



Black, Laurel Johnson. (1998). *Between Talk and Teaching: Reconsidering the Writing Conference*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.

This book is aimed at college level writing instructors who want to maximize the impact of the time they spend in conference with individual students. It should also be of interest to secondary level teachers. The raw data of the discussion are transcripts and discourse analysis from a small sample of conferences the author was able to record, coupled with essays about "best" or "worst" conferences written by students.

Because of all the transcribed conference excerpts the book is not an easy read, but it is well worth the effort. This is not a topic that has gotten much attention in the literature and Black does an excellent job of bringing out the issues, clarifying the whole conference process, and discussing ways of improving conference interactions to improve learning. She makes quite clear how the one-on-one nature of a conference heightens the feelings of unequal power for student participants. She shows in some detail how instructors, often anxious to give as much advice and instruction as possible in a short time, frequently do not allow students to speak, or do not listen and respond to what they say when they do speak. Finally, Black advocates an active learning mode for the conference, that allows the student the dignity of his/her own vision for writing.

Pages: 177 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 0-87421-241-3

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

Linse, Caroline T. (1997). *The Treasured Mailbox: How to Use Authentic Correspondence with Children K-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Beeline Books.

This book is light on theory but incredibly inclusive on practical ideas. It includes ideas not just for writing projects, but also for getting paper supplies, decorating papers, reading about correspondence, and perhaps its most original idea, setting up a correspondence library.

The author clearly loves letters and finds that because they often have a given form and specific audience they can be a helpful way to inspire young children to write. She advocates engaging children in writing by introducing them to the real world of writing using books that include letters, a visit to a greeting card shop, or samples of correspondence donated by parents. She also points out the benefits of adding interest through decoration and creative design. This would be a good idea book for teachers or parents who want to encourage writing.

Pages: 130 Price: \$14.95 ISBN: 0-435-08139-x

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

Weiler, Kathleen. (1998). *Country Schoolwomen: Teaching in Rural California, 1850 -- 1950*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

This is an excellent history that should interest scholars of the history of education throughout the United States. Starting from a desire to know more about the life her school teacher mother lived, Weiler takes an in-depth look at schools and teaching in a century that shaped our current school system. She does this by concentrating on the school systems of two California counties. Culture and world events play a role in education that is reflected in the changing patterns of schooling and the changing faces of the teachers in these counties. Via extensive interviews with former teachers, as well as a look at the documentary record, Weiler shows us how we got here. In the process she provides some insight into educational evolution that can help to shape the process for the future.

Pages: **339** Price: **\$49.50** ISBN: **0-8047-3004-0**

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University



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