu, while igniting their sense of wonder. Louv's point that younger students need the exposure during formative times in their life rings true. For the junior high and high school students from New York City that I led on the Appalachian Trail, being in the "wild" provided them with an opportunity to explore and to leave behind their city-bound concerns. These opportunities to experience nature not only give students the mental framework necessary to understand ecological relationships, but more importantly, it provides a different lens through which they can view systems and come to cross-reference their own comprehension by scaffolding prior knowledge.

Louv's message of reconnecting people of all ages with nature is a cornerstone of the United Nation's Decade of Educating for Sustainability (EfS). As an educator with a focus on EfS, Louv's argument strikes me on both professional and personal levels. In order for students to appreciate the bounty of nature, they must be given time to experience and explore it. While outdoor trips on the order of hiking the Appalachian Trail, Continental Divide, or Pacific Crest Trail may not be accessible to all youths, the simple act of connecting with place (a core principle of "place-based education"), enhances their experience and raises their level of awareness.

Louv's tome is readable, thought provoking, and upbeat. Despite the limited academic research, Louv's message is both timely and essential for today's educators. I recommend that parents and teachers review Louv's work. The resources in this updated edition provide children and adults with concrete examples of what they can do in order to reconnect with their surroundings and rekindle the innate sense of wonder in all of us. As Cajete (1994) notes, "education is...learning about life through participation and relationship in community, including...the whole of Nature" (p. 26).

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Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Durango, CO: Kivakí Press.

Reviewed by Eric Wilson, doctoral student, science education, University of Colorado Denver.

Neumann, Anna. (2009). *Professing to Learn: Creating Tenured Lives and Careers in the American Research University*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press .

Pages: 306 Price: \$45.00 ISBN: 978-0-8018-9131-1

The title chosen for this book is appropriate as it gives the reader a clear understanding about the contents. The topic is narrow and thus will appeal to a select group of readers; however, among that select group, there may well be a significant pool of university professors who will be drawn to learning more about the influence of tenure on their lives.

Research, teaching, service, and public outreach are terms that are certainly familiar to anyone who is a tenure-track professor. Universities, according to their mission, tie expectations of performance to each of these areas. Some may allow non-tenured faculty a reduced class load and other responsibilities to promote a culture of research.

Anna Neumann has taken her research findings and placed them in a book to be shared with the greater community and to better inform faculty and others about what is happening and perhaps has happened to them in conjunction with tenure and post-tenure years. Seventy-eight professors from diverse disciplines and fields of expertise across five major universities were studied to learn more about the creation of academic knowledge through research, teaching, and service, which are integral to the mission of higher education.

Her data collection and presentation provide a rich tapestry of experiences that can be reviewed and shared to help both administrators and faculty to better understand this unique and challenging aspect of a faculty member's life and career. Both the novice professor who is expanding and clarifying his role and research interests and the experienced, post-tenure professor seeking to chart a path for future growth and learning can benefit from listening to the voices of those who were interviewed.

The author's research puts to rest an old cliché about post-tenure faculty letting go of their dreams and research initiatives and instead offers a clearer picture of how home, work, and research come together over the course of a career. Those newly tenured, may find that with their new academic status comes expectations of taking on more responsibilities related to their department, college, and discipline; and, they often have to hone strategic plans to balance an increasing workload and new set of demands.

Administrators in higher education would benefit from reading this book so that they can better mentor novice and experienced employees. Faculty seeking tenure and those with post-tenure status will probably find themselves mirrored by the stories included in the book. Indeed, I can almost hear them saying, "I wish someone would have told me this sooner."

Reviewed by Kathleen E. Fite, Texas State University-San Marcos.

Riddle, Johanna. (2009). *Engaging the Eye Generation: Visual Literacy Strategies for the K-5 Classroom*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 168 Price: \$18.00 ISBN: 978-157110-749-7

A gap exists between what students learn in schools and what they need to be successful in the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Schools, n.d.). The challenge many teachers face is determining how to best infuse practical strategies into their daily lessons that address this problem. Johanna Riddle addresses the question of how in her book, *Engaging the Eye Generation: Visual Literacy Strategies for the K-5 Classroom*. Riddle stresses that it is not necessary to change *what* we are teaching, but *how* we are teaching. In fact,

with successful integration of visual literacy skills, Riddle shows readers the potential for enriching and deepening what is currently taught in most schools.

In the introduction, an expanded view of literacy is defined with the help of the North Central Regional Education Laboratory. Eight categories of literacy are listed: basic literacy, scientific literacy, economic literacy, technological literacy, visual literacy, informational literacy, multicultural literacy and global awareness. By combining the use of many of these literacies, Riddle effectively writes about integrating multimodal literacies into classroom instruction. However, the main topic of this book is visual literacy defined by the North Central Regional Education Laboratory as the ability to "interpret, use, and create visual media in ways that advance thinking, decision making, communication and learning" (p. 3).

Riddle, an educator with twenty-five years of experience, invites us into her classroom to witness how she successfully began using and integrating multimodal literacies. She honestly shares her own learning curve and gives readers permission to start changing their instruction even when they fear they do not know enough. Riddle explains that the importance of teaching students to critically analyze, manipulate and produce visual information was more important than her own comfort level with visual literacy integration. She realized that her "students' need to know superseded my need to know it all" (p. 33). Throughout the book there are examples of teachers learning *with* and *from* students.

This concisely written text contains numerous examples of lessons in K - 5 classrooms in which students were engaged in meaningful learning that is innovative, challenging and high-quality. Issues such as standards and lack of computers that tend to be hurdles in implementing this type of learning were addressed. In the first chapter, a clear connection between language arts standards and visual literacy is articulated. Evidenced through actual classroom examples, it is apparent that every content area is strengthened by a strong visual literacy emphasis. Riddle emphasized collaboration throughout the book, "Born out of necessity--when you have a handful of computers and a class full of students, shared learning becomes part of the experience" (p. 48).

Readers can find ideas for projects that address multiple literacies, along with examples of easy to use rubrics that were co-constructed with students. Strategies and structures, such as a structure for problem-based learning (p. 44) are helpful additions. There are many resources and websites highlighted--including a number of free resources. Issues that worry teachers, such as copyright and Internet safety are addressed. For example, Riddle provides a list of websites where students can find stock photos that are copyright free for students to use in slide presentations. Pictures of real student work can be found throughout the text. "Can You See It?" boxes inset into the text offer tips, resources and suggestions for implementing a curriculum that addresses visual literacy. Real classrooms and the students in them are at the heart of this book--there are examples of how to appropriately scaffold and differentiate learning experiences for all levels of learners and their specific needs.

It is clear from Riddle's classroom examples that she moves between short whole group lessons to small group and individual work. She understands that she should guide and facilitate her students' learning, but demonstrates they are able to learn more if they are released to think, ask questions, research, collaborate and create in small groups and individually. Similarly this short text gives the reader a compelling rationale for implementing visual literacy strategies, ideas for doing so, permission to begin even if the teacher knows less than his/her students and tools to continue this learning and exploration.

Engaging the Eye Generation is a relevant, engaging text for preservice and inservice teachers of all experience levels, as well as administrators and instructional coaches. I highly recommend this text for a literacy or social studies methods course or as a book study for any school community that is serious about transforming instruction to ensure that their students will be leaders who "will find innovative solutions for global challenges ahead" (p. 112).

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Reviewed by Tricia DeGraff, Assistant Teaching Professor, Institute for Urban Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Robinson, Ken & Arnica, Lou. (2009). *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. New York: Viking Press.

Pages: 274 Price: \$25.95 ISBN: 978-0-670-02047-8

The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything, by Ken Robinson, discusses the need for

educational professionals to help students, themselves, and others find the place at which natural talent crosses personal passion. In doing so, students can develop the inspiration which puts them in their *Element*. Robinson contends evaluating students through non-traditional means will help them find their Element, bringing success to every aspect of their lives as they find where their natural talents and passions take them. This book is on the leading edge of a new movement away from traditional testing procedures as a method to gauge the abilities and knowledge of students.

Robinson asserts, "I believe passionately that we are all born with tremendous natural capacities, and that we lose touch with many of them as we spend more time in the world. Ironically one of the main reasons this happens is education" (p. xi). He uses the word Element as a way of describing where a person's talents and unique abilities unite with their passions; when you find that place, you are in your Element.

Coming from a large family and having suffered the disabilities imposed through the contraction of polio at a young age, Robinson found himself mentored by a man who saw in him more than he was achieving academically. His own experience of encouragement and opportunity, has inspired him to seek out examples of people worldwide who have overcome the academic challenges of institutionalized education to achieve levels of success that are phenomenal.

According to Robinson, a general education setting does not always expose one to one's Element. People such as Paul McCartney "...went through his entire education without anyone noticing that he had any musical talent at all. He even applied to join the choir of Liverpool Cathedral and was turned down. They said he wasn't a good enough singer" (p. 11). Later on, that same choir went on to perform two of his pieces. Illustrations of noted celebrities who either did not perform well in school or left early demonstrate how they found the needed inspiration in other ways, or were mentored by someone who saw in them that spark that needed to be developed.

Robinson believes that the education system leaves many people feeling inadequate. He states that the system's "...preoccupation with certain sorts of academic ability" (p. 12), has left other areas of human intelligence to be unmeasured. Children are continually being tested in higher and narrower ranges of standardized tests, leaving many areas of interest and ability to be not only unmeasured and untested but to be literally unsampled at all. Our current educational system was created to train people for work during the industrial revolution and to accommodate ... the influence of the academic culture of universities... The result is that school systems everywhere inculcate with a very narrow view of intelligence and capacity and overvalue particular sorts of talent and ability" (p. 13).

Robinson berates the system of testing intelligence and IQ tests in general. He contends that instead of asking "How intelligent are you?" we should ask, "How are you intelligent?" (p. 43). This comment is the one quote that stuck with me the most through the whole text. Dr. Robinson speaks of Howard Gardner theories; "He says that we all have different strengths in different intelligences and that education should treat them equally so that all children receive opportunities to develop their individual abilities" (p. 43).

Robinson explains that there are multiple ways one can be distracted or discouraged from finding their Element: personal, social and cultural. Worrying about what other people think is addressed through stories of people who overcome fear, such as Susan Jeffers who wrote, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*. Other people are hindered from finding their place because they are discouraged by friends or family. Paulo Coelho's parents committed him to an institution because he was pursuing the arts rather than the law career they had chosen for him. Despite multiple institutionalizations and suffering electroshock therapy, he still managed find his Element. His novel, *The Alchemist*, has sold more than 40 million copies. Another hindrance could be one's own culture. What is thought of as men's or women's work may be a hindrance for people in some cultures, such as an Iranian woman who had to leave her country to fulfill the career she dreamed of to become an architect.

Finally, the importance of mentoring is discussed. The role of a mentor can facilitate the recognition of a gift, perform a role of encouragement, and cause one to stretch in their abilities. "Mentorship is a two way street. As important as it is to have a mentor in your life it is equally important to fulfill these roles for other people. It is even possible that you'll find that your own real Element is as a mentor to other people" (p. 184). He discusses the difference between mentors and heroes. Mentors can be heroes, but heroes are not always mentors. Mentors have a personal stake in another person's life.

Robinson speaks of life as not being linear and that it is never too late to find your Element. Grandma Moses and Julia Child were past their fifties before finding their Element. He also encouraged people to not allow our culture to segregate us by age, or let the fact that we need money to live stop us from finding our Element. While it may not be lucrative, the quality of life found by people who have discovered their Element, regardless of the remuneration, is unmistakable. He asserts, "Personal happiness comes as much from the emotional and spiritual fulfillment that this can bring as from the material need we meet from the work we may have to do" (p. 223).

Transforming education is the final subject addressed in this book. Robinson utilizes the example shared by Paul McCartney who found an English teacher that inspired his class by keying into their natural curiosity and interest in sex. He had the students read Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" with a modern English translation on one side and the old English on the other. McCartney found himself hooked. Teachers need to find more ways to think outside the box in order to engage students. We need to develop ways to expose them to more subject matter and in differing fields and methods than traditional lectures and tests.

As a graduate student in education, I am finding more methodology addressing issues outlined by Robinson. However, many difficulties tie the hands of educators because testing is still connected to the funding necessary to maintain schools. Arguments for a new type of education model are prevalent in universities, but are not being addressed in many of the schools because of funding issues.

Many questions arise through reading this book and in the desire to implement the book's principles. As an educator, how does one find ways to reach students to expose them to their Element? How does one find the time to mentor those who need the encouragement to get them started? Recommending this book may be a good start. When more people have a good understanding of these principles, the more apt they will be to find places open to the changes needed to transform our education system into one more conducive to facing the challenges of the future. Another suggestion would be for educators to read segments of this book to their students themselves. For as much as we want the best for all students, they need to be inspired and encouraged to look for that place in life that motivates them to find where their deep passion crosses with their abilities.

For educators who are passionate about seeing students reach their full potential in life and are not willing to let the educational system, as it is, stand in the way, this book will grant insight through the examples and commentary on how the formal education process can sometimes become a hindrance. This book is an inspiration for educators looking for methods to prevent students from falling through the cracks of education. It is also an encouragement to people who are still looking for that place in the universe that brings meaning to their lives.

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Reviewed by Ruth Hunter, graduate student, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Missouri State University. Her research interests include alternative methods of teaching and technology integration into the Language Arts classroom.

Selznick, Richard. (2009). *The Shut-Down Learner: Helping Your Academically Discouraged Child*. Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications.

Pages: 160 Price: \$10.85 ISBN: 978-1-59181-078-0

This well-designed book is written for parents of students who have demonstrated significant difficulty in school. It can also be a great resource for educators who regularly work with such students. The shut-down learner (SDL) is not easy to define. He or she can exhibit many concerning signs, some more dangerous than others. There are different types of SDLs, and they can be uncovered at different points of their lives. In parent's eyes, SDLs are lazy. They do not try hard enough, do not care, and perform poorly out of spite. Parents and doctors often apply the labels attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabled, and dyslexic to SDLs, and too often assume medication is the quick and easy fix their struggling learner needs.

The author of *The Shut-Down Learner*, Dr. Richard Selznick, is a nationally certified school psychologist, and serves as the Director of the Cooper Learning Center at Cooper University Hospital in Voorhees, NJ. He has over 20 years of experience in the assessment and treatment of reading and learning disabilities. Selznick specializes in a broad range of school related issues, including dyslexia, ADHD, and oppositional and difficult children. He uses the term shut-down learner to describe the student who may have difficulty with core academic subjects, but excels in activities that require visual and spatial skills. He writes as an expert of identifying and treating learning problems. Using examples from families he has worked with, he develops a clear, organized, and user friendly guide to help learners who may fall into the category of SDL.

The reader's sense of "where do I go from here" develops, as Selznick gives numerous suggestions of positive ways to help the SDL. It all begins, he states, with understanding. The SDL often views the world and learning differently than parents and teachers, and it is important that those working with these children

keep this in mind. Additional suggestions include not forcing the SDL to learn in traditional ways, paying attention to the emotional concerns of the child, supporting her with reassuring gestures, developing vocabulary skills at home, and incorporating outside tutoring services. The use of medication is also addressed. Selznick feels that medication can be helpful in certain situations, but also stresses that additional methods of intervention must be used simultaneously. In both this section and the introduction, Selznick shares case studies that help the reader relate to the SDL through real-life examples. These stories reinforce the suggestions Selznick offers for help. In the final two sections, titled "The Shut-Down Learner's Perspective" and "Shut-Down Learner Success Stories", Selznick expands on case studies and shares detailed accounts of how SDLs have responded to his work.

One such story comes from Scott, a guitarist and businessman. Scott began working with Dr. Selznick when he was fifteen. He showed classic SDL characteristics; he was struggling in school and was not motivated to learn. While his parents were warm and supportive, they were also scared. Dr. Selznick soon discovered that Scott had a passion for playing the guitar. The biggest thing that ultimately worked for Scott was being mentored by a musician. Selznick explains, "The most important point to emphasize is that Scott was mentored by adults who saw qualities in him to develop. Mentoring is one of the most important gifts that can be given to a Shut-Down Learner" (p. 132).

Another SDL story is of Amy, a young lady Selznick describes as the toughest with whom he has worked. Amy was oppositional, highly reactive, inflexible, and difficult. Intense battles occurred in her home, and she had significant reading, spelling, and writing problems. Dr. Selznick's main objective was to improve communication skills between Amy and her parents. Amy attended a private high school for students with learning disabilities. She then went on to study at a university arts school, specializing in graphic design. Amy began to receive praise from adults, something that had not happened over the years. Ultimately, this positive support from others is what helped Amy the most. Amy became a productive, satisfied adult, and communicates positively with her parents.

These are just two of many case studies highlighted in the book. Selznick includes stories of students with many different pasts, leading to various types of intervention. Additionally, he shares interviews with SDLs with whom he has worked, including their personal tips for success. Among the great suggestions that Dr. Selznick provides, the individual stories are perhaps the most useful feature of the book. Parents and teachers can find multiple perspectives that relate to their personal situations.

The book concludes with brief descriptions and contact information for innovative programs being used across the country to help SDLs. Examples include Temple University's Spatial Intelligence and Learning Center, The Cooper Learning Center (New Jersey), The North Bennet Street School (Boston), and the Tiger Woods Learning Center (California). Additionally, Selznick shares several books and websites that can be useful as references.

All in all, *The Shut-Down Learner* is an excellent book. It is a must read for parents who are having academic troubles with their children, as well as educators who work with such students. As a high school mathematics teacher for six years, I have regularly encountered students who *shut-down* when it comes to mathematics. I am currently a dean of students, and I frequently work with children who exhibit signs of SDLs. These students often find it difficult to learn in traditional classroom settings, and act out in class as a result. My goal is to help them find a way to learn in formal school settings. *The Shut-Down Learner* is a very helpful resource for parents, educators, and other professionals working with students struggling academically.

Reviewed by Brad Weinhold, doctoral student in Leadership for Educational Equity, University of Colorado Denver and Dean of Students at a Colorado high school.



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