



education review // reseñas educativas

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reseñas educativas (Spanish)
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Brief reviews for July 2009

Ben-Arieh, Josefa & Miller, Helen J. (2009). *The Educator's Guide to Teaching Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Sage.

Pages: 165 Price: \$28.95 ISBN: 978-1-4129-5776-2

The preface sets the tone for a positive and empowering book showing respect, both for the educator and for the students under discussion. The authors obviously have a wealth of experience behind them, understanding and acknowledging the diversities, as well as the similarities, in learning styles of students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The additional text boxes throughout the book draw the reader's attention to areas of particular importance and encourage us to think laterally about the condition instead of merely listing "facts'."

The first chapter, explaining how ASD is recognised and how it might manifest itself in the classroom, is particularly astute and goes beyond the traditional definition of deficits in communication, imagination and socialization. The issue of possible enhanced sensitivities to sensory stimuli, so often overlooked in other guides, plays an equal part in this chapter and is addressed later when the authors write about setting up an ASD-friendly learning environment.

The comprehensive description of the assessment process, and the tools and tests used for this, is followed by practical guidance on setting up and delivering an educational programme suited to the student's needs. The programme includes everyone who will be involved with the student and encourages regular meetings and reviews.

The chapter on "environmental" supports is particularly useful as processing sensory stimuli in a different way to most of us is a driving force in many behaviours we perceive as bizarre in people with ASD. Observing and understanding what factors affect your student's comfort, readiness and ability to learn is the key to success in the classroom. Supports suggested include the use of pictures and symbols and strategies to minimize distress from overload of different senses.

The bulk of the book is contained in the fifth and last chapter, which outlines a wealth of possible interventions to choose from. The breadth and depth of this chapter is invaluable, providing advice and outline plans for just about every eventuality.

The two main areas of this chapter focus on behaviour and language. A characteristic of learners with ASD is that their behaviour often impedes their own and/or others' ability to learn. The reasons behind such behaviours are explored sensitively and systems for observing, analyzing and recording behaviours explained with a view to setting up a support strategy.

Difficulties understanding, processing and using language underpin many of the challenges facing the student with ASD and their educators. The next part of this chapter tackles the whole spectrum from the preverbal student to those whose language appears sophisticated but who find it hard to use that language appropriately in social situations. Support for the non-verbal student, through Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), signing and speech output devices is explained, followed by support for those with more advanced language skills, through 'social stories' and role play. The motivation to learn and to please the teacher can often be lacking in students with ASD, so the use of identifying and using rewards and reinforcers is explored.

The final section comprises useful appendices containing assessment tools, data collection forms and systems for recording interventions and meetings. The emphasis throughout the book is on understanding, support and working towards independence. I will certainly be recommending this book to teachers beginning their exciting and eye-opening journey with students on the autistic spectrum.

Reviewed by Margaret Sahin, Deputy Head at Bardwell Special School, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom.

Boreen, Jean; Johnson, Mary K.; Niday, Donna; & Potts, Joe. (2009). *Mentoring Beginning Teachers: Guiding, Reflecting, Coaching (2nd ed.)*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 192 Price: \$21.00 ISBN: 978-1-57110-742-8

When it comes to mentoring, experience has taught me one thing: effective mentoring relationships don't just "happen." They require dedication and hard work, which probably explains why there is such variety among them. One student teacher might report that his cooperating teacher does everything but cooperate with him, while a new teacher can't stop raving about the expert that is guiding her through that tumultuous first year first year on the job. And it would seem that I'm not alone in my observation; when discussing the importance of mentoring in terms of retaining teachers, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) is quick to mention that it's "high-quality" mentoring (among other things) that's needed to help stem the tide of teacher attrition. So how can those of us who are interested either in keeping new teachers in the field or in making sure that student teachers get the most out of the experience ensure that they do indeed have high-quality mentors?

One sure way would be to make *Mentoring New Teachers: Guiding, Reflecting, Coaching* required reading for every veteran teacher, regardless of whether or not they are new to the role. Organized so that answers to any mentoring-related question can be quickly accessed, this book is written with the busy educator in mind—it can be read either cover-to-cover or one chapter at a time, depending on your needs. Are you new to mentoring? Start with Chapters one and two, which discuss the importance of the mentoring experience for both mentor and mentee, and then read on from there. Are you an "old hand" at mentoring, but wondering how to help a new teacher with classroom management challenges? Turn directly to Chapter six, which provides several key themes on which both expert and novice can reflect. Especially helpful for any mentor is the final chapter, which includes answers to several "What if?" questions, such as "What if the students prefer the student teacher to me?", "What is my liability if my student teacher does something legally actionable?", and "What do I do if the student teacher lacks basic grammatical skills?"

In a time when keeping teachers in the profession is of the utmost concern, mentoring plays a big role in achieving this goal (Odell, 1992). With chapters focusing on reflection, school culture, relationships with parents/guardians, curriculum mapping, communicating with administrators, and professional development, "Mentoring New Teachers: Guiding, Reflecting, Coaching" is a "must-have" for any mentor, and the exhaustive list of questions for self-reflection, tips for how to deal with practically any scenario, and easy-to-read format make it unlikely that this book will spend much time sitting unused on a bookshelf.

References

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Odell, S. J. (1990). Support for new teachers. In T. Bey & C.T. Holmes (Eds.), *Mentoring: Developing successful new teachers* (pp.3-24). Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators.

Reviewed by Karrin S. Lukacs, an adjunct faculty member at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia.

Cayuso, Emily. (2009). *Flip for Non-Fiction Comprehension*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House..

Pages: 64 Price: \$27.95 ISBN: 978-1-934338-37-7

I once had the opportunity to observe a lesson in non-fiction comprehension strategies delivered by the reading specialist at the school where I was gathering data for my dissertation study. The regular classroom teacher had taken ill, and before a substitute could be arranged for the day, the reading specialist filled in with a brief lesson based on a particularly vivid excerpt from *Animal Grossology* (Branzei, 1996). The lesson focused on using context clues to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words and distinguishing main ideas from supporting details. As much as the lesson afforded students the opportunity to practice effective reading comprehension strategies with informational texts, and as energetically as it was delivered, the enduring learning outcomes were limited by the fact that the lesson was a one-shot activity, disconnected from the regular curriculum routines established by the classroom teacher. The lesson was not situated in a larger instructional framework to nurture students' mastery of non-fiction comprehension, and ultimately there was no discernible transfer of these skills into future reading tasks.

In a similar vein, if a strong framework isn't already in place for teaching non-fiction comprehension strategies, Emily Cayuso's *Flip for Non-Fiction Comprehension* will not provide much help to the language arts teacher who hopes to build one. The fifty-five "lessons" contained in this book, which is designed as a flip-chart, aren't really lessons so much as they are brief reminders to cue students to use strategies they have hopefully already learned. Most of the prompts are simply variations on one or more classic strategies from the content area reading toolbox: KWL, SQ3R, text feature analysis, and graphic organizers. A few prompts, like those focused on the *Guinness Book of World Records* and the phone book, are explicitly keyed to particular text forms, while the majority are presented in such a way as to be applicable to virtually any informational text. Almost all assume that students already possess the skills that the prompt is supposed to help them develop. For example, "The Main Idea" (p. 43) presents a simple diagram of a large central balloon (labeled "Main Idea") with four "Detail" balloons branching off of it and the text, "Draw and fill in the graphic with the main idea and supporting details from the text." Most are as tersely written as the generic reading comprehension exercises students are likely to find

at the ends of chapters in their content area textbooks. Cayuso provides a very short introduction in which she suggests ways in which the book could be used in a variety of instructional contexts, but almost all of them amount to propping the book open like a tent to a given page to remind students what to do on their own after a given strategy has been modeled and students have had "enough teacher-guided practice" (p. 6). However, creative suggestions for what that modeling or guided practice might look like are not offered, and in the absence of an overarching instructional framework to organize the activities collected in *Flip for Non-Fiction Comprehension*, readers would be better advised to stock their professional libraries with any of the classic volumes offered in Cayuso's bibliography, such as Stephanie Harvey's *Nonfiction Matters* or Fountas and Pinnell's *Guiding Readers and Writers*.

References

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

Gunderson, Lee. (2009). *ESL (ELL) Literacy Instruction: A Guidebook to Theory and Practice*. (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Pages: 283 Price: \$41.95 ISBN: 0-415-98972-8

As the number of linguistically and culturally diverse students has increased dramatically in North American schools, English as a second language (ESL) literacy instruction has become a critical issue. It is critical for two reasons. First, literacy development directly influences the extent to which ESL students can possibly succeed or even survive in school and life. Second, prevalent literacy pedagogical strategies for ESL students are those that have been developed for native English speakers, which themselves are highly controversial. In an attempt to integrate native literacy research with ESL literacy instruction, Gunderson's book makes a timely contribution to address this issue.

This seven-chapter book discusses reading approaches that provide comprehensible input to ESL students. Gunderson explores the approaches using the Two-Factor ELL Instructional Matrix, a model that considers students' first-language (L1) literacy background and English proficiency as major variables for comprehensible input. Specifically, Gunderson identifies students' specific needs and abilities, mainly determined by their L1 literacy background and English proficiency, as various positions in the matrix. He then discusses literacy programs that match students' needs and abilities. The essence of this book, as Gunderson states, is "to provide comprehensible input for students who differ significantly in their English skills and literacy learning backgrounds" (p. 124).

Chapter 1 presents a brief, yet comprehensive overview of the history of English reading instruction, tracing the roots of English reading instruction as far back as ancient Greece. In this overview, Gunderson documents a rich diversity of English reading approaches used in North American schools, from the Hornbook in the fifteenth century to critical literacies and multiliteracies that emerged in the late twentieth century. Regardless of the richness of reading programs, Gunderson suggests that controversy is considerable concerning which program is superior to another. This historical account of reading instruction foregrounds the central concern of this book, i.e. "how can it be that ESL students are generally placed into programs designed for native English speakers when there is controversy within the reading community concerning those very programs" (p. 34).

In chapter 2, Gunderson develops the Two-Factor ELL Instructional Matrix. The matrix intends to provide comprehensible input for ESL reading instruction, based on students' L1 literacy history and oral English skills. The underlying assumption is that students' L1 literacy background and oral English ability are two powerful predictors of comprehensible input. Gunderson then gives clear and straightforward pedagogical suggestions that correspond to the comprehensible input. For example, Gunderson suggests that secondary students "of lower English ability and with less L1 background are not ready to learn from text. No amount of help from the teacher will make these students successful content comprehenders. They must be immersed in a reading program" (p. 49).

Arguing that ESL students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds considerably influence their perceptions and expectations about literacy and literacy instruction in North American schools, Gunderson describes the variables of language and culture for literacy instruction in chapter 3. Gunderson presents key cultural and linguistic characteristics of 10 focus groups covering students of over 50 countries, regions and ethnic groups in North American schools. However, Gunderson stresses that caution must be exercised when generalizing these focus group observations to other groups, given the dynamic nature of culture, and intra-group diversity.

Chapter 4 discusses literacy activities for elementary-level students. Drawing on the Two-Factor Elementary Instructional Matrix, decisions can be made concerning whether students should be included in reading programs and what reading programs apply. Chapter 5 focuses on students of three age groups, namely, intermediate students (students in grades 4 through 8), secondary students, and adult students. Apart from a discussion of appropriate reading programs, Gunderson identifies major challenges to literacy instructions for each group. More specifically, the challenge for teaching intermediate

students is selecting appropriate reading materials that match their needs and abilities, while not offending for being childish. With regard to secondary students, the major concern is that they “need to learn to read as quickly as possible because their success depends on their ability to comprehend and learn from text” (p. 185). For adult students, especially those that need basic English literacy development, the primary goal of literacy instruction is to equip them with important vocabulary through survival reading programs.

Chapter 6 provides strategies for teaching academic content reading skills. Gunderson argues that the first step to design academic reading programs is to assess students’ overall content comprehension of particular academic texts through content reading assessment. Furthermore, Gunderson briefly discusses the implications of critical literacy and multiliteracies on academic reading instructions. Four points developed here are worth mentioning. First, essentially teachers must develop their own programs to address critical literacy; second, the best approach to critical literacy instruction is to engage students in dialogue about serious issues; third, concerning multimodel teaching and learning, post-secondary teachers “must demonstrate how students can access comprehensible input” (p. 242); and fourth, critical literacy skills are important for Internet use.

The final chapter is fairly concise. Gunderson briefly compares the ESL literacy context in 1991, when the first edition of this book was published, with that of the present. He also revisits the model developed in this book and the debate concerning the best literacy approach. In the end, Gunderson calls for the dedication of teachers and researchers to finding better approaches to ESL literacy instructions.

Though Gunderson states that this book is not inclusive of everything, he has undoubtedly succeeded in providing (a) a nice connection of theory, research and personal observations; (b) an enlightening perspective that sees students as unique individuals instead of stereotyped groups for literacy instructions; (c) a detailed model that integrates native literacy measures with ESL literacy practices; (d) abundant pedagogical strategies for instructors to choose from to suit the diversified needs and abilities of their students at various age levels; (e) rich examples that serve not only to illustrate how the strategies apply in ESL literacy instructions but also to present possibilities for further exploration; and (f) an insightful incorporation of the notions of critical literacy and multiliteracies in discussion, which situates literacy pedagogy in the complex sociocultural context of the new millennium. Additionally, Gunderson offers readers his practical advice out of a wealth of experiences in teaching ESL students. For example, in the discussion of the oral English ability of elementary students, Gunderson suggests that 0-level oral ability speakers are easily located on the playground because they “are the ones literally on the periphery, usually standing next to a fence surveying the activities before them” (p. 47).

There are two aspects that might be considered in a future edition. First, some of Gunderson’s claims could have been more convincing if relevant evidence was presented. For example, Gunderson argues that “adults with no L1 literacy background and little, if any, proficiency in English are often the most difficult individuals to teach” (p. 205); however, he does not specify whether this argument is based on certain research findings or his own observations. Second, though deeply impressed, I am a little overwhelmed by the abundance of pedagogical programs Gunderson provides.

Overall, Gunderson’s book *ESL Literacy Instruction: A Guidebook to Theory and Practice* makes a significant and timely contribution to the field of ESL literacy education, and is a practical guide for teachers seeking ideas for teaching reading to their ESL students of diverse needs and abilities. It provides a comprehensive, convincing, and immediate solution to the debate over effective ESL literacy instructions. It deserves a wide target audience, from pre-service teachers to ESL educators. Besides being used for teacher training programs and individual references, hopefully, this book will also enlighten the field of ESL education and contribute to even more literacy programs that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for ESL students.

Reviewed by Hongmei Xu, a doctoral student in the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies, the University of Texas at San Antonio, College of Education and Human Development, where she is also an instructor with ESL Services. Her research interests include world Englishes, sociolinguistics, and teaching English as a foreign language.

Kohl, Herbert. (2009). *The Herb Kohl Reader: Awakening the Heart of Teaching*. New York: The New Press.

Pages: 336 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1-59558-420-5

Education is filled with many challenges and whether you are a beginning teacher, a veteran teacher or involved with school reform and education policy *The Herb Kohl Reader* will lift your spirits. Herbert Kohl, the author of thirty-five books is an inspiration to the education world in part because he has spent his days passionately teaching in the classroom. This practice is where the groundwork and framework for his influence on educational policy was developed. William Ayers describes Kohl as the poet laureate of teaching (p. xi). Indeed his passion will once again revive or fuel your dedication to teaching. Herb Kohl’s book is a compilation of his work chosen from his books on teaching, learning, and educational thinking. One might consider these his best and favorite pieces representing those thirty-five books. Get ready to curl up and thoroughly enjoy this reader. Whether you are exhausted questioning yourself about why are you still teaching or maybe questioning your decision to become involved in education, this book will confirm your choice and ignite your fervor.

The Herb Kohl Reader is divided into four sections. Section 1 provides the reader a glimpse into the development of Herb Kohl as a teacher. Section 2 demonstrates the practice of teaching and learning. Section 3 exemplifies life as a father while

teaching other parents' children. Section 4 illuminates education, learning and politics found in our world today.

The first section sets the tone as Kohl provides the reader with his starting point. Kohl is a true storyteller and he developed this craft at a young age. While reading Kohl's book, I was reminded of gardening. One of the 'seeds' to plant in a garden is hope and as Kohl says, "creating hope in oneself as a teacher and nourishing or rekindling it in one's students is the central issue educators face today" (p. 12). He states, "seeding hope is at the center of the art and craft of teaching" (p. 12). Herbert Kohl taught students in Harlem and his days of teacher education and training were thoroughly challenged as well as the curriculum he was teaching. This frustration and juxtaposition was a cornerstone to his vision of educational reality. Section 1 displays the ability Kohl developed to step out of his teacher authoritarian role and observe the individual students in his classroom. So often, teachers feel the need to keep a tight rein on their students. Kohl demonstrates the necessity to being an observer of students.

Section 2 discusses the methods of teaching. He reveals his style in teaching as "reading implies writing; science begs experimentation; mathematics involves puzzles, proofs, and games; and the arts involve imaginative expression as well as historical knowledge" (p. 103). It is in this section that a teacher is guided to reflect on the reasons he or she decided to enter this profession. A discussion on reading with respect for the learner is exhibited by environment, and the comfort level of the child. The explanation for loving students as learners is revealed as Kohl writes about the necessity to see the larger perspective when planning lessons. Teachers have all experienced those times when they have spent hours toiling over bringing a concept or idea into the classroom. Somehow when these plans are executed, the results are not cohesive with the objectives. Kohl gives examples of these situations, and how as a teacher one becomes part of the whole to provide concrete learning through these "sidetracked" parts in the lesson.

The third section discusses the role of being a parent, advice given to those who "would like their children to develop self-discipline and their own intellectual and artistic skills as well as a commitment to equity and social justice" (p. 189). This section also offers an insight into fatherhood and ends with a section on aging.

Section 4 thrashes out Kohl's ideas on critical issues in education during the present time. The idea teachers can "creatively maladjust" to dysfunctional systems is presented. Educators are expected to conform and carry out directives given without question. Often times, the expectations to conform move against the grain of sound teaching practice. Not conforming brings about a sense of guilt and yet the inner conviction one experiences cannot allow conforming. It is at this point Kohl say there is a "beginning of a personal awareness of issues of conscience" (p. 284). He ends the section with examples and ways to empower oneself and the education profession.

Herbert Kohl's passion and desire for learning and education are apparent on every page. His intention to create a collection of his works demonstrating the wealth of forty-five years in teaching children was successful. This book is an inspiration and is sure to spark or rekindle one's dedication for teaching. As a 20 year veteran in the education arena, this book is the breath of hope I will remind myself of as I walk into my classroom in this time of high stakes testing. Herb Kohl's book just might be the keystone of my survival.

Reviewed by Sharon Whitehead-van Löben Sels, PhD., First grade teacher, Hidahl Elementary, Ceres Unified in California, and adjunct faculty with Chapman University, and Walden University.

Krajnjan, Stevan (2009). *Timesavers for Teachers Book One: Interactive Classroom Forms and Essential Tools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 258 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 978-0-4703-9532-5

Krajnjan, Stevan. (2009). *Timesavers for Teachers Book Two: Report Card and IEP Comments, Substitute Teacher Instructions Kit, and Classroom Awards and Passes*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 276 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 978-0-4703-9533-2

Stevan Krajnjan shares prepared materials that could be of value to both novice and veteran educators in *Timesavers for Teachers*, books one and two. He utilized his twenty-four years of teaching experience to develop timetables, templates, to-do lists, plans, questionnaires, graphic organizers and more for book one. This resource guide only has reproducibles that can be copied or printed with the accompanying CD. There is no theory or research-based evidence included behind the use of the forms or their creation. Krajnjan also provides a Web site for more information on other timesavers that he has designed at www.timesaversforteachers.com.

Nothing about these forms or documents is overly creative or impressive, but some could be handy for teachers who have not yet decided to "go green." Each page utilizes some format of Microsoft Word software and could easily be recreated by any teacher with average computer skills. Many similar types of forms can also be downloaded for free from the Internet. Not all forms will be useful for every teacher, and there are some that seem overly repetitive. There is a whole section on paper passes in both books one and two for: the hall, office, washroom, bathroom, computer, library, game, lunchroom, and no-homework passes. What is the difference between a washroom and a bathroom? Passes are perforated for printing, laminating, and cutting. Ironically, there are other methods of hall passes that could save even *more* time for teachers, such as the use of a wooden, reusable pass that doesn't require copying, laminating, and cutting out every few weeks due to

everyday wear and tear. Please note that book two contains the exact same passes that are in book one, along with a few others.

I wondered why the detention log had a large crab clip art at the top. Does that mean students in detention are crabby? I did not care for the homework excuse note at all. What teacher wants to read documented excuses for why students aren't prepared and responsible for their own learning? There is a sample purchase order form that cannot be utilized in districts with their own policies and procedures regarding ordering teaching materials. There are also grade book pages for marks and progress reports that could be utilized informally, but why go to the trouble when most districts provide licensed online grade book software programs for teachers and trains them to use it? The incident report form is another that I could not use as a teacher because our district has their own personalized form required by the insurance company.

Some of the forms have good ideas, but may need to be modified. For instance, one form has 8 math notebook expectations that may not be the expectations that all teachers have for their students. The class birthdays chart was particularly lackluster. Most teachers I've observed document birthdays each year with a dry-erase marker on a brightly-colored laminated poster displayed in the classroom. These posters last for multiple years and typically have a more creative design. In regards to student recognition, book two has more paper certificate awards than book one, but all of them are more fridge-worthy than frame-worthy when it comes to creative design and color. They are just not as impressive as the store-bought variety that are currently available at teacher supply stores.

One good aspect of the book for math teachers is the multiple types of grid paper that can be used. There is also a 20 point checklist for students to follow as they proofread each other's work that language arts teachers would applaud. It's a stronger template than the micro-font peer editing forms that are included as 4 copies per page. I had difficulty reading those. Book one also includes handwriting paper, evaluation rubrics, and reflection forms for school field trips. I thought the "Book Jot Notes" were a good idea in book one because they have space for students to write down words they want to look up later. The "Parent/Teacher Conference Preparation" forms are also a good idea in book one to help teachers organize their thoughts prior to the meeting, so they don't forget key topics that can sometimes get lost in conversation when conferencing with parents. The substitute teacher feedback forms included in book two are well organized and would be useful for any teacher in any grade, but are not essential. The class list form in book two is also good, but it would take a long time to fill out. I would probably just use the enrollment cards that the secretary provides at the beginning of the year and keep them filed in a handy organizer, which allows you to keep information alphabetically, rather than change and print a paper form every time you get a new student added to your roster.

The bottom line for teachers is that I would not pay \$32.95 for book one's forms that are either antiquated, non-applicable, redundant, currently provided by my school district, or that I could find online for free. Also, I'm not really sure that book one saves you much time as a teacher because it really doesn't take much time to create simple forms such as these for yourself with a software program provided by the school. In addition, many of the graphic organizers included in book one did not provide enough room for students to write in, and I have found others that I like better included for free with my basal reading series and online that provide more useable space.

I have a different opinion about book two. If you are the type of teacher who has difficulty coming up with the most professional approach to commenting on student performance or behavior, I highly recommend book two for you. Currently teaching special education in Canada, Krajnjan understands the professional practice of communication and is able to help teachers find the exact wording to describe student behavior and performance. The comments are appropriate, well-worded, and thorough for all curriculum areas and would be a useful resource for both novice and veteran teachers. Using Krajnjan's comments will also help you avoid being too honest in your feedback to the point of either offending the parents or making yourself come across as tired and frustrated with the student. Part I of book two is the real time saving resource for teachers. When it comes to the bottom line for teachers though, there are cheaper collections of professional commentary for report cards and progress reports that can be purchased in teacher resource stores, and you can survive quite well as an effective teacher without parts II and III of book two. I would suggest saving your money for more useful ready-made resources and researching other options for saving real time as a teacher, if that's what you're looking for in either of these publications.

Reviewed by Jennifer Holloway, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Cameron University.

Levin, Ben. (2008). *How to Change 5000 Schools: A Practical and Positive Approach for Leading Change at Every Level*. Cambridge: MA Harvard Education Press.

Pages: 256 Price: \$13.50 ISBN: 978-1-934742-08-2

Ben Levin's name will be familiar to persons involved in educational leadership and educational change. He is a frequent contributor to *Phi Delta Kappan* and has written numerous articles as well as three other books. His name is often linked with fellow Canadian Michael Fullan, and Fullan provides one of the endorsements included on the back cover of the book. Levin and Fullan were two of the educators brought in by the Ontario ministry of education in 2003 to tackle a failing educational system.

In this book, Levin describes the reforms which resulted in the proportion of students reaching provincial standards increasing by 10 percent in four years, the number of very low-performing schools dropping by 75 percent, high school graduation rates rising by 7 percent over 4 years, attrition among young teachers dropping by half, early retirement among

teachers declining sharply, and public confidence notably increasing.

The first question that many will probably ask is whether this approach would be transferable to the United States. Levin addresses this question when he writes “I contend in this book that there are ways to push forward system improvement, even in a large and decentralized place like the United States, that do not rely on simplistic ideas about accountability, that do not make everything dependent on a single test score, that help strengthen the skills and motivation of students and educators rather than demotivating them, and in doing those things also build public confidence in public education” (p. 8). The course taken in Ontario was certainly not simplistic, and it required a significant increase in spending. However, the results they achieved are indisputable, and their strategies can be undertaken anywhere.

The book is an interesting mix of idealism and pragmatism. Levin stresses that there is no one strategy that will work for all schools, but one element that he views as universally important is what Fullan describes as “capacity-building.” Capacity building requires a change in the prevailing culture and is characterized by new values and new behaviors (p. 82). Levin emphasizes that change is not something that can be mandated or imposed upon people. Among the more striking features of the Ontario plan was the importance placed on teacher development and both teacher and parent buy-in. Levin makes clear that their reform was centered around support and respect rather than relying on punitive measures. Although much of this information is available in Levin’s other writings, this book is a highly readable account that more fully explains both the underlying philosophy as well as the specific strategies used in Ontario.

In the final analysis, however, this book is not about the Ontario schools—it is about all students and teachers and school leaders. It is about how schools can succeed in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Levin makes it clear how difficult (and expensive) change can be, but his is ultimately an optimistic message. Change can and does occur.

Highly recommended for all libraries serving educational administration programs.

Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University.

Makin, Laurie; Diaz, Criss J. & McLachlan, Claire. (2008). *Literacies in Childhood, Changing Views, Challenging Practice*, 2nd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 304 Price: \$49.95 ISBN: 0729537838

When a book I am reading for my own professional growth and the readings of my doctoral coursework mesh, I know I am onto something. The synergy between the ideas presented in *Literacies in Childhood, Changing Views, Challenging Practice*, edited by Laurie Makin, Criss Jones Díaz, and Claire McLachlan, and the ideas I am exploring through my required course readings and writings is very powerful.

This book is divided into three sections: “Frameworks for Thinking about Literacy”, “Pathways to Literacy”, and “Multiliteracies and Diversity”. Each of these sections is further divided into individual chapters that not only connect with each other but also with other sections and chapters in the book. From my multiple perspectives as a grade 2 teacher, mother of a 4-year-old, and a doctoral student, the main threads running through this book are the same. First, the growth of globalization and technology requires different kinds of approaches in the classroom. Second, since literacy is first acquired through social interactions outside of the school setting, early childhood practices need to consider and expand upon home experiences and cultures, recognizing that literacy is not just about reading and writing. Becoming literate “includes electronic literacies, technoliteracies, digital literacies, visual literacies and print-based literacies.” (p.57). The authors believe that we need to intentionally learn about the literacies and routines that are part and parcel of each child’s family practices.

Many teachers tend to privilege school practices over home practices; valuing those children with literacy practices that more closely match the school’s literacy beliefs. Yet, in order for all students to learn well and be successful, teachers must create a bridge between home and school. At the same time, children need to be critical questioners and analyzers of their family’s societal condition and situation. The contributors to this book all believe that young children can engage in critical literacy activities. Teachers need to be familiar with children’s popular and home cultures in order to help them do this.

Each chapter in this book includes an abstract, a reflection and follow-up box, and numerous references. Each chapter takes a look at a variety of literacies and contemporary issues in teaching and learning by describing the research and how it applies to current thinking and practice in the classroom. In this way, teachers can integrate their knowledge of early childhood development, with an understanding of home cultures, and current research to best address the needs of our youngest learners.

Often the reflection and follow-up box in teacher education and professional books is comprised of a series of questions to test the reader’s literal understanding of the section. In *Literacies in Childhood*, however, the reflection and follow-up questions are authentic and relevant to teaching and learning. Even though I often skip this part in most books, I found myself exploring the reflection questions and thinking about how my responses could improve and enhance my current teaching practices.

This is not necessarily a book teachers can pick up and read without support. It’s a book that begs to be read in small groups so that action can be taken based on, but not limited to, the suggested activities at the end of each chapter. In that sense, it is a perfect book for a college undergraduate or graduate course. It would engender rich conversations and small

and large changes in practices that could have an enormous impact on children's learning. At the same time, this book would make a great book study for a K – 3 school-based staff; participants will necessarily experience changes to their thinking that would impact classroom practices.

Reviewed by Elisa Waingort, Dalhousie Elementary School, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She currently teaches second grade bilingual students and is a doctoral student at the University of South Australia, Adelaide..

Phelps Deily, Mary-Ellen (Ed.). (2009). *The Education Week Guide to K-12 Terminology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 133 Price: \$14.95 ISBN: 978-0-470-40668-7

The Education Week Guide to K-12 Terminology is the foundational volume in a continuing series of monographic guides to critical issues in education to be published by *Education Week* and Wiley imprint Jossey-Bass. Providing brisk, basal overviews of key concepts and issues, this thin glossary of K-12 terminology is a valuable and authoritative resource for educators and parents wishing to navigate the professional jargon, bureaucratic legalese, and acronymic morass of K-12 education. Administrators, teachers, and policymakers will appreciate the convenience, credibility, and succinctness of this affordable guide.

With definitions ranging from one to five sentences, this glossary communicates the fundamentals of K-12 issues and terms in lucid writing that is free of ancillary or extraneous information. The guide's explanation of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), for example, is 53 words long—mercifully short compared to the NAGB's "about us" page at 965 words (www.nagb.org) or the Wikipedia entry on the same subject with 1,160 words (en.wikipedia.org). While the guide's economy of words and its ability to distill complex ideas is admirable, some entries are perhaps a bit too elemental or terse for the needs of seasoned practitioners and researchers. Overall, however, the definitions are balanced enough to meet the needs of most in the field of education.

Though the definitions are generally quite good, finding them is sometimes burdensome. Cross-referencing is sporadic, acronyms are treated inconsistently, and there is not a subject index (despite a claim to the contrary emblazoned on the cover). These omissions, however, are forgivable as they are of limited utility in such a slim volume.

In some cases, definitions are coupled with excerpts from *Education Week* articles, appearing in visually distinct panels on the sides of several pages. Though these excerpts are somewhat diversionary and, in most cases, not strictly necessary, they sometimes provide needed situational and historical context to the definitions. The best feature, which is appended to the end of the book, is a very useful and comprehensive guide to abbreviations, legislation, organizations, and other "challenging language"—these seven pages alone are worth the price of admission.

The Education Week Guide to K-12 Terminology is the most comprehensive and reliable guide to the unique language of education available today, and whatever flaws this guide may possess are minor relative to the quality of the definitions.

Reviewed by Benjamin Johnson, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Rycik, Mary T. & Rycik, James A. (2007). *Phonics and word identification: Instruction and intervention, K-8*. Upper Saddle Creek, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Pages: 192 Price: \$21.20 ISBN: 978-0-1311-8663-7

One of the most controversial issues in teaching reading is whole language versus phonics. Dealing with phonics and word recognition instead of whole language, *Phonics and Word Identification* is divided into eight medium-length chapters covering topics such as "Learning and Teaching about Consonants" and "Learning and Teaching about Vowels." This book emphasizes on how to teach phonics and word identification to students from play school to eighth grade. The authors not only discuss the content with specifically details, but they also offer many strategies and activities that maybe apply to teaching reading and writing.

In chapter one, the authors give a concise view of what phonics and word identification are and the chronological background of the roles of phonics instruction in reading. Chapter two focuses on introducing approaches to phonics instruction, as well as, the five principles which teachers should take into consideration while making decisions concerning teaching phonics and word identification. The following five chapters provide the essential knowledge and information about learning and teaching consonants, vowels, and word structures. In addition, those five chapters demonstrate how to apply the knowledge into reading, spelling and writing instructions. Chapter eight addresses the challenges and/or difficulties English language learners encounter when learning English. Also given in this chapter are instructional strategies to facilitate students' learning of new language structures.

Moreover, the way this book is organized is fascinating. For instance, before the beginning of each chapter, there is a scenario demonstrating the key concepts of the following contents. After that, several questions are posed to encourage readers to think about before moving to the main reading. The readers are not just passively receiving the knowledge and information; on the contrary, opportunities are offered to readers for interacting with this book. Moreover, there are two

activities called “Before You Move On” and “What’s In This Chapter For Me” at the end of each chapter to enable readers to review and summarize their understanding of the main ideas of each chapter.

In addition, each chapter has a section called “Interventions When Students Struggle.” In this section, suggestions and solutions are offered to teachers for helping students struggling with reading and writing. Chapter eight, “Accommodating and Supporting Students with Language Differences,” deals with the difficulties and challenges encountered by English language learners who speak different languages and dialects. Supportive strategies are presented in this chapter for dealing with those difficulties. The activities and games mentioned in this book, such as the teacher-made spelling games shown on page 104, 105 and 106, are research-based and are described and explained clearly by words, figures, and pictures. Teachers can gain a macro-perspective of the activities, as well as a micro-perspective of how to do these activities. By doing so, experienced teachers can grasp the main idea and modify the activities to meet their needs. New teachers can use the activities as guides to their teaching.

Teachers who care that their students always try hard look for the best approach to teaching. However, determining whether the approach is good or not depends on whether it meets the needs of the students. In the same way, it is hard to say that a book is good or not. It depends on what the readers or users want from the book and how they use it. Overall, this book does offer a lot of fundamental information and present many practical activities. Teachers can simply use strategies directly or modify them to fit what they need. Besides, many language arts teachers think the phonics approach should be applied only in teaching ESL students because phonics focuses on the regulations of how to spell and pronounce the vocabulary words (Curtis, 1997; Ovando, 2006). The way English native speakers learn their native language is similar to the whole language approach, which gives emphasis to the meaning of a text (Curtis, 1997; Ovando, 2006). Even so, not all English native speakers pronounce and spell vocabulary words accurately. Therefore, this book is useful for ESL teachers as well as for language arts teachers. Even though this book contains a lot of significant knowledge as well as good strategies and activities, it would probably benefit more teachers if the authors can take the suggestions addressed below into consideration.

This book includes information comparing Spanish phonemes to English and Black English vernacular (BEV), and culturally responsive teaching but it does not mention anything about the phonics learning difficulties faced by the ESL students with different native languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, etc. After all, in the U.S., approximately one-third of students are language minorities, who include not only Hispanics and Blacks, but also Asians and American Indian/Alaska natives and so on.

In addition, this book pays much attention to the teaching of the vowels and consonant phonics patterns, which is important. However, teachers cannot teach children the alphabetic symbols and patterns without teaching the *sounds* of spoken English. It is one of the biggest challenges for teachers to teach K-1 children. As Thomas (2007) stated, “Learning English vowel sounds presents a twofold challenge for ESL students. First, English has many more vowel sounds than there are vowel letters in the alphabet, and, second, these sounds often seem perplexingly similar to each other.” This book would be better if the authors provided the teaching strategies and activities regarding *sound* teaching. Overall, this book is worth buying and keeping on our bookshelves and I recommend this book to my colleagues.

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Review by Shu-Chuan Hsu, a doctoral student in bilingual education at Texas A&M University, Kingsville.

Uribe, Maria. & Nathenson-Mejia, Sally. (2009). *Literacy Essentials for English Language Learners: Successful Transitions*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pages: 140 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 0807749044

Does English reading need to be delayed until some optimal level of native language reading proficiency is reached and is English oral language development a prerequisite for learning to read in English? *Literacy Essentials for English Language Learners: Successful Transitions* by Maria Uribe and Sally Natheson-Mejia address these questions and provide a research-based book for developing language and literacy. As the title implies, the book provides “literacy essentials” that encourage teachers to build on existing linguistic and cultural background knowledge of English language learners in kindergarten through 5th grade. Furthermore in the foreword, Escamilla (2008) concurs that the book is for teachers, administrators, and other educators who want to support the languages and cultures of these children by implementing effective literacy programs for second language learners (p. ix).

The sections of the book include a foreword by Kathy Escamilla, acknowledgments, and an introduction which provides the reader with background for the whole book. Chapters one and two discuss the need to access and build on students’ background knowledge and how to manage a learning environment that takes their needs into consideration. The next three chapters cover the components of comprehensive literacy instruction: read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading.

Chapter six focuses on writing instruction. One of the many features that should be highlighted is the appendix which is divided into two tables that address instructional components, academic needs, and instructional strategies for students according to grade level. The other sections of the book consist of references, children's literature cited, an index, and a section about the authors.

Uribe and Natheson-Mejia present how background knowledge affects what learners understand and how important it is for teachers to gather information about ELL students' educational histories and academic knowledge as well as what they know about a school culture (p. 9). In fact, background knowledge is an essential aspect of students' reading success (Echevarria & Raves, 2003; Escamilla, 1993; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Kendal & Khuon, 2005). The authors also address the instructional environment for English language learners such as curriculum planning, grouping for instruction, and the classroom schedule. This gives the reader ideas on how to make connections across the curriculum that will reinforce learning and focus instruction on some of the specifics of academic language and literacy development.

The authors focus on students whose primary language is Spanish. This was an area of concern for me because many school districts have a diverse population of English language learning (ELL) students; however the authors make it clear that instructional strategies can be utilized with all students whose native language is not English. Throughout the book the authors refer to the terms *build on* (which refers to background knowledge), *explain* (refers to explicit instruction), and *involve* (refers to interactive instructional techniques) arguing that all three are important instructional strategies to support transition. (p. 5) Another positive aspect of the book is that each chapter includes a section titled "What We Know" which highlights information from the professional research literature related to the topic.

The authors suggest that literacy instruction be strength based and should begin with what children know and must include the development of cultural schema (p. 7-9). Larson and Marsh (2005) reiterate that we need to move beyond simply valuing or celebrating students' literacies, but actively and meaningfully use these literacies in the curriculum.

It is the authors belief that all students who come to school with a native language that is not English should be encouraged to express themselves in many ways, including in their native language. In addition, the authors demonstrate that ELL students need different instruction from struggling native English speakers and they propose a set of proven methods for helping children learn core content while transitioning to academic proficiency in English.

Overall, this book is designed to help teachers determine the needs of their ELL students and to improve and strengthen comprehensive literacy and to support successful learning. The book provides examples and sample lesson plans and structures to help teachers plan culturally sensitive instruction. Together, the authors combine their expertise, Uribe is the principal at Goldrick Elementary, an urban school in Denver, Colorado and Nathenson-Mejia is an associate professor in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver.

Literacy Essentials for English Language Learners: Successful Transitions is certainly designed to be a resource and tool for educators who want to help ELL students develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in school. I found that this book provides detailed explanations of a variety of concepts, issues, activities, and assessments, all of which are connected to reading instruction.

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Reviewed by Adriana S. García, a PhD student in Culture, Literacy and Language at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is also a Language Support Teacher and works primarily with limited English proficient students in first through fifth grade.

Van Zile, Susan & Napoli, Mary. (2009). *Teaching Literary Elements with Picture Books: Engaging Standards-Based Lessons and Strategies*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 80 Price: \$14.99 ISBN: 978-0-439-02799-1

Susan Van Zile's and Mary Napoli's *Teaching Literary Elements with Picture Books: Engaging Standards-based Lessons*

and Strategies, provides a variety of "ideas for transferring writing skills and literary devices from literature to student writing" (p. 4). More specifically, Van Zile and Napoli provide a variety of lessons which serve the purpose of teaching children to use the following literary devices in their own writing: imagery/sensory language, simile, metaphor, personification, irony, theme, idiom, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, satire, parody, voice, word choice, and style. Each of the lessons focus on one literary device, and lists pieces of children's literature that incorporate the featured literary device.

The premise of this book reflects the ideas of Fletcher and Portalupi (1998) who note, "the writing you get out of your students can only be as good as the classroom literature that surrounds and sustains it" (p. 10). It makes sense that if teachers expect their students to incorporate literary devices in their writing then students need to see multiple examples of how literary devices are used in published pieces of literature. That is, children need to be exposed to multiple selections of literature which possess quality language and rich vocabulary.

The basic format of Van Zile's and Napoli's book is as follows:

1. Each lesson begins by identifying, defining, and providing an example of the featured literary device.
2. Bibliographic information and brief summaries of the selected literature appear.
3. Materials for each lesson appear in a sidebar.
4. Detailed lesson ideas which are specifically related to the selected literature appear next. These lesson ideas incorporate before-, during-, and after-reading strategies.
5. A writing activity and several extension activities are listed for each literary device. These activities give students practice with the featured literary devices and also cross over to other content areas.

In addition to the repetitive format for each lesson, teachers can find a variety of resources at the end of the book, such as: a variety of graphic organizers, a reference list for pieces of children's literature, a reference list for professional references, and a list of internet resources for information about award-winning literature selections.

For many years I have used children's literature to motivate and teach young writers. I was excited to see that Van Zile and Napoli created a book that provides lessons for incorporating children's literature in the process of teaching literary elements to young writers. After reading *Teaching Literary Elements with Picture Books: Engaging Standards-based Lessons and Strategies*, I decided to teach a small group of third graders to incorporate similes into their own writing by using the lessons suggested by Van Zile and Napoli. One of the activities required young writers to write a postcard describing a destination of choice. Choosing the beach as his destination, one of my third graders described the ocean during sunset as "a large pool of melted gold." My small group of third graders was very successful with Van Zile's and Napoli's lesson. I plan to continue using Van Zile's and Napoli's lessons to assist young writers in incorporating literary devices into their own writing.

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Reviewed by Stephanie A. Grote-Garcia, doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.



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