



Curriculum Resource Center, [online database]. New York: Facts on File.

The *Curriculum Resource Center* is an excellent online version of many of the On File binders published by Facts On File, such as "Maps On File," "Science Experiments On File," etc. Many curriculum labs have most of these binders in their reference collection, but the online resource is much more accessible.

It is divided into two groups—Grades K-5, and Grades 6-12.

Grades K-5 Contents: Maps and Flags, Timelines, Science Diagrams, Science Projects, and Printable Job Profiles from Facts on File's popular "Career Ideas for Kids" series.

Grades 6-12 Contents: Maps (geographic, historical and statistical), Science Diagrams, Science Experiments, Historical Images, Historical Timelines, and other handouts including explanations of major events in world history, concepts and ideas of US government.

The database is simple to use, using Adobe Acrobat Reader you can print out some highly readable diagrams, pictures, and timelines. Several different kinds of maps can be printed, with and without labels. In addition, the Career Ideas section has activities that could be used as the basis for lessons or activities. They plan to update it only twice a year, so it will not be useful for keeping up with breaking events.

Curriculum Resource Center is a new resource, it would be hard to say how useful it is in practice, but it's a well organized, user-friendly resource for quick handouts for teachers. It would supplement but not be a replacement for the *Kraus Curriculum Development Library*.

Pages: N/A Price: **varies by institution size** ISBN: N/A

Reviewed by Sheila Kirven, New Jersey City University & Lorna Lueck, University of California, Santa Barbara

**Kallick, Bena & Wilson, James M. III, editors (2001)
Information Technology for Schools: Creating Practical Knowledge to Improve Student Performance. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.**

The subtitle of this book is the more accurate description of its goal. "Creating Practical Knowledge to Improve Student Performance" is the real aim and technology is only the means. The editors set the stage by discussing the Feedback Spiral, a model that encourages educators to see change as a process that requires data gathering, analysis, reflection and repeated modifications of implementation strategies. The two next sections move to a case study approach, discussing common district challenges: planning for technology, and finding ways to use existing information to improve instruction. This is followed by Costas and Bobowick's presentation of their technology self assessment process.

The book then moves to the classroom discussing class level implementation of technology in both general and specific terms. Like all edited collections there are strengths and weaknesses here. Two chapters are particularly strong. Sherry King's "Tracking Data on Student Achievement; Questions and Lessons" details her efforts to bring the disjoint data gathered in her school district together into a useable basis for both district wide and individual change. The final chapter by editors Kallick and Wilson is an excellent overview of the issues discussed and techniques needed to meet the challenges of utilizing technology to improve education.

Timeliness can be a significant issue with books about technology. Many of the interventions discussed are no longer cutting edge. The Feedback Spiral was first introduced by the editors in 1994. Hildebrandt Klais' chapter on "Teaching Computer Searching Skills," which advocates the use of the phone book as a database model, may be outdated due to the growing use of cell phones and pagers by the high school age population, since her project in the mid 1990's. Still the volume offers valuable food for thought for those looking at technology planning issues.

Pages: 121 Price: \$20 ISBN: 0-7879-5522-1

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

Lawyer-Brook, Dianna & McVey Vicki (2000). *Shifting Focus: A Handbook for ITV Educators*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Two way interactive television (ITV) is not the latest "hot" technology, but it is accessible for many schools at all levels. Lawyer-Brook and McVey draw on personal experience and other published accounts to discuss equipment, lesson planning, instructional techniques, even the dress and demeanor of the instructor. Their emphasis is on illustrating how active learning and community building can happen in an ITV setting. As a person who has never used the technology I was encouraged at first by the authors' willingness to admit that it was both complex and demanding, requiring training and practice to use

effectively. As the book progressed, and more and more do's and don'ts were added to the list, I began to feel overwhelmed by the number of issues that must be considered.

Part of the reason for this is the rather choppy format. In order to highlight crucial points and make them easy to find, the authors pepper the text with icons highlighting glossary words, important points, cautions and such. These features and the fairly frequent use of text boxes break up the flow of the writing. They also mean that no one topic is explored in much detail. I was particularly disappointed with the lack of depth in the examples, which tend to focus on how students responded to a lesson rather than how the lesson was planned. For me, the final chapter was the saving grace. It is a series of summaries of the preceding chapters, pulling all the concepts together, making the whole process seem more manageable.

Pages: **147** Price: **\$27.95** ISBN: **0-8108-3756-0**

Reviewed by Kate Corby, Michigan State University

Wormeli, Rick (2001) *Meet Me in the Middle: Becoming an Accomplished Middle-Level Teacher*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

In the introduction to *Meet Me in the Middle*, Rick Wormeli tells the reader to "take the pieces from this book that seem most useful to you now and leave the rest for another day." That is sound advice considering that each chapter Wormeli writes could be an entire book of its own. *Meet Me in the Middle* is a book written by a teacher for teachers. Wormeli inspires readers to be the best teachers they can be, to challenge themselves as much as they challenge their students, and to use "what's effective, not just what's comfortable or familiar."

Wormeli has published many articles in *Middle Ground* (National Middle School Association) and *Crucial Link* (Virginia Middle School Association). Some of these articles formed the basis for chapters in the book. The book is divided into 3 equal parts: Creating a Culture of Learning, Higher Student Achievement, and Extending our Professional Practices. Throughout these sections Wormeli presents ideas that have become staples of middle school philosophy, including active learning, games, differentiated instruction, block scheduling, writing in the content areas, team teaching, and outdoor education.

Chapter one begins with a look inside the teacher. What is the teacher's motivation for teaching? What does the teacher learn from his or her students? What attitudes do we reveal as we teach? Chapter two presents methods the teacher can use to motivate young adolescents. Wormeli begins with a series of questions to ask oneself to determine whether or not one's current methods are motivating. He describes

simple things a teacher can do to help motivate students, including being interested in the students, creating a safe classroom environment, using stories and suspense, playing games, cooperative learning, showing enthusiasm, communicating clear goals, meeting the students' learning needs, and providing frequent feedback.

Chapter three provides an overview of Bloom's taxonomy and highlights from the last 10 years of brain research. Wormeli provides several pages of ways to use reasoning and logic in the classroom to develop critical thinking. Chapters four and five stress the importance of active rather than passive learning. Wormeli presents many ideas that can be adapted to any subject. (These ideas could even be used successfully at faculty meetings!)

Part two focuses on student achievement. In chapter six, Wormeli points out that state standards for education do not have to restrict teaching and create "cookie cutter" students. Rather, in order to meet the standards, teachers should put the students first, keep up with current research, collaborate with their colleagues, and give frequent feedback to the students. Chapter seven discusses ways in which the teacher can provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of the students. It is important to provide a range of assignments and to match the challenge to the student. Wormeli outlines a sample plan demonstrating how to provide differentiation.

Chapter eight emphasizes that clear goals at the beginning of a unit of study is the first step in effective assessment. A variety of formats of grading are examined. Chapter nine advocates longer class periods for all subjects, even though that means the classes meet fewer times per week. Chapter ten outlines ways to include writing through all the content areas. Writing helps students learn the content and learn to express themselves. Many pages of writing activities are presented, most of which can be adapted to any subject area.

In part three, Wormeli takes us beyond the isolated classroom. Chapter 11 shows how team teaching can build positive relationships between teachers, students and parents. Interdisciplinary units help students see relationships between what might otherwise be disjointed topics. Teacher advisory programs are examined in chapter 12. Teachers meet with small groups of students daily or weekly to encourage communication and to build relationships. During this time, students might work on service projects or take time to reflect. Chapter 13 provides an overview of outdoor education, showing ways that teachers can integrate learning across the curriculum through one day or weeklong adventures.

Chapter 14 describes the roles of new teachers and veteran teachers in the mentoring process. Chapter 15 discusses ways teachers can reach out to parents, including ideas for using technology to improve communication. In Chapter 16, Wormeli presents the idea of teachers becoming certified by the National Board of Certification, a voluntary

process in which teachers evaluate other teachers. Wormeli believes that teachers who make the effort to become certified find themselves shifting from teacher-centered classrooms to student-centered classrooms, and from teaching subjects in isolation to teaching interdisciplinary units. This is a step that mid-career teachers could take in order to renew and stretch themselves.

The final chapter, entitled "The Truth about Middle School Students," describes a permanent fixture in Wormeli's classroom called the "graffiti wall." Within certain parameters, students are allowed to write whatever they want on a butcher paper-covered wall. Wormeli includes throughout this chapter some of what his students have written on this wall. Their words are profound, revealing active minds. Wormeli asks that teachers begin to challenge the stereotypes of adolescents as presented in the media.

While there are no photographs and few diagrams, *Meet Me in the Middle* is a quick and interesting read. Scattered throughout the book in the margins are quotes from real middle schoolers about their learning experiences. The 11-page index provides quick access to the many topics presented in the book. The five-page bibliography lists books and articles written mostly in the 1990s, with a few 2000 titles and a few older titles from the 1970s and 1980s. Included are web sites full of teacher resources or author and association information. Of special interest is the 22-page appendix of ready- to-use (or adapt) lesson ideas.

Meet Me in the Middle will appeal to all middle level teachers, serving both as an introduction to middle school education for novice teachers and as a tool to reinvigorate mid-career and veteran teachers. Upper elementary and high school teachers could also use many of the ideas presented, as the core ideas include putting the student first and building positive relationships.

Pages: **243** Price: **\$28** ISBN: **1-57110-328-7**

Reviewed by Kathy M. Irwin, University of Michigan, Dearborn



[home](#) | [reviews](#) | [editors](#) | [contribute](#) | [subscribe](#) | [publishers](#)