



### Brief Reviews for May 2010

Applebaum, N. (2009). *Representations of Technology in Science Fiction for Young People: Control Shift (Children's Literature and Culture)* (1 ed.). New York: Routledge.

Pages: 198 ISBN 978-0-415-98951-0.

In *Representations of Technology in Science Fiction for Young People*, Noga Applebaum argues that the science fiction (SF) genre, particularly for adolescents, does not depict the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In fact, she claims that young SF portrays technology in such negative ways that it is detrimental to childhood development and causes technophobia among its readers. Applebaum believes adults are the reason for the negative representation of technology in and out of the literary world. She references several young SF novels as well as many different theorists to support her claims that adults are trying to control, or protect children from something that is inevitable--technology. Reading this book could be useful for educators and parents in order to understand how to create balance among technology, nature, and art in their children's lives.

The book is divided into five chapters with an introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter, "But Only God Can Make a Tree: Technology and Nature in Young SF," Applebaum begins with a focus on technology and nature outlining how parents try to teach their children to appreciate and observe nature. She claims this is very difficult to do when children are walking through and living in "high-tech societies in the twenty-first century" (p. 18). Applebaum uses sixteen sample texts to show how difficult is it to appreciate nature in a technological society, and how nature is what will ultimately save humanity from the evils of technology. Some of the texts include Alison Prince's *The Others* (1986); Stephen Bowkett's *The Wintering* trilogy, *Ice*, *Storm* and *Thaw* (2001-2002); and Jeanne DuPrau's *The City of Ember* (2004). The overall message of this chapter, as well as throughout the text, is that children learn through the literature published, the ideals, beliefs, and values adults think they should know. Applebaum demonstrates how the sixteen sample texts, and others referenced throughout, unintentionally

create an ideological bias that widens the technological gap between generations, change the view of childhood, and illustrate how the adult-child power structure is changing. This threatens adulthood and the responsibilities associated with adulthood.

Chapter Two, “The Last Book in the Universe: The Fate of the Humanities in a Technological World,” addresses the artistic validity of technology and literature in the world. Science fiction, as a genre, is seen as “a meeting point between ‘science’ and ‘art’” (p. 46), but SF consistently shows the humanities and arts at odds with technology. The argument that technology is considered an art form is debatable, according to Applebaum. She references Walter Benjamin and his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” In this essay, Benjamin suggests that revolutionary art forms, created using technology such as film and photography, bring nature closer to humanity because the art is available to the masses. Applebaum also presents Heidegger’s conclusion that the salvation of humanity lies in art. At odds with both of these arguments is Jacques Ellul who believes that technologically produced art and music is heartbreaking. Chapter Two looks at the argument that technology dehumanizes people and alienates them from society; however, to imagine the new and existing technology is “a result of human ingenuity, imagination, creativity, and skill” (p. 51) is just as artistic as creating literature and paintings. Applebaum presents both sides of the argument very clearly and allows the reader to evaluate the information based on the thorough research she has conducted.

Chapter Three, “The Road Not Taken: the Impact of Technology on Narrative Structure,” addresses the argument that modern technology affects the narrative structure of young SF. Applebaum specifically targets digital media in this chapter but does not focus on the affects video or computer games have on children; she only addresses how the media incorporates literature. The *Choose Your Own Adventure* game books of the 1980’s are referenced in this chapter as an example of how children were in control of the storyline. Applebaum explains how digital media is a more advanced version of the adventure game books from the 80’s; children want to be in control of the characters’ and plots’ final destination and digital media is the evolutionary result of adventure gamebooks. Young SF authors choose to address the tension between books and digital media, causing a negative bias to arise. Applebaum argues that the authors are against the digital media because: 1) they are no longer in control of the characters and plot; and 2) they may lose royalties if the digital media becomes too popular.

Technology is changing education with the use of CD ROMs and other interactive software; therefore, education must keep up with the changes. Applebaum contends that education is unfortunately stuck in the Aristotelian

requirements for the narrative: coherence, significance of all elements, and a fixed sequence. Interactive digital media do not follow this layout; they are multi-linear in structure. Applebaum suggests that this is what threatens young SF authors; the *Sims*, for example, give children control over the characters and their actions in a world created by the child. The post-modern ideology of the death of the author is more of a reality in the world of digital media. Applebaum believes that books can remediate digital media and digital media can enhance SF texts causing them to be more appealing and challenging to the PlayStation and Xbox generation. Children will continue to read in a technologically advanced society.

The final two chapters look at the relationship between children and adults. Chapter Four, “The World Upside Down: Technology, Power and the Adult-child Relationship” argues that children’s stories contain adult propaganda to illustrate the hierarchy of the adult-child relationship. This chapter is where Applebaum discusses the discourse surrounding the “relationship between children and adults” using nine Young SF novels, including Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* (1985); Margaret Haddix’s *Turnabout* (2000); Kate Reid’s *Operation Timewarp* (2002); and Alex Shearer’s *The Hunted* (2005). Applebaum argues that adults want to be in control of children; that is the natural hierarchy. However, some authors allow their young protagonists to be in control of the situation because of the technology; therefore, technology is seen as negative by adults since it empowers children causing the hierarchy to crumble. In most literature, the adult author is the authority figure who is in control of the theme, subject, and outcome of the literature. As Applebaum argues throughout the book, this creates the bias for young readers. She states in this chapter that adults feel threatened by children who are more technologically savvy; therefore, the adult authors will portray technology negatively to try to keep children in the proper hierarchal placement in the adult-child power structure. To support this argument, Applebaum references Foucault’s belief that power is not necessarily oppressive, and it does have some positive results for the individual and the society in which the individual lives: “power is not simply an exercise in repressive control, but something that could also be driven by the need to be productive and creative” (p. 98). Applebaum’s bottom line in this chapter is if children know more than the adults, then the adults will lose control of the power they have over children. Instead of fighting the power children are beginning to assert using technology, Applebaum feels adult authors should be embracing it.

The final chapter, “(Tech) Nobody’s Children: Clones and Cloning in Young Adult Literature,” looks at the negative implications of cloning. Applebaum describes how government and medical officials see cloning as the loss of identity and uniqueness in an individual. Young SF portrays that image as

well. The young protagonists of the books referenced (Alison Allen-Gray's *Unique*, 2004; Patrick Cave's *Sharp North*, 2004; Chris Farnell's *Mark II*, 2006; and Rune Michael's *Genesis Alpha*, 2007) in this chapter are all human clones who feel a loss of identity and experience emotional conflict. This, according to Applebaum, is a direct result of both the American and British government denying the opportunities to clone human beings after the success with Dolly the sheep in 1997. The emotional and physical harm experienced by these children far outweighs the possibilities in technology; therefore, young SF illustrates the governments' beliefs, values, and morals; what adults feel is best for the world.

Noga Applebaum's book offers another point of view in the realm of technology and children's literature. Adults want to protect children and their childhood in a world where technology can possibly take childhood innocence away. In the process, however, adults create a world which stifles children and their creativity. Applebaum's book shows that the hierarchal power structure between children and adults can still exist if adults are willing to embrace the technology of the present and future world. She concludes her book by suggesting that parents, teachers, authors and publishers need to accept the young technologically savvy audience and offer a wider variety of literary perspectives on technology. If these adults do not, then the gap between the printed text and young people will continue to grow.

Reviewed by Shaynee Jesik, Pueblo South High School, Pueblo, CO.



Carteledge, Gwendolyn & Kleefeld, James. (2009). *Taking Part: Introducing Special Skills to Children PreK ~ Grade 3*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Pages: 369      ISBN: 13 978 0 87822 613 9

*Taking Part: Introducing Special Skills to Children Pre K ~ Grade 3* is a compendium of focused activities on developing age-appropriate, healthy social skills during the early childhood years. The book is evidence of the benefits of empowering children with confidence and feelings of trust.

The authors of the book have designed the progression of the book chapters and the contents in a decisively strategic manner.

The book includes an initial introductory chapter on a theoretical model of behavior change of the needed social skills in young children, and includes ideas on assessment practices in teaching these skills as well as their long term maintenance. Thereafter, the art of teaching social skills to children and its various aspects is described. These aspects include choosing skills to teach, size and composition of groups involved, time requirements, materials required, teaching sequences and instructional guidelines, cultural issues in teaching skill, and assessment of students' progress after they have been led through specific social skills group sessions. This is a good transition to the actual units in this book, each of which describes different social skills to be taught through role play and/or modeling activities.

There are a total of six units which are based on social situations and stories with desirable and healthy social interactions: helpfulness, empathy, self expression of feelings, friendliness, etc. The role playing activities utilize different animal characters to illustrate the social skill. Thus, the social activities make a natural connection to animals in nature and their characteristics. Multiple activities, in each unit, provide a unique approach to different aspects of the social skill at hand.

One nice feature of the book is its simple and easy-to-follow format. Units have specific themes on self expression and learning about human feelings in children, in group settings, and motivations for young learners in learning a new social skill. The inclusion of animal characters for role play offers an added advantage for the teacher to demonstrate how a particular character may feel in a particular situation. Children can really relate to almost all of the themes in the units presented in the book.

Key aspects of each unit include not only the activities themselves, but also a literature list which encourages the use of story books. The skills steps given at the beginning of each activity give children practice with group playing strategies, game rules and even offer ideas for future activities. All of these are crucial in reinforcing the social skills which are presented in the activities. Their presence in the units proves duly helpful in enabling the teacher to revise the skills in many different ways with young learners.

Finally, the authors have included resource appendices listing useful reminders of skill names and steps. Furthermore, puppet masks, posters, and blank line master templates are made available for copying and reusing with young learners, over and over again.

There are a few important things missing from the book which could greatly add to its usability, such as a unit on the psycho-educational importance of play in young learners' socialization process as they go through early

childhood educational programs at elementary schools or day care centers. It would help teachers to have aggregate references to relevant literature resources which could have been included at the back of book in the form of reference list. And it would have been useful to have included a detailed list of terms and definitions used in the field of social skills teaching.

All in all, the book serves its purpose of clearly describing the steps to a variety of highly structured social skills activities. The activities include animal puppet characters, which children would undoubtedly love to play since the early childhood age is very imaginative and filled with fantasy and make believe. Thus, the book merits use in all good early childhood centers, at ECE departments at colleges and universities by professors and students, and can prove useful for parents, in teaching social skills to young learners and opening them up to healthy socialization experiences in life.

Reviewed by Saira Qureshi, Associate Faculty, NorthWest Arkansas Community College, AR.



Gent, Pamela. (2009). *Great Ideas: Using Service-Learning & Differentiated Instruction to Help Your Students Succeed*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 280 ISBN 978-1-55766-985-8.

*Great Ideas: Using Service-Learning & Differentiated Instruction to Help Your Students Succeed* is a comprehensive, robust and well-researched guide for teachers. Pamela Gent, a Special Education professor, presents the historical background and compelling rationale for the service-learning method. Gent defines service-learning as a “teaching method mediated and directed by the teacher and thoughtfully and deliberately linked to the curriculum, academic standards, and IEP goals” (p. 6). This method consists of teaching students academic skills in the context of serving others. Gent emphasizes that service-learning is not simply an add-on, a capstone project or an extracurricular activity (p. 6) but an integral part of classroom instruction. The wealth of helpful information presented in the book communicates the purposeful implementation that students engaged in service-learning deserve and the commitment to excellence that it demands.

According to Gent service-learning offers multiple benefits. It helps the student gain academic knowledge, generalization, critical thinking and

creative skills (p. 31-32). It builds character by teaching students compassion, courage, equality and responsibility (p. 33-34). Service-learning develops communities and citizens by teaching students the importance of voting (p. 34-35). It instills self-determination, inclusiveness and life skills (p. 37-39). Lastly it reduces drop-out rates (p. 41).

The author explains each of the six components of service-learning: preparation, investigation, action, reflection, evaluation and celebration.

Preparation ensures that the student has the skills and knowledge needed in order to succeed in the act of service. Gent notes the importance of using differentiated instruction to ensure all learners can participate in service-learning.

Investigation consists of assessing real and unmet needs in the community. Gent believes that giving students a voice throughout the process empowers them and increases their self-efficacy (p. 86).

Action gives the student an opportunity to “do something to help a person, a group, or the community” (p. 114). Gent explains the advantages and disadvantages of direct service, indirect service and civic or political action.

Reflection consists of giving careful thought to the process of learning and serving. According to Gent this is one of the most crucial elements of service-learning because it creates a space for the student to “contemplate their experience” (p. 149).

Evaluation assesses the quality of the “implementation and progress toward meeting specific goals” (p. 187). Gent proposes the use of discussions, scales, conferences and benchmarks to measure learning outcomes.

Celebration “commemorates the service-learning and thanks all those involved in the action” (p. 221). This is a meaningful way to recognize all student participants and to provide a sense of closure. Among others, Gent suggests using coupons, food items, certificates and special events to create a memorable celebration (p. 227).

The reader will find examples of service-learning lessons at the beginning of each chapter. These examples bring the book to life, as the reader is able to recognize the steps that Gent presents in detail. A small town wants to raise funds for the local food bank so the town’s park sponsors a Christmas tree decoration contest. Residents can vote for their favorite tree by buying votes. A kindergarten teacher decides this is the perfect service-learning project for her class. Her young students choose zoo animals as their tree’s theme.

Every student participates, including Alegria, a child with Down syndrome. The class creates colorful giraffes, zebras, lions, etc. The students learn colors, shapes and the alphabet. They acquire skills such as coloring, cutting, gluing, folding, sorting and reading. Once the zoo animals are done, they go to the park and decorate their tree. Even though they do not win first place, they are able to raise \$200 dollars for the food bank. The class reflects by writing a story which is printed on a certificate the teacher awards to each participant (pp. 113-114).

This valuable resource not only provides step-by-step instruction and examples but also a generous compendium of tables and figures that include student surveys, planning organizers, self-monitoring forms, commitment pledges, action charts by age group, fundraising sources, systematic reflection questionnaires, reflection acrostics, progress logs, etc. Gent communicates with clarity and eloquence. Her presentation is engaging and well organized. Readers will find her passion for the subject both evident and inspiring. For teachers who have never considered service-learning, this book provides encouragement to do so. For novice teachers, the book provides rich opportunities to learn and a plethora of ideas for implementing service-learning. For seasoned teachers, Gent provides a challenge to strive for improvement and fine tuning.

Behind Gent's thorough presentation of the service-learning method lies the author's deep passion for teaching, great compassion toward students with disabilities and a conviction to make instruction individualized. *Great Ideas* is a testament to excellence and student-centered teaching.

Reviewed by Sudi Kate Gliebe, doctoral student in Child Development at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Her areas of interest are children's spiritual and emotional development, parenting, learning and teaching methods.



Heidger, T. & Stevens, B. (2009). *Ready-to-go Comprehension: Twenty-One Easy Activities for Early Readers*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Pages: 20 ISBN 978-1-934338-64-3.



This flipbook was created by two teachers to give other teachers an accessible and helpful resource to use while planning reading comprehension practice for early readers. Throughout the nine-page flipbook, seven research-based reading strategies are explained and twenty-one corresponding activities are described. In general, teachers of young readers will find that this guide is intuitively designed, well-researched, and useful.

Heidger and Stevens designed this flipbook to enable ease of use for teachers, a goal facilitated by the logical design. The guide is comprised of nine pages including a one page introduction, seven strategy pages, and a final page for illustrations of activities. Strategies are ordered sequentially by the stage of the reading process (pre-, during, or post-reading) in which they primarily occur. Each strategy is outlined on a single-tiered page with a unique number, color, and symbol, which makes finding a desired strategy simple. Additionally, each strategy page follows a single logical format that includes an overview of the strategy and its importance, model phrasing, and three applicable activities. Clear headings are used for each of these sections. Overall, the format and design of the guide make it easy to use.

The information and activities included in the flipbook are built around seven reading comprehension strategies that the authors adapted from the work of respected teachers and researchers such as Regie Routman, Irene C. Fountas, Gay Su Pinnell, and others. These seven approaches include two pre-reading strategies, two during-reading strategies and three post-reading strategies: think, predict, visualize, question, look, summarize or paraphrase and “make a personal connection” (cover). These strategies have been found repeatedly to increase reading comprehension (Allington, 2006). Perhaps the only strategy not included in the flipbook that has been shown to facilitate comprehension is the development of vocabulary knowledge (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000); however, vocabulary building is considered indirectly in several places within the flipbook. Overall, the research and practitioner-based support of the seven included strategies underscores the importance of these particular strategies and helping children develop reading skills through applicable activities.

Indeed, the primary focus of the flipbook is to provide activities that can be used to develop the comprehension strategies named above. Accordingly, the majority of page space is dedicated to explaining three the activities for each strategy. Taken as a whole, the suggested activities are easy to follow: directions are clear, required materials are noted, and illustrations are provided where needed. The activities also make use of various grouping configurations and learning modalities, and many involve active engagement for students. For example, the “Pick a Card ...Any Card” activity specifies exactly each step a teacher needs to take to implement the activity and

involves students working together and generating content. The variety of activities and active learning elements found therein will help students stay engaged as they move toward increased comprehension.

Some of the suggested activities such as “Crystal Confirmations,” which requires the students to create crystal balls prior to writing predictions or “File Folder Facts” where teachers must make a large character cutout on which students will stick their post-it note answers-to-questions seem unnecessarily complex. In these and several other activities the intended objective could be accomplished with less work. However, since the activity components can be reused and the “fun” aspect of the tasks may help students become excited about reading comprehension, the initial time investment is worthwhile if teachers plan to use the activities more than once. Also, the authors suggest several activities that are only tangentially related to the strategy of focus, such as the use of the activity “Silent Sequencing.” Though intended to exemplify the strategy of looking for the most important ideas, this activity is primarily focused on the related strategy of ordering events. Yet, even when not directly related to one of the seven strategies, the twenty-one activities have value, though their inclusion means teachers may need to seek out additional more directly related activities.

This easy to use flipbook provides comprehensible information on research-based reading comprehension strategies. Most of the activities are appropriate and engaging and will help students develop literacy. This handy flipbook will ease reading comprehension lesson planning for busy teachers.

## References

Allington, R. L. (2006). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (U.S.). (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: an evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Retrieved from [http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/upload/smallbook\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/upload/smallbook_pdf.pdf) on March 20, 2010.

Reviewed by Jacqueline A. Bennett, University of California, Los Angeles.



Landy, Sarah. (2009). *Pathways to Competence: Encouraging Social and Emotional Development in Young Children* (2 ed.). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 640 ISBN-13 978-1-55766-891-2.

While it is increasingly recognized that the proper nurturing of social and emotional development is essential for children's healthy development, core development textbooks still largely neglect this essential component of children's wellbeing. Yet it is imperative for every early childhood professional to enter the field ready to support children's social and emotional health. Sarah Landy's fully updated textbook offers early childhood professionals, paraprofessionals, and pre-service students an understanding of these oft-neglected dimensions of development in young children, while providing a variety of practical strategies for encouraging their social and emotional growth. Each of the lengthy chapters covers a particular area of development within this scope: early development and temperament; body control and body image; secure attachment; play and imagination; language and communication; self-esteem; self-regulation and morality; emotional regulation; attention, concentration, planning and problem-solving, and; social competence and empathy.

Landy, a developmental and specialist clinical psychologist and an assistant professor of psychiatry, demonstrates her extensive experience in the field with this meticulously researched, detailed overview of the subject. The text offers an extensive, if not exhaustive, bibliography for each of the ten chapters, with some excellent listings for further reading and wonderful, highly valuable collections of children's literature for each area of development.

This 20-year veteran of the field is, however, also limited in latitude by nature of her background: while *Pathways to Competence* promises a one-stop "guide to addressing every facet of social-emotional development", the range of developmental theories included is narrowly restricted to the orthodox models presented in a typical undergraduate development textbook, including Freud, Erikson and Piaget--failing to allow for gender, cultural, and individual variations in developmental patterns. Biases toward such traditional theories are unacknowledged, and diminish the author's authority (for example, anyone somewhat acquainted with Freud's theory of development can see its connection with Landy's dubious statement that

“little boys may want to marry their mothers ... and little girls, their fathers ...” (p. 118)). The validity of Landy’s claims would be improved were her theoretical influences better acknowledged.

Indeed, throughout the text, development is narrowly described not as a highly variable and individual event, but as a rigid series of stages defined inflexibly by age. For example, infants “should” have attained very particular physical milestones within an age range of a few months (such as babbling, crawling, walking and smiling), without proper acknowledgement of there being a healthy deviation from this timeline. Certainly a substantial amount of un-cited “facts” are questionable. Landy, for instance, argues that attachment “is not instantaneous for infant or parent, and for the baby, it is not established until 8 months of age” (p. 143).

Despite the rigid outlook on children’s development and the author’s prevalent cultural biases, *Pathways to Competence* offers what far too few core texts do: a push for greater understanding of the emotional and social health of young children. Landy’s case for the nurturing of a secure attachment, positive self-esteem, emotional regulation, empathy and more is commendable and surely vital for our time. The practical strategies and principles presented to parents and caregivers for promoting healthy social-emotional growth are excellent. While it’s arguably imprudent to use this as the authoritative text in a child development course, this book makes a very useful contribution to the field, and with the use of supplementary texts, I would indeed recommend its inclusion for the study of children’s development.

Reviewed by Amy St Amand, teacher, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.



Macintyre, Christine. (2009). *Bullying and Young Children: Understanding the issues and tackling the problem*. New York: Routledge.

Pages: 128 ISBN: 9780415484961

Bullying has been a major problem for teachers and students alike for many years and because of this many have turned to books for solutions regarding this issue. Christine Macintyre attempts to create a book that defines causes

of bullying and give ample solutions on how, as teachers, to prevent and address these situations.

*Bullying and Young Children* attempts to give a well rounded perception on the topic of bullying in 128 pages. Macintyre splits her book into six different sections each denoting a different idea in relation to bullying. The first five chapters of the book give an overview of questions regarding bullying, and provide readers a more vivid understanding behind the topic. The last chapter is solely devoted to ideas and strategies to stop the bullying from happening in primary education situations.

Throughout the book, Macintyre relies on help from children as they provide stories, poems, and pictures about their experiences with bullying. These excerpts help provide an escape from the technical text and further help emphasize the affects bullying can have on young children. These additional experiences provide an easy read for anyone to enjoy and perhaps even relate to.

At times this book reads more like a journal than a book to help educators understand and deal with bullying in the classroom. Macintyre chooses to reinforce an abundant amount of research with countless stories of how bullying occurred in real life situations. With every new piece of information given, there seems to be a story to go along with it; even responses to some questions come in the form of stories from teachers, students, or colleagues. This, unfortunately, tends to get repetitive as two thirds of the book is devoted to questions regarding bullying. However, by sharing these experiences it provides an easier read and helps the reader further understand the issues presented in *Bullying and Young Children*.

The last fifteen pages of the book are devoted to solutions to stop bullying in primary education classrooms. Included in these pages are a few worksheets for students to fill out, poems to provoke discussion, and verbal cues to give students to use if or when bullying does happen. This section only provides some strategies that may be effective in preventing bullying in the classroom, it does not, however, provide a definite cure.

For those looking for an understanding of why bullying happens and an overview of experiences relating to it, this book will definitely satisfy your expectations; those who are looking for a book on bullying strategies and prevention techniques may want to look elsewhere. Macintyre presents a detailed analysis of why bullying happens and responds to important questions regarding the topic, unfortunately though, does not elaborate much on techniques for addressing and preventing the problem. *Bullying and Young Children: Understanding the issues and tackling the problem* provides an easy,

interesting read into the world of bullying in primary education and overall gives a basic, concise view on the vast topic which is, bullying.

Reviewed by Jesse Meredith, Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada.



Merrell, K., Whitcomb, S. and Parisi, D. (2009). *Strong Start: A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Pages: 146 ISBN: 978-1-55766-9888-9

The importance of social and emotional learning can often be overlooked in schools today. *Strong Start* brings to light the critical need to address this in pre-K programs. As the first level in a series of program materials from the Pre-K through 12 programs, this installment serves as both prevention and intervention for all students.

The *Strong Start* curriculum is a brief, Pre-K program designed for promoting the social and emotional learning of young children. It has a range of applications and may be used effectively with typical students, those that are at-risk, or children with behavioral issues. The program is appropriate for a wide range of professionals including teachers, counselors, mental health providers and those in special education.

Within the introduction, the authors call our attention to the need for children's mental health programs. They discuss the resiliency that is needed for children to overcome environmental, social, and emotional issues. Current statistics and relevant research are connected throughout the text. A model for preventing behavioral and emotional problems is presented. The authors refer to this "triangle model" without referencing Response to Intervention, which is so relevant in elementary schools. Making this connection between Pre-K and school age children might have been helpful for educators in the field.

The evidence base of the program is mentioned in a one-page section of the text. Readers are encouraged to visit the University of Oregon website to view current studies. While this is an important reference, it might have been more advantageous for these studies to be reviewed and/or summarized for the reader.

The stage is then set for the teachers who are preparing to use this curriculum. Information is provided regarding the curriculum mascot, supplementary materials, the classroom arrangement and making cultural adaptations. Ten lessons are presented, which take approximately 35 minutes per lesson to teach. Section II of the text includes plans for these lessons which focus on identifying various feelings, understanding the feelings of others, being a good friend, and solving people problems. These lessons are organized in a simple format. They include lesson objectives, some scripted portions for the teacher, visual aids for students, and a *Strong Start* bulletin to send home to families.

Lessons incorporate some hands-on learning activities but most focus on teacher talk and modeling. Student objectives focus on listening, describing, identifying and understanding rather than doing. Only one or two activities involve role play, drawing or singing. There is a lot of acting out with the mascot and teacher modeling. When do students have the chance to practice this? Daily practice is needed to reinforce these teachings. At this primary level, practitioners might expect more active ways of learning. Classroom teachers and others would probably need to add to this program, enhancing it through more creative methods.

In addition, the curriculum addresses appropriate ways to express feelings, skills to monitor their feelings, thoughts and behaviors, techniques to relax and remain calm in times of stress or worry. The ten main lessons are followed by two "booster" lessons that include additional guidance for teachers.

At the end of each lesson, the authors include a section to apply what has been learned. The program emphasizes three steps to accomplish this task: 1) teach students how to *anticipate* emotions and social issues, 2) *remind* students of the steps to deal with these and 3) *acknowledge* when students have utilized these skills. This philosophy would benefit those that work with children at any level.

The appendices include additional booster lessons and a list of recommended literature. The book also comes with a CD-ROM which includes the same materials found within the text. Feeling word posters are printed three times within the texts and are repeated again several times on the CD-ROM. This might have been more useful if it included new information to accompany the text.

The *Strong Start* program is presented by the Oregon Resiliency Project. It provides a simple toolkit for practitioners to use with activities tailored for preschoolers to address the social and emotional learning that is often

lacking in many curricula. As an add-on for early childhood programs, *Strong Start* will help support the development of young children.

Reviewed by Jacie Maslyk, M. Ed., Principal, Crafton Elementary School, Pittsburgh, PA. and a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.



Mortenson, Greg (2009). *Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. New York: Viking Penguin.

Pages: 420 ISBN 978-0-670-02115-4.

*Stones into Schools* is the heroic story of American mountaineer and project founder Greg Mortenson and his journey to achieve his goal of closing the illiteracy gap in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He, along with a staff of several strange and somewhat misfit characters have made it their personal business to promote education among these children, particularly the girls. This book is a detailed and deeply emotional telling of the trials and great lengths that this group of dedicated individuals have gone to in order to keep promises, build relationships and promote education throughout all of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Mortenson's main goal is to promote literacy in countries that have been war-torn and so broken with poverty and religious extremism that education has become literally non-existent in most areas and a very low priority in others. They make a point of reaching out to the most remote and forgotten regions and provinces that Mortenson refers to as "the last best place", a slogan that he has adopted from his hometown but now uses to describe the locations in which they build their schools.

This story is told with great detail that allows the reader to understand how dire the conditions are that each and every person encountered throughout the book live in and how desperately they want the schools that Mortenson offers. He describes the frustrations and setbacks that they encounter such as devastating natural disasters, political and religious scandals and the difficulties that come with travelling. Mortenson also describes the rewarding and memorable milestones such as seeing the first females to graduate high school, the dedication that communities put into maintaining the education of their children and the way this education has altered the



lives of generations to come. It is these moments that leaves the reader feeling inspired and thirsty for more.

I would most definitely recommend *Stones Into Schools* to nearly anyone to read. The stories of the individuals that Mortenson and his team help and encounter are ones that are sure to inspire the reader to want to make a difference, and to appreciate education and the opportunities that come with it. It is an encouraging read that makes one realize the importance of keeping promises and the satisfaction and gratification that comes with striving for and achieving goals, no matter how big they may be.

Reviewed by Megan Kurtenbach, Simon Fraser University,  
Burnaby, BC, Canada



Pryle, Marilyn. (2009). *Purposeful Conferences, Powerful Writing!: Strategies, Tips, and Teacher-Student Dialogues for Helping Kids Improve Their Writing*. New York: Scholastic.

Pages: 128 ISBN: 9780545011174

As a grade two teacher I tend to read professional books that are written with K – 2 teachers in mind. And, as a book reviewer I like to review books that target that same audience. Yet when I choose a book to review, here and elsewhere, I often don't know the intended grade level audience. Marilyn Pryle's book, *Purposeful Conferences, Powerful Writing*, is written for grades 5 and up, I didn't think I would find many applications to my current teaching situation. Yet, to my surprise and pleasure, I have found ways to adapt Pryle's ideas for conducting more effective writing conferences with my grade 2 students. I appreciate how she nudges her students to find the meaning in their writing despite having a fundamental philosophical disagreement with the language Pryle uses in her teacher-student conferences.

Pryle's book is a great companion book to another Scholastic book, *Launching the Writing Workshop: A Step-by-Step Guide in Photographs* by Denise Leograndis and Pam Allyn. Since reading both books, I made changes in the way I confer with my students. I assume more of an expert role while still helping students maintain ownership of their writing. I also place more emphasis on helping my students identify and express the significance in their writing so

that what they write is important to them, which will then resonate with the reader. My hope is to encourage passion and meaning in students' choices of writing topics so that they create more interesting and self-revealing pieces. Although this is much harder to do with younger students it is not impossible. I agree with Pryle when she says, "When helping a student choose a topic, I strive to identify something the student cares about, and find the heart of it. If the student has no emotional investment in the topic, the writing will not succeed," (p. 17).

Pryle uses teacher-centered terminology to get kids to rethink and revise their writing. She also does a lot of writing on the child's paper while conferring (something I only do after asking permission). What is Pryle's rationale for doing this? She says, "Often, for the sake of time, I will write my thoughts for them as I speak, figuring I would have done so anyway had the draft been handed in," (p. 60). Allowing the child to write down teacher or classmate suggestions keeps the ownership of the writing squarely with the child. If the teacher is the one writing on the child's paper the suggestion is likely to be used simply because the teacher is viewed as the authority in the classroom and, in Pryle's case, the one doing all the marking. On p. 75 I wrote in the margin of the book, "I think she (Pryle) does too much leading of the writer to where she wants him/her to go."

Is any of this necessarily bad? No, but if we are concerned about creating spaces in classrooms where children own their writing and have a voice, other than that of the teacher, then we need to pay attention to the language that we use with students. Words do matter. For example, Pryle writes: "I take several days at the start of each year to *train students* [reviewer's italics] to follow the procedures *I have chosen*, and I post signs around the class to serve as reminders to help them *maintain order and silence*," (p. 9). Reading this, I picture a class that allows very little space for students to make this their class with procedures created in a community of learners, including the teacher, and is maintained through quiet work governed by "step-by-step assignment sheets," (p. 8). Rather than point out all the places in the book where this type of language surfaces, and there are many examples, suffice it to say that despite the discomfort and disagreement I experienced when reading this book at those junctures, I still found many techniques I could use to help my students improve and enhance their writing.

Pryle's approach to conducting writing conferences is to start by giving the student specific praise first and then moving to one or two teaching points. This is normal procedure for those of us who are experienced doing writing workshop in our classrooms. The scripts she provides of teacher-student conversations about the child's writing are helpful to teachers who need a boost to their conferring procedures and techniques.

I appreciated the tip boxes that are on almost every page of Pryle's book - some pages have multiple tips. These are the places where she speaks directly to the reader as she is conferring with a student about his/her writing. I also liked Pryle's constant attempt to get her students to "be in the moment" and to find specific words rather than "banned words" (overused words), such as good, fun, and excellent. She also helps her students use grammar to identify the weak places in their writing that could be livened up by a simple change of verb tense. And, needless to say, these tips have helped my own writing process.

Experienced writing workshop teachers are mostly likely to benefit from reading this book. Only after having worked with the ins and outs of allowing students to choose topics and genres, and experiencing writing conferences will teachers be in the best position to use the ideas explored in this book.

## References

Leograndis, D., & Allyn, P. (2008). *Launching the writing workshop: A step-by-step guide in photographs*. New York: Scholastic.

Reviewed by Elisa Waingort who teaches Grade 2 Spanish Bilingual at Dalhousie Elementary in Calgary, Canada.



Rosen, Larry. (2010). *Revired: Understanding the igeration and the Way They Learn*. New York: Palmgrave Macmillian.

Pages: 256    ISBN: 9780230614789

Larry Rosen joins the chorus calling for K-12 school reform based on the evidence that children in the 21st century are a technology-savvy population and that 21st century culture is technology-rich, but that 21st century curriculum and instruction is neither. Although the theme is familiar, and the evidence cited is familiar, Rosen does add to the evolving discussion. The generations born since computers became available have been given various names, and Rosen uses "igeration" to describe the generation born since 1990. The igeration is comprised of individuals who are voracious media consumers, content creators, and users of social networks; these

characteristics are shared with the previous digital generation (and with digital immigrants from non-digital generations), and the first chapter of this book reviews how 20th century schools were (and continue to be) ill-suited for the needs of these generations. In the second chapter, thirteen characteristics of the i-generation are reviewed, and these are similar to other recent works (Palfrey & Gasser, 2009; Tapscott, 2009).

In chapters three and four, Rosen describes two features of the i-generation that differentiate this generation from previous digital generations: their collective ability to multitask and their use of wireless mobile devices (WMD's). Rosen follows with a description of three educational implications that arise from these defining features of the i-generation. The i-generation's constant access to social networks provides the opportunity for inclusive dialogue and discussion, the opportunity to leverage students' creativity, and the motivation for teaching media literacy.

The book ends with a consideration of concerns and barriers (which were noticeably absent in the first seven chapters) and Rosen argues for "rewiring education." Rosen makes familiar recommendations (e.g. providing professional development for teachers) that are obligatory in books arguing for an increased role of technology in education but that seem to have been ineffective for decades. There is good and new advice in the list of recommendations (e.g. assess teacher's attitudes towards technology and develop new skills based on WMD's), but the new insights are lost in a laundry list of frequently given recommendations. I found myself wishing Rosen had given more detail on new ideas and ignored those that are so familiar.

In general, the book contains some new contributions to the very important literature advising educators on the need for new pedagogy. Those new contributions, however, are included with other recommendations that, while necessary, are not new. The unique characteristics of the i-generation and the technology they use are made clear in this book; the nature of the education that will serve the i-generation is outlined. The details of how all of this will change classroom practice has yet to be resolved. Rosen does point readers in the right direction and makes readers aware of what will be necessary to fill in those details.

## References

- Palfrey, J., & Gasser, U. (2009). *Born digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives*. New York: Basic Books.
- Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing our world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Reviewed by Gary L. Ackerman, PhD in education and who has extensive K-12 experience.



Warnock, Scott. (2009). *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Pages: 183 ISBN 978-0-8141-5253-9.

Scott Warnock, director of the Freshman Writing Program at Drexel University, doesn't fill many pages of his book, *Teaching Writing Online*, with an argument for the importance of online instruction. We know that online courses have become an established part of many colleges and universities, and will likely remain so into the foreseeable future. Instead, Warnock briefly provides information concerning the disproportionate increase in enrollment in online versus traditional face-to-face (f2f) courses; he then moves on to his more important message: that writing instruction works well in an online or hybrid (some online instruction, some f2f) environment. In fact, Warnock believes that "online writing instruction provides the opportunity for not just a *different* approach, but a *progressive* approach to the way teachers teach writing—an evolution of sorts in writing instruction" (p. x). This belief comes from years of experience. Much of the advice he offers in this book might seem intuitive to veteran teachers, but if you are new to online teaching or considering a hybrid course, Warnock's sample lessons, models of correspondence with students, and "Pre-Term Questions" to consider could mitigate initial struggles throughout the transition period.

From the beginning, Warnock intertwines arguments for the value of teaching writing online with practical tips to ease the transition. Inside the front and back cover of the book, he provides 41 Guidelines that are repeated in relevant chapters throughout the book. These guidelines offer suggestions for how to get started teaching an online or hybrid course, such as: "Initially, you want to think *migration*, not *transformation*, when teaching online. Think about what you do well, and then think about how you can use various resources to *translate* those skills to the OW course [online writing course]" (p. xvii). Although he discusses many available technologies for writing instruction, Warnock cautions teachers not to become overwhelmed in an effort to use every online writing tool available; instead, he says, "Don't be any more complicated technologically than you have to be" (p. 19). Warnock also offers help for those who are in a position to decide whether

they want to organize their classes in an online or a hybrid format. What I like about Warnock's approach to teaching online is that he emphasizes using the f2f teaching techniques we have found to be successful in the past. Whether you rely on conversations, group work, peer review, games, or quizzes to teach and test students, Warnock provides ways to translate these activities into the digital world effectively. In Guideline 11, he puts forth that "Various technological tools are available to help you deliver your course content and conduct your class in any style you like; and plenty of resources, including on the Web, in the help section of your CMS [course management system/software], and at the back of this book, exist to assist you" (p. 36).

Warnock offers teachers who are new to online, or hybrid, courses practical advice on how to keep student writing organized, how to make an effective syllabus, and how grading might change. These issues become very important because of the increased amount of writing students do in an online class. While this increase is a central reason for Warnock's belief that online courses provide advantages for writing instruction, he also acknowledges that attending to so much writing can be difficult for instructors. Still, Warnock advises that teachers "Respond a lot, especially early in the term. Let your students know you are there, and help them establish who you are as an audience" (p. 124). Keeping some set deadlines that are unchanging from week to week, such as weekly posts and reading quizzes, helps students become comfortable with the expectations of an online class. Although he gives some examples of how he manages his time in an online course, such as having some pre-determined times when he is available online for students, I wondered if the time Warnock devotes to an online course increases when compared to an f2f class.

One of the concluding chapters of the book provides another way that online writing courses can be advantageous: teacher training. According to Warnock, "Education, and writing instruction in particular, is dynamic: people are inventing new ways daily to help students learn. The online writing environment offers a keen edge in this way" (p. 163). Chapter Sixteen is devoted to "Virtual Teaching Circles" and how ideas and assignments can be shared electronically, because "One composition teacher is good. A group of composition teachers sharing materials electronically is great" (p. 166). Throughout the book, Warnock offers helpful resources for online writing teachers, such as books he has used, Web-based tools, and online resources. Chapter eighteen is devoted to electronic resources, most of which could be used by any instructor of online courses. Aside from the outside resources mentioned, Warnock provides appendices with his own teaching materials, such as a sample syllabus, a sample weekly plan, and a message board conversation. He also provides a glossary of terms that might be new to you

if you are just beginning as an online teacher, as well as a fairly comprehensive bibliography of resources on writing and online education.

The “Pre-Term Questions” provided at the end of each chapter are perhaps the most beneficial part of Warnock’s book. Many of the questions he asks caused me to reflect on my teaching techniques and goals, whether I am teaching online or f2f. This kind of assessment of ourselves as teachers seems to be one of Warnock’s goals. In thinking about our strengths in the classroom, we can decide how to best translate them into the online environment, and his book offers practical ways to do so.

Overall, I think this book is clearly written and organized and would be beneficial for any composition teacher who teaches, or is interested in teaching, a hybrid or online course. Additionally, because technology has such a well-established place in even f2f classrooms, much of Warnock’s advice would be beneficial for any writing teacher. Warnock has gone through the experience of transitioning to the online environment and while all of his ideas may not match your teaching personality and goals for students, using this resource could help you avoid “reinventing ideas that have been around for years” (p. 163).

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