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Brief reviews for March 2010

Berninger, Virginia W. & Wolf, Beverly J. (2009). *Teaching Students with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia: Lessons from Teaching and Science*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Pages: 240 Price: \$34.95 ISBN: 978-1-55766-934-1

Dr. Virginia Berninger, a professor in the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Washington and Beverly Wolf, the Director of the Slingerland Institute for Literacy, team up in this comprehensive look at research and teaching solutions for students with dyslexia and dysgraphia. The book is divided into five sections that ground the work in historical and contemporary contexts, provide effective instructional approaches, blend scientific knowledge and educational practice, give teacher training models, and furnish final author reflections in the field of teaching students with dyslexia, dysgraphia and/or oral and written language disability (OWL). The book also provides numerous suggested readings and resources as well as a 17 page comprehensive reference list, sure to be useful to teacher trainees or those currently in the field. This book could serve as a textbook in either an undergraduate or graduate course in teaching reading and/or students with learning disabilities (LDs) or as a valuable addition to any practitioner's library. Additionally, the authors have created a companion text *Helping Students with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia Make Connections: Differentiated Instruction Lesson Plans in Reading and Writing* (2009) that uses the principles of this book as the foundation for effective instructional practices.

Berninger and Wolf link teaching and research throughout the text to show that effective instructional practices are based on both teacher-generated and science-generated contributions and the best procedures result when the two merge. They provide both medical and educational-historical context of oral and written language disorders by citing important researchers like Broca, Morgan, Hinshelwood, Orton, Geschwind, Gillingham, Stillman, Childs, Monroe, Fernald, and Slingerland. Their examination of the emerging fields of reading and learning disabilities is succinct but it sets the stage for an important message that the book delivers: teachers need "knowledge of effective practices for designing, implementing, and evaluating differentiated instruction in the general education classroom" (p. 11). Emphasis on individualizing instruction is woven throughout the text and the authors assert that if more teachers differentiated instruction, fewer students would be referred or need to be referred for special education. A chapter on organizational classroom environment gives recommendations ranging from motivation to team approaches to types of materials to pacing, all supported by extensive researcher contributions.

There are several "how to" chapters ranging from teaching oral language to teaching reading to teaching writing. Each begins with a brief explanation of specific skill development followed by a comprehensive list of concrete instructional strategies that support the particular skill development (oral language, reading, writing). The chapters also include researcher contributions in the field. Another chapter suggests using multimodal language instruction and emphasizes the need for intellectual engagement which will benefit not only students with dyslexia and dysgraphia but all students in the general educational setting. Both pre-service and in-service practitioners will find these chapters invaluable in helping all students develop oral and written language as well as reading ability in the general education classroom. Teachers will appreciate the specific strategies and recommendations that will individualize their instructional plans.

The next section of the book reverses the manner in which science and education are linked. In the first chapter of this section, Berninger and Wolf present researcher contributions in the field of human genetics, neuroscience, linguistics, and cognitive science followed by teacher reflections. Providing theoretical information about the biological basis of LDs can help teachers "apply those insights to classroom practice in literacy instruction for students with dyslexia, OWL LD, and/or dysgraphia" (p. 125). Another chapter examines the clinical differences between dyslexia, OWL LD and dysgraphia and encourages practitioners to think beyond simple diagnosis to evidence-based assessment and to monitor progress based on particular needs of individual students. The final chapter in this section examines a number of literacy programs that use different approaches for teaching students with dyslexia, OWL LD, and/or dysgraphia.

One of the final chapters entitled "Creating Building-Level Plans for Teaching All Students Effectively and Efficiently" is noteworthy for its use not only by individual pre-service and in-service teachers, but also for its value to administrators. Berninger and Wolf give practical recommendations to create a positive infrastructure that recognizes that general education

teachers can serve the needs of students with dyslexia, dysgraphia and/or OWL LD if they are taught to do so and given the support needed to meet the needs of diverse learners within their classrooms. Suggestions recognize the need for a building-wide commitment to recognizing, identifying and instructing students with dyslexia, dysgraphia and/or OWL LD. Other recommendations include types of class configuration and student grouping as well as the need for continued teacher development and training. The last chapters present professional development strategies for both pre-service and in-service teachers. The authors emphasize the importance of preparing teachers to provide differentiated instruction and to implement research-based practice. The two chapters on professional development are constructed to give practical suggestions to those who create teacher training programs.

Beninger's and Wolf's comprehensive examination of research and practical instruction involved in teaching students with dyslexia and dysgraphia is a must-have resource for both teachers in training or those in the field. The book is an essential tool for educators who believe that all children can learn when they are taught properly.

References

Beninger, V. W. (2009). *Helping students with dyslexia and dysgraphia make connections: Differentiated instruction lesson plans in reading and writing*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Reviewed by, Patricia Mytkowicz, Ed.D., associate professor and coordinator of a program for multilingual students with learning disabilities at Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts.

Cary, Lisa. (2007). *Curriculum Spaces: Discourse, Postmodern Theory and Educational Research*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pages: 152 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0820481289

In the concluding remarks to *Curriculum Spaces: Discourse, Postmodern Theory and Educational Research*, Cary offers the following words on how curriculum is now understood:

Historically, the notion of curriculum space was one of physical space—the classroom, the desk, the school building, the school district, state and nation. Today, I am able to think differently about curriculum because some leading scholars in the field have reconceptualized what 'curriculum' means.... This reflects the move from curriculum development to an investigation of the frames that influence education on all levels (p. 136).

Cary draws from a multiplicity of theoretical frameworks—poststructural, postcolonial, and psychoanalytical discourse—in order to enrich our understanding of curriculum spaces. In contrast to the totalizing, "static" knowledge of modern thinking, Cary cultivates a more "fluid and complicated" (p. 1) paradigm in which she draws from such contemporary thinkers as Serres and Latour who use the following image-rich metaphor to call into question the "'big science' of the Enlightenment": "It's better to paint a sort of fluctuating picture of relations and rapports—like the percolating basin of a glacial river, unceasingly changing its bed and showing an admirable network of forks...." (Serres in Cary, p. 7).

Paying respect to leaders in the reconceptualist field—e.g. Pinar and Grumet (1976)—Cary takes up the challenge that Pinar (2004) places before other curriculum (theory) scholars who not only call for an interdisciplinary understanding of the field itself but also interdisciplinarity in schooling altogether. With the hegemonic onslaught of standards based education reforms (SBER) in the United States and beyond, in which discipline knowledge is touted by the neoliberal education campaign as *the essential learning for the knowledge-economy*, Pinar's plea has both scholarly and political implications.

In *Globalization of Education* (2009), Spring meticulously notes that knowledge-economy teachers, such as those envisioned by the World Bank, must have "an in-depth knowledge of their subject areas including knowledge of facts, concepts, and an understanding of interconnections between knowledge and fact" (p. 49). In addition, the training of such teachers includes an understanding of "the conditions of a classroom that is knowledge-rich, assessment driven, and community connected." It is precisely this type of teacher training that drains intellectuality from the field altogether and aims to create in its stead an educational system and subsequent workforce that is exclusively sympathetic to propelling global human-capital exponentially forward.

"Politicians have" says Pinar, "taken control of what is to be taught: the curriculum. Examination-driven curricula demote teachers from scholars and intellectuals to technicians in service to the state. The cultivation of self-reflexive, interdisciplinary erudition and intellectuality disappears" (2004, p. 2-3). Following Pinar's lead, Cary extrapolates on the need for interdisciplinarity in the curriculum studies field and educational research (2007, p. xiii), arguing that epistemology which came about during the Enlightenment has "spawned static systems of knowing and histories of being even though they claimed to describe a process of becoming" (p. 7).

While turning to an analysis of films about teachers seems to work somewhat outside the disciplinary-norms box, Cary's choice of films is strangely conventional as each deals with teachers who work in the same "physical space—the classroom," (p. 136) which her study aims to expand out from. Noting such mainstream classroom examples as *Dangerous Minds*, *Dead Poets Society*, and providing a deeper analysis of "vintage films" (p. 123), *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Cary, ironically, works within the framework she, and others before her, set out to dismantle. If we were to stay within the vintage Hollywood collection itself, perhaps examining the pedagogy and curriculum of R.P. McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* or Morpheus in the contemporary vintage film, *The Matrix*, might get Cary's readers thinking more inclusively about "the 'nature' of teacher—as charismatic and egocentric" (p. 126) and "the cult of

personality" (p. 128) in more surprising, fluid, and complicated ways. That said, *Curriculum Spaces* is a valuable, accessible guide for anyone interested in pursuing a deeper understanding of how to integrate a cross-section of theoretical frameworks into the study of curriculum spaces and educational research today.

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Spring, J. (2009). *Globalization of education: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Reviewed by Hannah Spector, a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia. A former high school English teacher and department chair, her research interests include curriculum theory, cosmopolitanism, and literature education. Hannah earned her BA in English at the University of Florida and an MFA in Creative Writing at Emerson College.

Chen, Jie-Qi.; Moran, Seana. & Gardner, Howard. (2009). *Multiple Intelligences Around the World*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 432 Price: \$30.00 ISBN: 0787997609

Edited by Jie-Qi Chen, Howard Gardner, and Seana Moran, *Multiple Intelligences Around the World* is a collection of topical and geographical analyses by various scholars and practitioners around the world. The book aims to investigate how multiple intelligences (MI) have been understood and implemented worldwide. It almost seems like an evaluation of the theory using real case studies as evidence so that the conclusion is how MI theory is not a "fad" and instead can be a useful learning and teaching tool across the world.

The main themes dealt with in *Multiple Intelligences Around the World* include descriptions and analyses of different educational environments using multiple intelligences; discussions of how an educational policy and practice can be borrowed by one community/country/region from another; and what "universal lessons" do these case studies teach? These themes are a case in point—the book physically represents what MI has achieved in terms of combining heterogeneous cultures (sometimes within the same country) under one intelligence and learning framework.

One of the key features of *Multiple Intelligences Around the World* is its basis on the MI theory introduced by Howard Gardner in 1983. Originally a product of psychology, the underlying tenet of the MI theory rests on the assumption of the existence of a variety of human talents that are not always measured by regular, standardized intelligence quotient (IQ) tests. In other words, instead of a more specific method of precisely measuring a human quality, which is the more common method in social science and practice, MI theory advocates a broader concept of intelligence that can precisely measure a human quality. For instance, if a child is more talented at mathematics than another child, the second child might be more talented visually so that the relative intelligence of both children is difficult to determine through simple IQ tests that attempt to measure only mathematical and linguistic abilities. The various categories of intelligences stated by Gardner (1983) include physical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, verbal/languages, mathematical/logical, visual, musical, naturalistic, and existential.

Gardner and Armstrong give a useful overview of the theory and the issues it faced (for instance, being confused with Daniel Goleman's idea of emotional intelligence) to set the stage for the coming chapters. According to Gardner, MI theory has spread rapidly across the world and this is possibly due to multiple "principles, goals, and methods" (p. 8) being consistent with the theory. Armstrong also emphasizes this multicultural element by giving examples from nature education in an outdoor school in Norway, a high school lesson plan in a Beijing suburb in China, and Western religious traditions adopting a pluralistic MI theory. According to Gardner, the popularity of MI theory lies in several aspects: (a) it allows a revival of older traditions (e.g. Japanese emphasis on practical arts and crafts) that emphasize different skills than do SAT scores; (b) MI theory caters towards an increasing interest in expanding curricula, pedagogy, and assessments and also to reach underprivileged children (through special education etc.); and (c) MI theory and practices encourage and build on "democratic practices and values" because it celebrates individual perspectives and qualities.

The strength of MI theory as represented in *Multiple Intelligences Around the World* lies in its diverse, cross-cultural applicability. The evidence for this diverse applicability is provided in the book by the numerous countries examined by the book's contributors: China, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, Norway, Denmark, England, Ireland, Scotland, Romania, Turkey, Argentina, Columbia, and the United States. These countries also represent, although obviously not completely, multiple regions and hence multiple cultures of the world: Far East, Southeast Asia, Europe, South America, North America, and Australia.

In other words, the book thinks both big and small. While Part 1 sets the stage, other chapters deal with the technology used for teaching using multiple intelligences. Part 2 contains case studies from Asia and Pacific areas as well as providing a slight background about other theories of intelligence so that the reader can put them into perspective and then evaluate the MI theory. It provides examples of how MI educational ideas and practices can be consistent with ancient traditions, such as Confucian thinking and Japanese art education, as well as describing a general "shift from teacher-centered curriculum to child-centered curriculum" (p. 27). This implies that an important aspect of MI theory is its bottom-up approach towards education practice and policy, which also implies that students are considered constructive members of the

community, for instance, in the Multiple Intelligence International School in the Philippines.

Part 3 of the book deals with Europe and the bottom-up approach is again significant. However, unlike Part 2, Part 3 is written more in terms of teachers being “change agents” for educational reform so that inclusive educational policies, restructured teacher training, and student achievement in reading are all improved. South American case studies comprise Part 4. Countries in South America are less wealthy and politically stable than countries in Europe so that it is interesting to note that contributors in this section focus on personal intelligences and pursuit of education rather than systemic reform (for instance, behavioral problems and inner strength). However, all contributors do advocate schools that employ MI theory and are more inclusive. Part 5 discusses the United States with special focus on establishing schools based on MI ideas and on educating targeted populations (such as Latino/a and Navajo children in school student groups). It also deals with MI assessments that have to be “intelligence-fair, authentic, and relevant” (p. 289)—a useful discussion since standardized testing (such as No Child Left Behind) measuring only linguistic or mathematical abilities are not considered credible by MI theory. On a personal note, Part 6 focusing on reflection and analysis is one of the most interesting portions of the book. This is because it combines the initial introduction of MI theory with case study examples to reach some conclusions about MI affecting education policy or ask more questions about cultural differences in accepting MI theory (“construct of cultural zone of proximal development”).

Since this book deals with education across the world, it could fit neatly into the comparative and international education (CIE) field. Among the various paradigms and theoretical frameworks existing in the field, a psychological MI theory would probably be welcomed as part of the sociological or postmodernist approach. The readers might have benefited from a more detailed discussion of the possible relationship between MI theory and other frameworks in a formal field of academia and practice such as comparative and international education. It is also important to examine this connection (or tension) because in Korea, MI theory itself has become an “independent field of academic research” (pg. 95).

Overall, I would recommend this book to almost everyone related to the education field - scholars, public and private administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It shows scholars—sometimes to their own surprise—the applicability of their ideas, even across fields. For instance, MI theory was originally a psychological concept that was adopted into educational practices. For practitioners, it allows them to be open to various methods of teaching, learning, and policy making so that whether it is MI theory or another theory of intelligence, they can make an informed decision about the most suitable and feasible educational practice. According to Moran, people are “poised for the intellectual equivalent of the Cambrian explosion” (pg. 372). The book is also organized logically. It moves from a general discussion to more specific case studies that are also tied by region and theme so that the reader is constantly reminded of the purpose of the book—examining MI theory in practice. To make it reader friendly, the authors have made an effort to make the book as organized as possible, as well as to describe the organization in a table (at the end of the book so that it also functions as a summary) that cross-lists chapters, themes, and authors. Pictures are included in chapters to illustrate particular educational practices. In the beginning of the book, Gardner and Armstrong use a conversational tone that connects with the reader so that MI theory, the people related to it, and its implications take on a very real face. In turn, the reader is offered the ultimate hook—he or she is made to think consciously or unconsciously—of how MI theory and the educational practices described in the book are similar to or different than their own lives.

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Reviewed by Maham Mela, doctoral student in comparative and international education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Cornett, Claudia. (2010). *Comprehension First: Inquiry into Big Ideas Using Important Questions*. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.

Pages: 410 Price: \$36.00 ISBN: 978-1-890871-98-7

In *Comprehension First: Inquiry into Big Ideas Using Important Questions*, Claudia Cornett outlines the importance of making comprehension the priority of reading instruction. Cornett, a Professor Emeritus of Education at Wittenberg University, describes an inquiry-based process for instruction that prepares students to be active meaning makers, employing critical and creative thinking. The process she describes, Comprehension Problem Solving (CPS), helps students ask key questions before, during, and after reading. Furthermore, students are encouraged to ask important questions that lead to worthy big ideas. Most importantly, Cornett applies CPS to new literacies. By focusing on new skills needed by students to fully comprehend digital literacies, Cornett adds relevance and practical application of CPS to today's classrooms.

In the book's preface, Cornett lays a strong foundation for the need for CPS. She explains why inquiry-based comprehension is essential and why comprehension must be a teacher's top priority. She then outlines how the text will be organized. One of the strengths of this book is its organization. Each chapter includes a preview with important questions. Classroom snapshots are included that demonstrate the skills and strategies in action in real classroom interactions. Online resources are provided related to the chapter topic complete with a YouTube video introduction to the text by the author available for reader viewing. Each chapter includes detailed example lesson plans for each strategy called "Ready Resources" and each chapter ends with a review of big ideas, a look ahead, and response options for the reader to increase their own comprehension. By organizing the text in this manner, Cornett provides a model of CPS for the reader and creates a text that is user friendly and easy to navigate and revisit regularly. Viewing the YouTube video provides a comprehensive

overview of the book and is a unique way for readers to connect to the author.

Chapter one provides a basis for considering a new approach to comprehension instruction. Cornett visits the current body of research on comprehension instruction and suggests a sluggishness in our response to provide students with meaningful comprehension instruction. She stresses that definitions provide focus for goals and provides definitions for Literacy, Reading, Comprehension, Text, Big Ideas, Important Questions, and Inquiry. These definitions are key to understanding the theoretical foundation of the CPS instructional process.

The CPS process is described as a comprehensive and authentic model of how people make sense of various types of texts. CPS places equal importance on the product as well as the process. Intentional use of the strategies of CPS results in a deeper understanding of important ideas in text- a valuable product. Before reading the reader sets a purpose to create motivation by focusing on the goal of comprehension through predicting and connecting. During reading, the reader gathers data by taking and making meaning through determining importance, inferring conclusions, creating images, questioning and monitoring, analyzing, and synthesizing. After reading the reader identifies big ideas, reflects and revises, and responds. These before, during, and after reading strategies are the focus of the remainder of the book and of the corresponding resources in each chapter.

Chapters three through ten continue to outline the CPS process by zeroing in on nine comprehension best practices and how these practices are linked to the five comprehension factors; learners, teachers and teaching, tasks, text, and context. These five comprehension factors are a common thread throughout the remainder of the book and are related to all aspects of the nine best practices. Chapter Three focuses on two of these best practices, teaching the CPS process and focusing on big ideas. This chapter discusses the importance of supportive teachers and supportive classroom contexts. Cornett suggests that teacher quality, modeling, and motivation are key preconditions for successful best practice implementation. She further discusses aesthetic changes that can be made to the classroom environment to create a comfortable sanctuary for learning.

With differentiated instruction and assessment, Cornett discusses how determining a student's strengths and weaknesses is essential for teachers to craft comprehension instruction that is customized and meets the student's diverse needs. Assessment determines how instruction is differentiated and, when assessment is designed to support further learning, motivates students to learn. Informal and formal comprehension assessment is detailed with a focus on assessment's relationship to the five comprehension factors.

Cornett explains the need for explicit teaching of the CPS process daily. Empirical studies are cited to support that explicit teaching has proven to be the most successful procedure for teaching comprehension. Explicit teaching allows students to become independent constructors of their own meaning. Guidelines for explicit instruction are provided allowing for scaffolding and a gradual release of control from teacher to student. A section of Chapter Five is devoted to discussion of explicit teaching of technology-based texts.

The relationship between motivation and comprehension is explored and motivation is related back to the five comprehension factors by describing motivated learners, motivating tasks, motivating texts, motivating teachers, and motivating contexts. Cornett emphasizes the need for teaching that motivates through engagement. Teachers should teach to student interests, provide choice, orient to goals, and encourage collaboration. Clear feedback about progress is key to increasing motivation. Again, Cornett looks at technology as a means for motivating students and provides practical suggestions for implementing technology into comprehension instruction.

Questioning is the focus of Chapter seven. Cornett reminds us that it is important to ask quality questions, questions that are open-ended and ask for aesthetic understanding. Questioning and question generation should be explicitly taught to students and modeled for them regularly. These questioning skills can then be applied to discussion activities. This chapter provides a wealth of practical resources for teachers for organizing discussion activities to increase comprehension.

When discussing comprehension it is impossible not to consider the influence of fluency and vocabulary. Cornett discusses ways to problem solve unknown words, ways to deepen understanding of words, and emphasizes the need for teachers to distinguish between words as labels and words as concepts. She also acknowledges that increasing fluency when reading frees the student to concentrate on meaning. She defines fluency as accuracy, rate, and expression when reading and provides a rubric to measure expression. Again, Cornett looks at the aesthetics of the classroom environment with a discussion of ways to create word-rich classrooms.

Chapter nine discusses options for students to display their comprehension. The end of the CPS process asks students to respond to their learning. A wide variety of options are provided, including a comprehensive ready resource for teachers listing nearly 100 ideas for student responses. These responses generated by students bring the comprehension process full circle. Students create texts through problem solving and display comprehension of both the text they are responding to and the text they have personally created. Writing as a response to comprehension is examined and the similarities of CPS and the writing process are discussed. Finally, Cornett gives advice for student response through technology.

Comprehension First concludes by bringing together the full picture of the nine best practices. How these practices are instructed and embedded into daily classroom instruction is demonstrated through a discussion of classroom time organization. To successfully include best practices in comprehension instruction and the components of CPS in the classroom, Cornett recommends the following seven main literacy events daily: Opening Literacy Routines, Interactive Read Aloud, Daily Engaged Independent Reading, Small Group/Independent Work, Writing Workshop, Embedded Comprehension Instruction in the Content Areas, and Performances and Exhibits. These seven events are discussed in both theory and practice.

At the end of the book appendices are provided. These are practical application materials to aid teachers in implementing CPS in their classrooms. Appendix D is a teacher self-assessment that encourages self evaluation and reflection of comprehension beliefs and teaching practices. This is followed by a list of practices that are not recommended as a reminder to teachers. Finally, the appendices are followed by an extensive and comprehensive reference list.

In *Comprehension First* Claudia Cornett outlines a process for explicitly teaching comprehension in classrooms. She asserts that this is our charge with a new call for focusing on comprehension as the main goal of reading. The process she outlines includes best practices that are supported by research. The organization of her book is teacher friendly and the support offered by the classroom snapshots and accompanying resources allow for successful implementation. A clearer picture of the steps of the CPS process from the onset of the book would be useful but by the conclusion the reader fully understands the whole picture of how this process is implemented in a classroom setting.

Cornett's CPS process appears to be simply just another way to organize instruction in classrooms based upon what we know to be best practices for comprehension teaching. This would be true had she not embedded information about new literacies and using technology for comprehension instruction and response. The inclusion of digital literacies provides a relevance and currency to her process and her discussion. She provides teachers with a practical means for organizing instruction in their classrooms that will create meaning makers in today's information and technology era. Cornett set out to prepare teachers to teach in this century and, by including new literacies in the comprehension discussion, she has made great strides toward this goal.

Reviewed by, Amy Spiker, doctoral student in Literacy Education at the University of Wyoming. She is also a member of the faculty at the University of Wyoming as an Academic Professional Lecturer, teaching methods courses in Elementary Literacy Education and supervising student teaching experiences. Prior to her university experiences she was a reading teacher and elementary classroom teacher for eighteen years.

Fadel, Charles, & Trilling, Bernie. (2009). *21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 177 Price: \$27.95 ISBN: 9780470475386

Educators who have been paying attention to the pedagogical theory and practice that has emerged in the first decade of the 21st century will find little that is new in this book. Trilling and Fadel have been involved with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills for several years, and the contents of this book have been available on that organization's web site for several years. Still, the book promises to serve an important role as individual teachers, local schools, professional associations, and state leaders face the problem of transforming 20th century schools into 21st century schools.

In the 177 pages, readers will find answers to two questions: What is 21st century learning? and What are 21st century skills? Trilling and Fadel take two chapters to answer the first question and three chapters to answer the second question. The remainder of the book (four chapters) focuses on the classroom practices, school organizations, and societal visions and commitments that will be necessary to transform schools into institutions where students use technology to develop the problem-solving experience, global awareness, and interpersonal skills that are the basis for the education model that is proposed.

At times, the book reads like a laundry list of ideas and practices that could be easily dismissed as disconnected fads that will not transform schooling in a systematic manner. It becomes clear, however, that the laundry list is really a comprehensive description of 21st century schools. In isolation, any one reform proposed in the book is likely to be a disconnected fad; together the ideas form a comprehensive vision for schools and a framework for transforming the many dimensions of schooling that need attention for the vision to be reality.

The intended audience for the book does not appear to be an academic one; references are sparse, academic readers are likely to be distracted by the lack of sources, and careful readers are likely to find ideas that are drawn from other authors but are not referenced. For many stakeholders; including community members, school board members, and politicians; the lack of references will not interfere with the value of the book. For other stakeholders, including educators and education leaders, whose schedules ostensibly interfere with academic reading, the lack of references is a concern, but the book remains useful. In academic settings, the lack of references is a greater concern, but presumably finding the research to support the claims made in the book will be useful and instructive. One can reasonably conclude, then, that this book can be read by a wide range of individuals who are interested in the future of K-12 schooling.

Adding to the value of the book for use in diverse settings is the organization of the text which lends itself to a variety of group reading strategies. Also, the companion DVD includes video clips from schools in which the ideas proposed have already been implemented. Further, the appendices include several web resources that support and illustrate the ideas proposed by the authors.

In summary, this book provides a comprehensive vision of 21st century schools and it can be adapted for use in a variety of settings. In clear and simple terms, readers are introduced to the schools we need to prepare young people (and educators) for the coming decades.

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

Flynn, Kelly. (2008). *Kids, Classrooms, and Capitol Hill: A Peek inside the Walls of America's Public Schools*. Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield.

Pages: 189 Price: \$34.95 ISBN: 978-1-57886-822-3

Kelly Flynn's book is an organized, self-selected compilation of her "most timeless" newspaper columns from a weekly series written for *The Flint Journal* from 2002 to 2008. Flynn, a University of Michigan English Education graduate, is a veteran teacher who minored in journalism. In the introduction to the book, Flynn describes the rebirth of her interest in journalism linked directly to her passion for education. After experiencing a "lockdown" with her second period students, Flynn "thought about how the public just really doesn't 'get' the public education experience today," (p. xi). After keeping a journal for a year, Flynn left public education to begin writing her columns. This book is the telling of the story "from the inside looking out," providing succinct, focused, and accessible vignettes of real experience for her target audience – parents, teachers, administrators, as well as "taxpayers, legislators, and policy makers," (p. xii).

This book is easy to read and has much to recommend it. Clear, concisely written columns are organized into sections under the following headings: Teachers, The Classroom Experience, Seasons, Students, Student Issues, Discipline, Parents, Public Schools, Politics and Legislation, and Take Back the Profession. Each column's rich, brief description will remind any public school teacher of his/her own experiences, eliciting memories of students, colleagues, community, and events. They also reminded me in tone and vitality of Susan Ohanian's (1996), *Ask Ms. Class*.

As a teacher educator at a small state college, I am always searching for authentic written accounts of classroom experience for preservice teachers to explore (e.g., Forbes & Shannon, 2006; Newman, 1998; Silverman, Welty, & Lyon, 1992). Although not formal case studies, these 21st century columns can provide an immediate immersion into a multitude of issues that confront all education constituents in the age of No Child Left Behind. Flynn makes this intent explicit by providing a set of discussion questions for each section at the conclusion of the book, designed to provoke further thinking and dialogue between preservice and inservice teachers, parents and administrators, etc.

If there is a challenge to the book, it is merely that we, as readers—and many as researchers—may find the brief offerings of individual experience less than satisfying. Although the book could easily be read in one sitting, it was difficult for me to stay with it for a prolonged period of time. The pattern of Flynn's excellent prose led me to scan ahead, seeking the "punch line" in subsequent columns. Realizing that was not a fair way to read for the task assigned, I came to enjoy both Flynn's effort and experience when I read just a few columns before bed, and when I skipped around to find topics or headings that I was interested in.

In conclusion, I was grateful to review a book that was accessible, authentic, and expressive of the lived life of a learning teacher. Flynn strikes many issues head on and suggests how we might remedy them. For example, "Too many burned-out teachers stay on the job...taking up space where an inspired teacher could be.... We need some sort of assistance program for career teachers who don't want to leave, but need help getting their fire relit," (p. 16); or,

Part of the problem is that we only give girls half the message; "you can be anything you want" we tell them, and leave it at that. We need to have an entire conversation, including some good strong examples of what they could be. We need to show them how to get there. (p. 82).

Although the problems and solutions might be considered shared knowledge among many educators and only superficially addressed here, I found it did not hurt me to be reminded of them.

Most importantly with this volume, Flynn demonstrates the power of teacher reflection and reminds all readers that the crux of teaching and learning is "relationship". It is "the thing noneducators just don't get," (p. 129). In other words, "when you get right down to it, it's more about people—good, bad, silly, indifferent, flawed, funny, ordinary people—than anything else," (p.33).

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Reviewed by Judith M. Meloy, Ph.D., former middle and high school teacher in Centerville, Ohio, and currently retired professor of education at Castleton State College, Castleton, Vermont, where she currently adjuncts in both education department and freshmen seminar programs.

Israel, Susan E. (2009). *Breakthroughs in Literacy: Teacher Success Stories and Strategies, Grades K-8*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 211 Price: \$22.95 ISBN: 978-0-470-37182-4

In the 2009 book, *Breakthroughs in Literacy*, author and literacy advocate, Susan E. Israel, puts together a heart-warming collection of motivational stories and personal anecdotes in education, written and shared by teachers from around the country. In addition to the inspiring narratives, the author provides insightful summations and advice for practical use in the language arts classroom. The book offers an exciting and innovative approach to support classroom instruction for pre-service teachers, or to be used as a reference for novice teachers seeking strategies that work in real life classroom settings. The collaborative work presents a multitude of information and guidance from numerous perspectives, while feeling overall positive and motivational in nature.

The book is well organized into four central thematic sections: Connections, Motivation, Engagement, and Transformation. Within each section, Israel introduces the premise of the individual accounts contained within the following chapter. Throughout each theme, the stories themselves are allowed to supply the heart and soul of the section. A total of 29 stories provide the basis for the entire book, each one detailing an individual teacher's unique "breakthrough" in a specific situation. As the teachers themselves represent various levels of professional experience, the author interjects at the conclusion of each theme, presenting a reflective summary, questions, and learning extensions for further clarification and exploration. Additionally, she concludes the book with a section of supplementary information, complete with what Israel calls "The Seven Pathways to Literacy Learning," giving reliable suggestions for working with all types of learners. Overall, the book is highly organized and lends itself well to being read in its entirety or to being used a handy reference guide, with easily identified sections.

Breakthroughs in Literacy is a valuable tool for education students and practicing teachers alike, offering readers creative ideas and useful advice for working with struggling learners. The availability and access it provides to a significant number of classroom tested teaching strategies makes it a potentially effective resource for the K-8 classroom. Moreover, the inspirational tone brought forth by the author and collaborators offers a sense of support and encouragement to other professionals trying to achieve "breakthroughs" of their own in language arts classrooms throughout the country.

Reviewed by Jennifer Rose-Woodward, adjunct faculty for the University in the Teacher Education Department and a doctoral student at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha, NE. Rose –Woodward has a master's degree in language arts from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Liu, Eric, & Noppe-Brandon, Scott. (2009). *Imagination First: Unlocking the Power of Possibility*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pages: 228 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-470-38248-6

Imagination First reads more like a business book than an education title. A quick read, the book is a manual for developing one's imagination, and the concepts and practices described can be used with either children or adults. Liu and Noppe-Brandon assert that "any conceptual breakthrough requires imagination first" (p. 12) and they believe that everyone can learn to use their imagination more effectively. The book is divided into three sections: the premise, the practices, and the purposes. The largest part of the book devoted to the practices.

In a society where the education system seems to drain children of imagination and where the future of our economy is in crisis, Liu and Noppe-Brandon provide hope for a new way of thinking and doing. If we are going to find innovative solutions for today's education system and create innovative new industries, we can begin by cultivating imagination.

The authors articulate the relationship between words that our society often uses interchangeably: imagination, creativity, and innovation. They see these concepts as a continuum with one leading to the next. The authors' point of view is that imagination must be learned, developed, and cultivated before innovation can occur. They dispel three myths: that you either have imagination or you don't, that it is a mystery, and that you cannot learn it.

Contemplating "what if" can be scary. So Liu and Noppe-Brandon developed twenty-eight-and-a-half practices for readers to...practice. These practices are informed by "capacities for imaginative learning" (2009) developed by The Lincoln Center Institute, where Noppe-Brandon is executive director: noticing deeply, embodying, questioning, identifying patterns, making connections, exhibiting empathy, creating meaning, taking action, and reflecting and assessing.

Practice six encourages you to think inside the box. Be grateful for limits and see the potential in those limits as a source of new invention, along the lines of the old adage "necessity is the mother of invention." Practice eight encourages you to mix your metaphors. Consider alternatives to common metaphors. How are the things around you like gardens, gifts, or games? Practice seventeen encourages you to play telephone, or meaning-laundering, to discover the essence and possibilities of a particular communication.

The authors included twelve pages of related books, articles, and websites for readers to explore. The book's website, imaginationfirst.com, is primarily a marketing tool for the book, but readers can sample the practices, read more about the authors, explore related resources, and share their experiences.

As a former classroom teacher, I definitely see ways I could use the practices while teaching my students. As a manager, I see ways I can use the practices for staff and team development. I plan to keep this book within reach, in between Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind* and Michael Michalko's *Thinkertoys*.

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Reviewed by Kathy M. Irwin, MSLS, Librarian, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Murray, Charles. (2009). *Real Education: Four Simple Truths for Bringing America's Schools Back to Reality*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Pages: \$15.00 Price: 219 ISBN: 0307405397

Charles Murray would call me an educational romantic.

I believe that early education and intervention is crucial to a child's academic success. I also believe that there is some fundamental good in the NCLB tenets, encouraging K-12 educators to raise the bar thereby striving to improve academic skills for all children. Furthermore, as a former guidance counselor, I have encouraged many students to at least *try* college, believing that both the academic challenge and social experience would prove beneficial to them later in life. As the author of *Real Education: Four Simple Truths for Bring America's Schools Back to Reality*, Charles Murray would take issue with all of the previous positions and perhaps even most of my imbedded educational philosophy. Murray is currently a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. and also co-wrote the previous best seller and equally controversial book entitled *The Bell Curve* (1994).

The book is not the typical edu-speak, nor does it glorify the role and potential of seasoned educators to leave their mark. Instead, it challenges most of what we have been taught in our professional preparatory programs and a lot of what we have come to accept as educational truths. Murray argues that the problem with American education is not low test scores or embattled teachers unions but rather that the "educational system is living a lie" (p. 11). He contends that the "lie" is that every child can become what s/he desires if only the educational system teaches and supports them adequately. In his book, Murray calls for a transformation of the American educational system. He argues that educators have "idealized images of the potential that children bring to the classroom and of our ability to realize that potential" (p. 11). He maintains that when the facts get in the way, we simply ignore them because they do not further our cause. And according to Murray, this wishful thinking and well-intended egalitarianism (p. 12) stands in the way of dealing with the four simple truths he outlines in the book:

- Ability varies
- Half of the children are below average
- Too many people are going to college
- America's future depends on how we educate the academically gifted

Four chapters of the book's five are devoted to these tenets. The final chapter details Murray's idea of how to create a more meaningful educational system while embracing the four simple truths.

According to Murray, not only does ability vary, it varies *a lot*. Using Harold Gardner's multiple intelligences as a framework, he presents the extremes using concrete examples. One can either be musically tone deaf or Mozart equivalent in their musical ability. Likewise, regarding logical-mathematical ability, an intelligence highly correlated with academic achievement, some children cannot understand the concept of cause and effect, whereas some are able to comprehend Aristotle. Translation: not everyone is good at everything, nor does everyone have a special "gift," which we have commonly come to believe. "For any given ability, the population forms a continuum that goes from very low to very high" (p. 30) and schools that choose to ignore this reality are in effect, doing their students a disservice (p. 30).

Murray further contends that we have a limited capacity to change academic ability. He questions the efficacy of early childhood intervention programs such as Head Start and the lack of long term effects of such programs. In a September 24, 2009 blog entry for the EnterpriseBLOG, part of the *The Journal of the American Enterprise*, he calls early childhood intervention programs one of the most oversold social policy interventions. "The most we know how to do with outside interventions is to make children who are well below average a little less below average" (p. 49). Murray maintains that educators so desperately want to be able to change the course of a child's life (and for hundreds of years we have held that more education is the way to accomplish this task) that we have begun to believe something sacred that has no basis in truth. In fact, Murray argues that early childhood programs have proven there is no relationship between early intervention and long term academic achievement.

Another controversial topic tackles the current number of America's students who choose college as the avenue to pursue their career goals. In chapter 3, the author argues that far too many students are going to a four year college in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, when only 10-15% of students actually have the intellectual capacity to successfully complete college level studies. He suggests that we have devalued other forms of training and certification often necessary for job success and instead encouraged all high school graduates to pursue college dreams, even when their attendance necessitates tedious remedial work and results in both frustrating experiences for students and faculty as well as college level grade inflation. He contends that many adolescents have career ambitions that are inconsistent with their educational plans and that usually this misalignment tends to be optimistic (p. 104). Without understanding the educational hurdles, they gravitate toward college because they believe that having a BA will ensure job success. In reality, many drop out or are still enrolled

more than five years later.

Finally in chapter 4, Murray proposes that like it or not, we are a country that is run by an elite group of people, drawn almost entirely from those who are academically gifted. For this reason, he maintains that it is critical for those who will someday be leaders of our nation's culture, economy and politics (p. 108) to have the absolute *best* education, especially at the collegiate level. "The problem with the education of the gifted involves not the amount of education nor their professional training, but their training as citizens....We need to structure their education so that they have the best possible chance to become not just knowledgeable but wise" (p. 112). This return to a more classical liberal education involves rigor in the following areas: verbal expression, judgment and decision-making as well as a broader understanding regarding the complexities of virtue, the common good and individual humility.

Well researched with scores of notes and an extensive bibliography, Murray presents his arguments in a logical and organized fashion, sometimes causing the reader to wonder: How could I have presumed differently? At the same time, professional educators may find themselves asking whether they should be reading this book as it goes against what many of us have been taught and/or come to believe—if only given quality teachers, safe schools and decent textbooks, all children are capable of being above average. Not for the faint at heart, nor for those in education unwilling to open their minds to ideas beyond the norm, *Real Education* should be read by school leaders at all levels, graduate students of education and those charged with designing our teacher preparatory programs, if for no other reason than to stimulate a discussion beyond the status-quo.

Murray is perhaps an optimistic cynic regarding the future direction of educational policy. He is a strong critic, but yet at the same time offers hope and direction for change and readers will appreciate the specificity. While he has harsh words for most public school curriculum offered in our schools, he suggests an easy and quick solution—schools should replace existing faulty curriculum with E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge sequence, upon which Murray lays abundant praise.

This book, although controversial in subject matter, raises daunting questions about the current educational system and the collateral effect on American society. If a significantly improved educational system has a chance of improving the academic achievement of most students, isn't it worth the effort? In the end, we are left to wonder.

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Reviewed by Laura Lloyd-Smith, Ed.D. A graduate of the University of South Dakota and adjunct instructor of education, Dr. Lloyd-Smith is a former school counselor who has research interests in the foundations of education, fostering secondary level parent involvement and blended course delivery.

Spring, Joel. (2009). *Globalization of Education: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Pages: 264 Price: \$30.95 ISBN: 0415989477

In *Globalization of Education: An Introduction*, Joel Spring provides an in-depth explanation for a series of competing theories on how globalization currently contributes to educational practices on a world scale. These three theories are described as the "World Cultural Scholars" who maintain that school systems and educators draw freely from global practices (p. 13) in creating "a global flow of best practices" (p. 10), "World System Theorists and Postcolonial critics" who argue that globalized education is an effect of empire by which powerful nations maintain hegemonic control of a growing world curriculum (p. 17) and as such must be resisted, and the "Culturalists" who do not perceive that globalization has any significant bearing on educational practices around the world whatsoever (p. 17).

In an all too brief concluding assessment to a highly organized, detailed account of these competing positions, Spring makes a precipitated quasi-psychoanalytic turn to sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin by arguing that these manufactured models are symptomatic of man's neuroses, infantile impulses, and ir/rationalities. In our human, all too human "desire for certainty and predictability" (p. 200), we come up with emotionally-driven, dogmatic theories to explain globalized phenomena as being free-flowing, culturally imperialistic, or simply imagined as in each of these respective cases. Any one of these theoretical paradigms, Spring argues, might or might not be functioning depending on context or setting or, stretching his argument even further, the mental state of a school administrator who like his/her scholarly counterparts, acts "self-deceptive" one day, "demonic" the next (p. 200).

Based on Spring's authoritative account of the power that the World Bank plays in influencing educational developments around the world, the Culturalist paradigm seems either naïve or suspect. Echoing Hume, who said that reason "is the slave to the passions," and following Morin more specifically, Spring deduces that humankind and scholars in particular are "more driven by emotions and fantasies than by reason" (p. 200) in conducting their research; if this is the case, it's hard not to imagine that the Culturalists might be in collusion with leaders who support the Human Capital World Model which aims to create educational programs throughout the world that manufacture human beings for a global "knowledge economy" (p. 37). This knowledge capital economy invests in education exclusively to benefit the economic growth of the already empowered while codifying "one form of knowledge" (p. 13).

Eerily reminiscent of Taylor's scientific management model and artistically captured in Fritz Lang's science fiction film *Metropolis* where the "Heart Machine" acts as a kind of central electronic generating mega-mechanism to operate the entire metropolis, the World Systems Theorist's critical view is potently illustrated by the World Bank which supports a particular kind of education and personality that "increases the level of productivity [such that] more goods can be produced using fewer hours of human labor" (p. 39)—bearing a rudimentary resemblance to Spring's technologically sophisticated "global flows and networks" of educational policies. These global networks are part of a greater "superstructure" that links all forms of global education "almost instantaneous[ly]" (p. 7). With their ability to "expand and attract members" and to "stretch across the boundaries of nations and continents," the global flow of ideas or "ideoscapes," act like a novel type of pan-movement—unlike previous pan-movements (Arendt, 1951/1976)—in that this version has economic intent.

Spring is so calculatingly neutral in describing these competing paradigms that one begins to wonder what an edited collection might look like in its stead. On one hand, Spring portrays a world in which international trade and technologies are making "resources," "scientific research," and "business services" completely "the same" (p. 3), like fungible goods on an assembly line; yet, on the other hand, he equivocates, stating that "the global spread of education is much more complicated and involves choice" (p. 21), like the World Cultural Theorists would like us to believe, "and imposition" (p. 21), echoing the critics of global educational homogeneity.

While critics and/or Spring (it's not made fully clear) argue that it is perilous to assume that teachers and their educational practices are simply "passive participants" (p. 7), without agency in the global network of educational policies, it's just as dangerous if not more so to overlook the organizational similarities between the global flows and networks and the "peculiar onion-like structure" of totalitarianism elucidated by Arendt which "increase[s] in sympathizers" by organizing superparties of "elite formations" and frontline bureaucrats, multiplying offices and duplicating functions (p. 413). For Arendt, total terror "substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron" (p. 465) that completely eradicates human individuality and plurality, replacing it with "One man of gigantic dimension" (p. 466).

As global networks are built on a superstructure influencing communications between government, policymakers, and schools (Spring, 2009, p. 6), the possibility of creating a monolithic educational ideology is no illusion as the Culturalists would like to claim. Curiously, while Spring provides layers of evidence suggesting that the Human Capital World Model is more than just a model, he downplays the World System Theory which understands the world in these terms. For Spring, it's futile to predict—as these theories attempt to do—a future that is always illusive and uncertain. At the same time, civilization has been gifted with thinkers such as Arendt who have provided valuable scholarship that teaches us how to detect warning signs of a future totalitarian world that might look in its infancy quite different than its predecessors.

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Reviewed by Hannah Spector, a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia. A former high school English teacher and department chair, her research interests include curriculum theory, cosmopolitanism, and literature education. Hannah earned her BA in English at the University of Florida and an MFA in Creative Writing at Emerson College.



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