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Brief reviews for March 2009

Allen, Janet. (2008). *More Tools for Teaching Content Literacy.* Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Pages: 46   Price: $12.00   ISBN: 978-1-57110-771-8

Author of *Words, Words, Words* (1999), *Yellow Brick Roads* (2000), *On the Same Page* (2002), and *Tools for Teaching Content Literacy* (2004) among numerous articles and earlier writings, Janet Allen has staked a claim as a literacy guru worthy of every practitioner's attention.

Her latest text in a flip-chart format is easily applicable in both elementary and secondary classrooms regardless of subject area. It is designed for both beginner and experienced teachers across disciplines, who wish to have students understand assigned texts and be active participants in learning activities, which lead to student engagement. The strategies detailed with the associated organizers are sure to appeal to students.

For each of the twenty-five learning tools included in the book, Allen describes the activity, tells why she would use the activity in a classroom, and gives numbered steps on how to use the activity. Also, Allen provides the original research references of a particular strategy as well as suggested references for further reading. Both of these features support individual teacher exploration of the selected strategy to advance professional learning or remind teachers of previously used strategies. While a teacher may not try every strategy, any of the strategies that are incorporated into a teacher's repertoire is sure to advance student interest in learning, particularly if the teacher follows Allen's lead by modeling how the strategy applies to the text under study.

One of the proposed strategies is the "Three Level Study Guide." This strategy is adapted for each grade and requires students to "work through [literal, interpretive, and application] levels, ... to read more closely, effectively discriminate between important and minor ideas and information, and think more creatively and critically" (Three Level Study Guide). Allen has presented key questions which she has termed "sentence starters" to raise student awareness of different levels of thinking. More awareness in creating questions to help students determine a purpose for reading is addressed in "Using the 5Ws to Find Information" strategy. This particular tool is not limited to the literal level of reading/thinking, but certainly applicable to the early grades.

Allen warns that teachers must model the strategies if students are expected to integrate and internalize the strategies as learning tools. One particular writing strategy, "EXPLORE Writing," takes students through elements in preparing a response to an assigned reading. Allen's example is her own reader response process in which she does a think aloud as she takes notes about reading *No Promises in the Wind* by Irene Hunt. So that students do not see this accompanying graphic organizer as another worksheet, Allen explains that teachers must share their written response (the final product of the strategy). Another effective writing strategy to help students internalize information requires teachers to identify the "big ideas" for students to learn and to then pose connections designed to help students think and write about the content.

Those in the literacy field will recognize some of the selected strategies; however, Allen has refreshed commonly incorporated reading and writing strategies and imbued them with her practical explanations and applications with student work from real classrooms. The selected strategies are varied to fit the needs of multiple classrooms and teacher objectives.

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Allen, J. (2004). *Tools for teaching content literacy*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Allen, J. (1999). *Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4-12*. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Allen, J. (2000). *Yellow brick roads: Shared and guided paths to independent reading 4-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse

Publishers.

Hunt, I. (1970). *No promises in the wind*. Chicago: Follett.

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

Barone, Diane, & Youngs, Suzette. (2008). *Your Core Reading Program and Children's Literature: Effective Strategies for Using the Best of Both, K-3.* **New York: Scholastic.**

Pages: 128   Price: $17.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-04707-4

In the current climate of 90-minute reading blocks and research-based curricula, many teachers are feeling the tension of covering mandated material while still making learning interesting, relevant, and appropriate for all students. *Your Core Reading Program & Children's Literature* seeks to marry the best of both worlds. The book begins with a rationale for doing so and addressing some of the technical issues (e.g., scheduling, planning, connecting to state standards, and selecting texts and parts of the existing curriculum). It then goes on to outline the content and creation of example units, based on real core reading programs and children's literature for each grade, first through third. (Note the discrepancy between the title of the book and content; kindergarten is not addressed.)

Barone and Youngs begin their book by constructing a solid argument for the use of both core literacy programs and authentic children's literature. In essence, they argue that the systematicity of the core program ensures a consistency that is beneficial for students transferring from grade to grade or school to school, and for teachers moving in and out of schools and grade levels. In addition, following the programs with fidelity ensures that all of the basic literacy skills are "covered". However, such programs are often criticized for their focus on isolated skills as opposed to content, potential to limit students' interaction with quality literature, and lack of student choice. Literature-based curricula are often praised for their tendency to focus on higher-level thinking skills, their authenticity, and their relation to student motivation. They are, however, criticized for their potential to be unsystematic, lack of articulation across grade levels and schools, and lack of attention to explicit teaching of word-level skills. By combining the two, instruction can benefit from their strengths and each can compensate for the other's weaknesses.

The focus of the book then turns to how to accomplish this feat by purposively selecting and combining the most beneficial parts of each instructional method, and eliminating those that are redundant or less effective. As an example, the authors offer suggestions for replacing the large number of primarily surface-level questions that accompany text selections in core series with more authentic writing and oral language activities. They also give specific examples of how to use a text selection from the core program as a starting point for a thematic unit, utilizing both other selections from the program, as well as authentic children's literature. The nuts and bolts of designing these instructional units are described in detail and exemplified in descriptions of three units based on real core reading programs.

This book has a lot to recommend it to teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators, alike. First and foremost, it pushes the reader to envision classrooms at their best--the way they could and should be, not the way they are. At the same time, it remains, for the most part, realistic. It empowers teachers as professionals by giving teachers the tools they need to make sound instructional decisions such as which pieces of the core program to use, choosing anchor and supporting texts, and evaluating the alignment of instruction with state standards. For example, in their description of the three units (one per grade), they outline not only the finished product, but also the criteria used to strategically select parts of the core program and supplement with children's literature and alternate teaching techniques. They go beyond what it should look like, describing how to strategically integrate children's literature without losing the comprehensive instruction that the core program supports. These sections detail activities in the context of the example units, but also give generic information that can be used to integrate them into other units of study. Additionally, *Your Core Reading Program & Children's Literature* contains a wealth of resource lists, with suggestions for both high-quality children's literature and web resources.

The book is not, and does not claim to be, a one-shot solution. There are many things that would still need to be worked out by the classroom teacher. For example, sample schedules don't account for transition times, which makes the scheduling of some parts of the day somewhat unrealistic for younger children (e.g. 15 minutes for recess and 30 minutes for lunch) and there is also very little time explicitly allotted to other content (45 minutes per day to be shared by science, social studies, and special classes). In addition, language arts and other content area standards vary by state, and the careful construction of integrated units that do justice to both is necessarily work that must be done at the school or district level (as the authors themselves recommend). However, the book is encouraging, leaving the reader the feeling that the task is not insurmountable and is worthy of attempting.

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

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

Pages: 238   Price: $32.95   ISBN: 9780071592062

In *Disrupting Class*, Harvard professor Clayton M. Christensen and his coauthors describe a vision of educational change. Teachers, administrators, and professors of teacher education will likely find implications for their work in this book.

The authors draw on Christensen's extensive research in disruptive innovation (Christensen & Raynor, 2003, Christensen, 1997). Disruptive innovations are products that originally target non-consumers. The quality of disruptive innovations is such that existing customers do not generally utilize them. However, over time the quality of these products improves, and they eventually become the standard product, utilized by the majority of users.

The authors use the personal computer to illustrate disruptive innovation. Prior to the personal computer, minicomputers (the least expensive computers) cost $200,000. Apple built a computer that was originally targeted to children as a toy. It was affordable, but could not do the complex tasks of a mini computer. Children (non-consumers of minicomputers) enjoyed these computers and a new market was created. The quality of the personal computer improved, until adults who would never have bought a minicomputer, purchased personal computers to help them accomplish basic tasks. Over time this "disruptive innovation" became the standard as it improved to the point where it could do all of the tasks formerly accomplished only by minicomputers. Thus the disruptive innovation, though originally cheaper and inferior to the competition, eventually became the standard product.

How does this apply to education? The authors begin by defining what they see as a critical problem. They state that students learn in different ways and that schools are not built to customize student learning to the different needs that students have. Drawing upon Gardner (2006) and others, the authors cite the importance of teaching students with a variety of learning styles. They argue that the current structure of schools is designed for standardization, and that the problems schools face require customization. Disruptive innovation can help solve this problem.

The authors argue that disruptively deploying computer-based innovations is a key to customize educational resources for students. They state, "student-centric learning is the escape hatch from the…hierarchical cells of standardization. The software is emerging. Student-centric learning opens the door for students to learn in ways that match their intelligence types in the places and at the paces they prefer by combining content in customized sequences" (p. 38-39).

Drawing on the work of Cuban (2001), the authors state that typically computers support existing school functions rather than transforming them. Computers do not just need to be used in classrooms; they need to be used differently, in disruptive ways. For example, an area of non-consumption in some schools might be a class in Arabic. Because the class is not offered, nobody takes the class. Through the use of video conferencing, a class in Arabic could be offered to interested students. In addition, video conferencing could allow students to be paired up with peer learners in Arabic speaking countries who are trying to learn English. Although the quality of this type of educational opportunity might not be as good as a live classroom, it is better than the alternative (no Arabic instruction). As the technology improves over time, it is conceivable that this form of education could become as efficacious as face to face classroom instruction. Citing innovations such as Apex Learning's AP classes, Brigham Young University's Virtual ChemLab and others, the authors show how these disruptions have the potential to change the face of education.

In addition to a focus on K-12 education, the authors offer insights into improving early childhood education, educational research, and the structure of schools based on disruptive innovation theory.

Two features of the book are worth noting. First, a narrative story is woven throughout the book, putting a personal face on the theories set forth. This story of two high school students, a teacher, and a principal illustrates the challenges faced by learners, teachers, and administrators, as well as the ways in which solutions from the book could be implemented. Second, many readers will find that the extensive footnotes provide significant additional insights.

This book articulately states a theory and its practical applications for teachers, administrators and education researchers. Given the rapid growth in Web 2.0 and other technologies the authors' theory about the power of disruptive forces may have important implications for the future of education.

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Reviewed by John Hilton III, Brigham Young University.

Crawford, Linda. (2008). *The Advisory Book.* Minneapolis, MN: Origins.

Pages: 296   Price: $24.95   ISBN: 978-0-938541-12-7

This comprehensive guide to student advisory programs for adolescents is full of practical ideas for teachers. The author, Linda Crawford, cites the findings of studies about social-emotional learning to support her argument that advisory programs help students improve their social and emotional skills, attitudes about themselves, others and school, classroom behavior, and achievement in school. The book focuses on four basic adolescent needs: autonomy, competence, relationship and

fun.

Two structured meeting formats for advisory programs, the Circle of Power and Respect (CPR) and Activity Plus (A+), are outlined in the book in some detail. Both are based on the six principles of *Developmental Designs* (2008), a research-based approach developed by Origins, a non-profit organization and publishers of this book. There are numerous examples, suggestions for daily messages and student activities, quotes from students, and references from research throughout the book. Chapter 5, "170 Thematic Advisories" and the extensive appendices, full of ideas for greeting, sharing, games and other activities, are particularly helpful as planning tools. You will also find additional resources, such as question lists, a personality inventory, and sections about role-playing, resolving conflict, planning a meeting, problem-solving, building consensus, and goal-setting.

As a middle-school principal, I found this book intriguing and full of possibilities and the argument for advisory programming compelling. The practical suggestions make the book a valuable planning resource, and the photographs of young adolescents in their advisory groups that appear throughout the book bring it to life. I would recommend this book to any teacher, counselor or school administrator who works with adolescent learners.

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Melanie Tait, Ed. D., Principal, Percy Baxter Middle School.

Kaplan, Phyllis; Rogers, Virginia & Webster, Rande. (2008). *Differentiated Instruction Made Easy.* **San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

Pages: 205   Price: $24.95   ISBN: 978-0-470-37235-7

Differentiated instruction is based on the belief that students learn differently. In order to meet the needs of every student in the classroom, a variety of activities which are shaped to the learner, should be offered. Classrooms that offer an environment and strategies with student centered learning are more natural and more effective than those which force fit students into a standard mold. *Differentiated Instruction Made Easy* is a practical, activity-based book that offers strategies to meet the needs of all the students in a classroom.

This text is intended for teachers of grades 2-8. It has activities for reading, spelling, writing, math, history, geography, science, media, art, music, fantasy, and peacemaking/service learning. There are five components which can be used across all subject areas.

1. Contracts: An important element of each subject chapter; they are an agreement between student and teacher that allows for interest and learning preference. There are numerous activities for each subject area and this form sets a limit on the options as well as the product.
2. Specific task cards and wheels: Most, not all, of the subject area chapters contain these items with simple and easy to understand directions which can be adapted to fit the needs of the learner.
3. Game boards: An entire chapter is devoted to samples of open-ended game boards with directions. The teacher will need to add dice, markers, or other game pieces. These game boards will help create more independent and thoughtful learners.
4. Spinners: They can be used as a supplement for the game boards or as a tool for a different activity.
5. Open-ended add-ons: The final chapter has journal sheets, graph paper, cartoon strips and other materials that can be utilized in the classroom for a variety of activities.

This book is easy to read and easy to use. The cover is a smile-starter with its bright colors and caricatures of children involved in different learning activities. *Differentiated Instruction Made Easy* would make a great resource for a classroom teacher who makes every effort for students with varied academic and cultural backgrounds, those who are struggling, or those who are advanced grow and learn to their full potential. Additionally, this book will enable students to consistently feel successful in their academics.

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

Kinnaird, Mike. (2008). *Sounds Like a Good Idea: Using Audio Technology in the Classroom.* **New York: Continuum.**

Pages: 146   Price: $36.27   ISBN: 978-1-85539-448-3

As the title of this book insinuates, it *Sounds Like a Good Idea* to use and incorporate audio technology in the classroom. The author, Mike Kinnaird, has done a brilliant job in laying out step-by-step instructions concerning the basic skills of audio technology recording, editing, and mixing techniques with specific lesson ideas and guidelines on how to utilize and integrate audio technology across various subjects in school. The author draws upon his extensive professional experience and expertise in broadcast media to promote audio-mediated classrooms.

The bulk of the book is comprised of three major parts. In part one, the author spends a great deal of time rationalizing the premise of using audio technology in the classroom in addition to scaffolding and walking readers through some fundamental techniques in developing and improving audio related skills. In part two, the book moves forward to potential classroom applications. The author presents specific tasks and venues in which audio-technology can be applied to different subject areas such as math, geography, history, and so on. In the last part of the book, the author provides his own experience of using audio in the classroom as well as case-studies of other professionals and academics who support the idea of audio-mediated classrooms.

In relation to my own experience as a language teacher, I have had some success using audio technology in the classroom and find Kinnaird's ideas enticing and highly practical. Yet, I am not fully convinced by his assertion that the audio-mediated classroom is the best approach to engage and support students in learning. Despite his compelling argument, the premise seems to have a shortage of relevant theory, research and data to substantiate his claims.

Nevertheless, the author effectively defends the overall place for audio technology in the classroom and highlights its growing role as a means of bridging schools and communities in the context of education. One of the most prevalent caveats of this book is that audio technology can be highly effective and conducive to learning when it is applied selectively and appropriately. I would recommend this book to teachers and other professionals who are interested in creating and developing audio-mediated curriculum or projects.

Reviewed by Joon Yeol Yoon, ESL instructor, PhD student in Culture, Literacy, and Language, University of Texas at San Antonio in the division of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies.

Kissner, Emily. (2008). *The Forest AND the Trees: Helping Readers Identify Important Details in Texts and Tests.* **Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Pages: 172   Price: $19.50   ISBN: 0-325-01195-8

Before reading *The Forest AND the Trees*, I was skeptical about an entire book devoted to helping readers (Grades 4-8) identify important details. Surely this task could be accomplished in a few lessons. What could Kissner possibly have to say about the subject that would require an entire book?

After reading the first two chapters, I was still undecided. The first chapter offered an overview of the book while the second chapter encouraged teachers to take students outside to notice details in nature. As a literacy coach, I constantly seek new ways to teach comprehension skills. I was not sure Kissner's book was going to provide new insights. Taking students on a nature walk did not seem to be an especially innovative idea. However, I decided to keep reading, and I am so glad that I did.

Kissner encouraged her students to go beyond the *surface* and *textbase* levels to the *situation* level. I began reading Kissner's book at a textbase level, looking for concrete ideas and activities that I could use or recommend to other teachers. As I continued to read, however, I realized I had switched to a situation level. I began to develop an appreciation not only for the research-based original assessments and examples provided by Kissner, but for her philosophy of teaching. While the language arts teacher will appreciate the ready-made lesson suggestions, activities, and surveys (e.g., What Kind of Reader Are You? and the Who's Doing the Talking?), all teachers can benefit from Kissner's approach to teaching and learning. Students are seen as individuals with unique learning needs. Kissner knows her students, knows subject matter, and knows how to scaffold student learning so that all students can be successful. Kissner stated:

> One of the many problems with the current standardized testing craze is that we become focused on a student's responses instead of thinking about the student. When we boil everything down to a, b, c, or d, right or wrong, basic or proficient, we miss a world of detail about our individual students. (p. 104)

I agree with Kissner's assertion but believe this view of teaching is not limited to standardized testing. She could have just as easily said, "One of the many problems *with education* is that we become focused on a student's responses instead of thinking about the student." While the book's title refers to main ideas as the forest and to details as the trees, on another level, the forest could also be the classroom and the trees could be the individual students. As Kissner noted, details are important in reading comprehension, and details are also important in the individual students we teach.

One of my responsibilities as a literacy coach is to offer teachers ideas and suggestions based on research. I sometimes find teachers resistant to change. Kissner's explanation of why students sometimes cling to misconceptions seems relevant to all learners, including teachers. First, learners resist "constantly trading in old facts for new ones…. the information that is oldest and most securely tied to schemas is clearly the knowledge to keep" (p. 124). Second, no one likes to be wrong.

I highly recommend this book to teachers who are willing to trade in old beliefs, who are not afraid to admit that they are sometimes wrong, who want to become more reflective, and who want to know, really know, their students. Most teachers, novice or veteran, no matter the content area or grade level would benefit from reading Kissner's book.

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

Kopp, Kathleen. (2008). *Learning through Writing: Authentic Writing Activities for the Content Areas, Grade 4.* Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 144　　Price: $19.95　　ISBN: 978-1934338-31-5

Learning through Writing: Authentic Writing Activities for the Content Areas, Grade 4 by Kathleen Kopp presents seventeen authentic writing activities for fourth grade teachers that align with national standards for content-area writing. They foster critical thinking and at the same time tap student imagination. As students move through the various stages of Kopp's writing model, teachers will be able to assess for accurate understanding of informational topics in language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Within each of the seventeen writing activities, Kopp offers a consistent and friendly format. Each activity begins with pages for the teacher: an introduction to the activity, a lesson plan with stages of the writing process, and extensions and evaluations with prepared rubrics. Kopp follows the teacher pages with pages for students covering situation, planning, and a student model. These writing activities promote thoughtful student planning and may be embedded within a current unit of study or they may stand alone.

An explanation of each teacher and student page appears at the beginning of the book. These are brief yet thorough and Kopp's words guide the reader through her rationale and her plan. Further, Kopp introduces a section dealing with differentiated instruction employing mini-lessons to address the needs of individual students. Equally important is the discussion regarding the final stage of the writing process: publication. Kopp shares electronic and online publishing offerings, student-friendly online publishing websites, and parental consent forms.

Kopp's authentic writing activities linked to content-area topics clearly provide meaningful writing experiences for all students in an engaging forum. Although this text is designated as grade 4, many of these authentic writing activities could be modified to meet various grade level standards.

Reviewed by Mary Lee Bass, Ed.D., Lecturer, Department of Educational Leadership and Special Education, Monmouth University, New Jersey. Her areas of professional interest include strategy instruction, early literacy development, content literacy, and preservice teacher education.

Mather, Nancy & Goldstein, Sam. (2008). *Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors: A Guide to Intervention and Classroom Management, Second Edition.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 488　　Price: $56.95　　ISBN: 978-1-55766-935-3

Teachers seeking effective classroom strategies for addressing student attention problems and learning, emotional and\or behavioral disabilities may find it hard to come by this information in a single package. Because Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is classified within the special education taxonomy as an Other Health Impairment (OHI) rather than a Learning or Emotional/Behavioral Disability (LD or E/BD), research pertaining to students with attentional deficits often appears separately from literature specific to students with intellectual or emotional disabilities. This second edition of Mather and Goldstein's 2001 book once again brings concerted academic rigor and applies it to the conjoined problems of emotional disorders, learning and attention difficulties, making it an outstanding book for general or special educators who are interested in the theoretical and practical applications from a variety of educational researchers.

Nancy Mather, one of the authors of the Woodcock-Johnson battery of achievement and cognitive assessments, brings her acumen as a researcher and teacher educator to the fore in tandem with Sam Goldstein, whose expertise in clinical neuropsychology and attention disorders in children complements the learning-disabilities research in the book. The second edition retains much of the content of the 2001 edition with a few important revisions: a brief section on Response to Intervention, an expanded section on emotional difficulties students may face in the classroom, including anxiety-related conditions, and new recommendations throughout based on the most recent research, including an updated resource list.

The introductory chapters detail the theoretical foundations on which the book is based. Mather and Goldstein's framework may resonate with many educators. They posit that attention and impulse control, emotions and behavior, student self-esteem and the learning environment are foundational blocks upon which the symbolic blocks of phonology, orthography, and motor skills are based. The top three conceptual blocks of their pyramid (language, images, and strategies) correspond to higher-order skill groups involving written expression, reading comprehension and math problem solving. The second edition improves upon the first with a detailed explanation of the "Building Blocks" model, outlining the interplay of various factors which affect student behavior in the classroom. The model originally appeared Mather and Goldstein's first collaboration, a text for parents of children with learning difficulties, *Overcoming Underachieving*, in 1998.

This is a logical and practical model which is supported by a wealth of research literature in the book, but one which retains an applied "feel" due to the authors' commitment to communicate with teachers using case studies and sample strategies for managing and remediating student behavior and learning in the classroom.

Within the 2008 edition, the authors pair practical solutions and considerations for working with students of varying strength-and-deficit combinations. The inclusion of a number of observational checklists and reproducible rating scales makes this a useful resource for teachers and teacher educators alike. It would be good recommended reading for any survey of special education class in teacher education and an authoritative text for any methods class addressing learning or behavior disabilities in the classroom.

I became familiar with the first edition of this book as a graduate student in special education, in a class on emotional and behavioral disorders. Six years ago this was our primary text and I have held onto it since, while many other textbooks I owned throughout the years ended up back on bookstore shelves. I attribute my continued interest in the book to the fact that the authors so painstakingly outline the various factors contributing to learning and behavior and yet spare no effort in identifying corresponding strategies that teachers and teacher educators can use to address these problems. This book is really the rarest of gems in education: a book that disseminates research comprehensively, yet so succinctly and effectively that it may be put into practice with ease.

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Reviewed by Gita Upreti, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation & School Psychology, College of Education, University of Arizona,

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Rasinski, Timothy, & Padak, Nancy. (2008). *Fast Start: Getting Ready to Read.* **New York: Scholastic.**

Pages: 144   Price: $22.99   ISBN: 978-0-545-03179-0

Fast Start: Getting Ready to Read by Timothy Rasinski and Nancy Padak provides early childhood teachers and parents with sixty simple poems followed by activities to help young children learn early concepts about print. The *Fast Start* program targets building a partnership between school and home by coordinating lessons for school and brief reinforcement lessons for home practice.

Teachers, parents, and children engage in about a five to ten minute routine of repeated readings of the reproducible poems with subsequent skill-building activities. Many of the poems are Mother Goose rhymes. The repeated reading of these rhymes and word family activities reinforce phonemic awareness development which in turn supports reading and writing skills. The authors designed the activities to set children up for multiple opportunities to build fluency in early reading behaviors. Adults model fluent expressive reading and introduce early print concepts such as directionality, one-to-one correspondence, first and last, letter names and sounds, syllables, and word boundaries.

Due to the fact that home and school activities follow a gradient of difficulty sequentially through the program, *Fast Start* can be used to differentiate instruction to match the strengths and needs of individual students. Many of the activities are easily adaptable for use with other poems not included in this program.

A five-week pilot implementation resulted in positive outcomes both in student literacy progress and teacher/parent satisfaction. The authors report successful implementation results from several settings emphasizing the positive influence of home use. The claim that this program "…ensures reading success for every child" (p. 1) raises questions as it is not a comprehensive literacy program. However, combining research and practice, this book offers supplemental lessons on print concepts and phonemic awareness to support emergent readers and writers.

Rasinski and Padak offer suggestions for managing *Fast Start* work for English language learners and their families. They recommend checking with the English Language Learner teachers in the local school for strategies to adapt the lessons to individual linguistic backgrounds. They also advise recording the poems on audiotape for home use. Proceed with caution and bear in mind the importance of selecting text within the second language learner's control. Geisler and Rodriguez (1998) encourage teachers to maintain a balance between students' competencies and features of text. Text written in rhyme may prove problematic for students learning English because their attention is divided between new concepts and unusual structure in rhyme. "Text to which children can bring interpretations, and texts which are close to children's oral language use, give them power over the learning tasks" (Clay, 1991, p. 335). Therefore, teachers using *Fast Start* with English language learners may need to support the meaning of new cultural concepts and difficult language structures in poetry until these students gain control over them.

This resource includes 30 motivational stickers, reproducible family letters, certificates, bookmarks, guidelines for introducing the program to parents, assessment procedures, and reading logs. Parent letters and the *Fast Start* routine are provided in English and Spanish, but the poems and activities are in English only. Helpful hints for program management along with clear and concise directions make *Fast Start* very teacher-friendly.

The home-school partnership in literacy education hallmarks the *Fast Start* program. Rasinski and Padak encourage parents to read to and with their children. The authors provide references that document the power of parental involvement in children's reading development. On this premise, I recommend *Fast Start: Getting Ready to Read* as a supplemental resource for primary teachers and parents to foster fluency in early concepts about print and phonemic awareness.

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Reviewed by Lisa F. Lang, a doctoral candidate in Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. With thirty years of early childhood education experience, she currently serves as a Reading Recovery Teacher

Leader and Instructional Coach in Gwinnett County Public Schools. Her research interests include instructional scaffolding, early literacy intervention, conversation analysis, and writing instruction with English language learners.

Sadowski, Michael (Ed.). (2008). *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education.* **Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.**

Pages: 259   Price: $29.95   ISBN: 978-1-891792-94-6

Michael Sadowski edits and often contributes to his collection, *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education*, which aims to present many perspectives on the intricate process of adolescent identity formation. From race, gender, and sexuality to spirituality and disability, the authors address what contextual factors affect secondary students every day on their journey to self-discovery.

An Amazon (www.amazon.com) search reveals that customers often buy Kathleen Cushman's *Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students* with *Adolescents at School*; together the two are complementary pieces. The former focuses on the students' voices and practical advice, and in the latter we hear from counselors, parents, researchers, and administrators, as well as from students.

Through a mix of research features, interviews, profiles, and commentaries, the authors build a mosaic of the forces that impact students--much like the one of student faces on the cover. Some of the major issues the authors address are the "acting white" theory as it affects African American students, the problem of "model minority" stereotyping for Asian Americans, violence among males in the wake of multiple school shootings, and the silence or bullying of LGBT students, to list just a few of many.

Most chapters are between three and six pages, and, as in any collection, some are stronger than others. The most effective chapters combine research with students' voices. One of the most memorable, Ellen Brantlinger's "Who Wins and Who Loses?", tells the story and shares the voices of an upper-class girl and a lower-class boy, both of whom were affected deeply by their social class. Other chapters feel slightly out of place, as if they had been revised slightly to include details about identity formation for inclusion in the text. Many pieces cite Erik Erickson, which is relevant, but became repetitive. Most of the recommendations within the chapters involve changing curriculum or teaching methods to increase sensitivity to student struggles. In the final chapter, "From Understanding to Action," Sadowski synthesizes the separate recommendations of the authors into one cohesive unit; this piece alone will help many teachers and administrators take steps to facilitate healthy adolescent identity formation in their schools.

High school teachers know that students struggle with a host of issues as they move from childhood to adulthood. This text serves to expand upon and explain more about how and why students struggle, while also addressing ways that teachers can adjust their approach to aid students on this journey. Another audience that will benefit from the text is pre-service teachers, who are making their own journey from adolescence to adulthood and the professional world. Pre-service teacher educators often plan to teach in the way that they were taught, and this book will help to widen the perspectives of these students who may not have been aware of some issues that other students around them may have encountered. This awareness in turn can build more sensitive and informed teachers who are equipped to respond to their students' unique and complicated needs.

It feels cliché by now to write a phrase like, "in this environment of high-stakes testing," but it is true that teachers now have so much institutional press to get results in the form of test scores. This book reminds us of that crucial and often-lost piece of the puzzle—who students are, what is important to them, and what they need from teachers and schools to feel safe and happy.

References

Cushman, K. (2005). *Fires in the bathroom: Advice for teachers from high school students*. New York: New Press.

Reviewed by Janine Davis, University of Virginia.

Sullivan, Mary. (2008). *Lessons for Guided Writing, Grades 5 & Up: Whole-Class Lessons and Dozens of Student Samples with Teacher Comments to Effectively Scaffold the Writing Process.* **New York: Scholastic.**

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In *Lessons for Guided Writing*, Mary Sullivan provides step-by-step guidance for teachers on how to scaffold students through two major kinds of writing: the descriptive paragraph and the short story. Because she feels teachers lack both the knowledge and the confidence to teach writing because of the inherent complexity of teaching writing, she tries to scaffold teachers into effective writing instruction, just as teachers scaffold students into effective writing. Too often, teachers *tell* students what to do rather than actually teach them what to do--perhaps because they are replicating the ineffective writing instruction they received in their own K-12 education. Because teachers have not experienced effective writing instruction themselves, the author provides a detailed look at sequences of lessons, responses she gives to students, and organizers and rubrics she uses for teaching students to write paragraphs and short stories.

In the sequence of lessons for writing the descriptive paragraph, Sullivan begins by clarifying for students the characteristics of the paragraph as a form of writing. She provides detailed descriptions of a variety of activities that rely upon discussion and pre-writing in order to teach students the elements of the descriptive paragraph. In her lessons for teaching the short story, she focuses on teaching the major elements of the short story: theme, character, and problem. She provides several lessons for each of these elements and she also provides lessons for story craft, specifically dialogue, story leads, and story endings.

Sullivan's approach includes differentiating instruction for students through several means. Through conferencing and response to writers, she shows how teachers should respond to first drafts (as well as later drafts) and discusses how to handle students whose first writing attempts are brief. She also provides suggestions for working with reluctant writers, such as scribing for them. She explains how breaking down larger writing assignments into short doable tasks alleviates reluctant writers' stress.

Sullivan's approach relies on models of writing and extensive teacher and student talk. While these elements are necessary, an emphasis on active teacher modeling of writing (live, in front of the students, thinking aloud) is lacking. Teachers following Sullivan's advice would do well to include modeling of the strategies for their students before asking students to use the strategies themselves.

The book, as a whole, does not cover a wide range of writing types, but this seems consistent with Sullivan's focus on teaching students how to improve the quality of their writing. Similarly, this book provides depth, but not breadth, showing the reader the detailed thought process that is entailed in writing and teaching a well-sequenced, explicit set of lessons. Having taught the lessons she provides for descriptive writing and fiction, one could move on to other genres or forms and writing, applying the same principles.

Reviewed by Sylvia Read, assistant professor, School of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University.

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