



Beers, Kylene (2003) *When Kids Can't Read--What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Facing the terrible dilemma as a first year middle-school teacher not knowing how to answer a parent when he asked, "Why can't my son read and what are you going to do to help him?" Kylene Beers drew a blank. Embarrassed by the situation which occurred over two decades ago she became determined to find out "what to do" about students who can't read.

Today Beers teaches reading and English methods classes at the University of Houston. In this paperback she outlines what teachers can do to help youngsters who can't read. Beers explains that the reason an older student can't read can be rather complex. He may have comprehension, vocabulary, word recognition and fluency, or spelling problems. Or, the individual may just need help in responding to literature and finding books that are of interest. Obviously a person having trouble reading might be having difficulty in a combination of these potential trouble areas.

Beers provides concrete information on how to deal with all of these areas of concern. Practical strategies and suggestions on how to improve students' skills and help them overcome reading difficulties are explained in each of the 15 chapters. The topics covered include assessing dependent readers' needs, instruction in comprehension, learning to make an inference, constructing meaning, developing vocabulary and fluency, and improving word recognition.

Classroom tested techniques are clearly explained and supported with student transcripts and some reproducible material. Enough suggestions for dealing with a given problem are provided so that if one thing doesn't work or seem appropriate, another strategy can be tried. The extensive appendices offer a range of material such as templates for capturing questions about a text as a student reads or investigating word meanings. Useful lists of roots, Fry and Dolch words, spelling rules, and book titles based on subject matter will also be found at the back of the book.

Certainly there is no quick fix when it comes to helping a struggling adolescent overcome a reading problem. Beers does provide a way of diagnosing the situation, though, and she also suggests concrete remedies. For example, what should one do if a student stumbles through many words or decodes the first few letters or first syllable of a multi-syllable word and then makes up the rest or gives up? Turn to the

book's back cover for a list of potential student problems and the course of action that one might wish to follow. There one it directed to the chapters on word recognition, spelling and fluency to devise a way of helping the youngster. Anyone not trained as a reading specialist will find this volume extremely helpful.

Pages: **392** Price: **\$27.50** ISBN: **0-86709-519-9**

Reviewed by Robert F. Walch

Cervený, Cathy G. & La Cotti, Melissa L. (2003) 35
Learning Tools for Practicing Essential Reading and
***Writing Strategies.* New York: Scholastic.**

While diminutive in pagination, this powerful little book is full of mini-lessons, activities, and reproducibles for novice and experienced 4th-8th grade teachers of reading and writing. With a total of 33 years of experience between them; the authors have many ideas to share, which they do with creativity demonstrating their joy of teaching. Cervený is a former Maryland Teacher of the Year. La Cotti has worked with grades 3 to 5 since 1993.

The suggested strategies are based on research and successful instruction. Cervený and La Cotti emphasize teaching strategies that assist students to become independent learners while applying necessary critical thinking skills when reading and writing.

The introduction provides an excellent theoretical foundation for their book. The concise review of the research (bibliography provided) encourages one to delve deeper into the literature of teaching strategies. This alone makes the book valuable to teachers interested in how students successfully construct meaning from reading and writing assignments.

The book is divided into two distinct sections, reading strategies and writing strategies. A reproducible "tool" follows each lesson plan. Reproducibles include bookmarks, checklists, strategy cards, trifolds, or handouts that students can keep available for review. While each lesson can be used independently, they also build upon the other. The "ultimate goal is to have students apply the strategy automatically to new challenges and more difficult learning tasks" (p.8).

Pages: **80** Price: **\$12.95** ISBN: **0-439-20761-4**

Reviewed by Rita Kohrman, Grand Valley State University

Cram, Ronald Hecker (2003) *Bullying: A Spiritual Crisis.*

St Louis: Chalice Press.

There is clearly a need for a well-written book on bullying as a spiritual crisis. I realized that fact as I was reading this book. Many people saw the cover and stopped to ask me about the book or to make a comment about the subject. As the author of the book points out, there is little research on the topic. Unfortunately, this book does not fill that need. For one thing, it is very hard to understand where the author is going. He jumps from one point to another with little or no explanation of why he is doing so, complicating the task of trying to follow and understand the argument he wishes to make. He states the view of a prominent person such as St. Paul and then simply states a differing view without adequately justifying why the reader should accept his view rather than St. Paul's. The book cries out for more clear and concise examples of the author's points to enable the reader to understand what the author is trying to convey. Here is a typical passage from the book:

Bullying is the negation of the praise of God. It distorts the relational process of God with and for human beings, interdependence, to violate the other person. (p. 75)

I read this passage many times and I'm still not sure what the author wants me to understand.

Despite these shortcomings, the book does provide an interesting, alternative look at violence and bullying. The book specifically targets those in religious education but all teachers, administrators and parents will find the concrete suggestions in the final chapter on how to deal with bullying of particular interest. There is also a very useful bibliography of resources for teachers, children, youth and adults as well as contact information for relevant organizations.

Cram begins his book on bullying with an examination of violence from a Christian perspective. He considers, then rejects, the view that Jesus' crucifixion was meant to be a sacrificial act, a form of atonement, since that view only serves to perpetuate our society's prevailing attitudes toward violence. He believes, instead, that "God created human beings to be in relation with God and with one another." (p. 3) Some relate to others in a spirit of doxology (praise of God) while others do so in sin. Sin, according to the author, is a desire to be in relation with others but in the wrong way. Relationships with others in a spirit of doxology are based on dignity and respect while relationships in sin are based on dehumanization. Violent people want to have relations with others because they fear being alone, but their relationships are based on violence. Such relations occur only in short, sporadic bursts of time and are ultimately unfulfilling, so the violence increases proportionally over time as the desire for relation grows.

In chapter two, Cram focuses on bullying through a case study. In chapter three, he presents some research findings about bullying. He points out that bullying can occur at every level: it can be practiced by

individuals, by groups, by organizations, by countries. He describes typical characteristics of bullies and their victims. He then argues that tolerance gives social support to violence with bullying being one of its manifestations. He gives a history of toleration and argues that toleration comes from relationships in which there is an imbalance of power. He feels that the opposite of intolerance is empathy, not toleration, and that adults should model empathy in their lives so that their children can learn to practice it as well. An empathic environment will, according to Cram, create a safe place in which people can find relief from their isolation; this will save them from lives of violence. In his view, the practice of forgiveness is important in breaking the cycle of violence.

Finally in chapter four, Cram gives concrete examples of how churches and religious schools can practice and encourage empathy and how they can manage bullying episodes. For instance, he suggests that an institution could form a "Community Life Committee" which would intervene with both the bully and the victim. Such a committee might recommend parenting classes for the bully's parents. The bully might be assigned to a teacher mentor. He argues against simply removing the victim from the bullying situation since such an action only sends the message that the victim cannot help him or herself. He advocates, instead, for teaching the victim temporary behaviors that will relieve the situation and then providing competent help to address the factors that made this particular person a bully's victim. He includes an example of a possible bullying policy that a religious school might adapt.

This book addresses the important topic of bullying from a religious perspective. It provides an interesting, alternative look at bullying but is very hard to follow and to understand. The concrete suggestions for churches and religious schools dealing with bullying listed in the final chapter and the bibliography of resources at the end of the book will be the features of greatest interest to educators and parents.

Pages: **121** Price: **\$19.00** ISBN: : **0-8272-0234-2**

Reviewed by Marija Freeland, University of Michigan

Janeczko, Paul B. (2003) *Opening a Door: Reading Poetry in the Middle School Classroom*. New York: Scholastic.

Paul B. Janeczko's book *Opening a Door: Reading Poetry in the Middle School Classroom* wants teachers to do more than his title suggests. The heart of this book is to help teachers break free of traditional methods of teaching poetry that often leave students cold, and find confidence in using new means of connecting students and poetry.

Every page is evidence of Janeczko's love affair with poetry and it is infectious. In the first section of the book, Janeczko gives a history of how he came to revitalize his own instruction of poetry. He looked to poetry that, to quote Ted Hughes' *Poetry Is*, "is made out of experiences which change our bodies, and spirits, whether momentarily or for good" (p.10). With this in mind, Janeczko began his revolution with William Stafford's *Fifteen*. He asked his students questions about what it felt like to be fifteen and such. It worked. The poem held their attention and they moved beyond giving indistinct answers to actually discussing it. That first class led Janeczko to a core belief that students will respond to poetry which is carefully selected to be accessible to them.

In the second portion of the book, Janeczko comes to teachers' aid by identifying carefully selected, accessible poems and by providing reproducible worksheets for each that are designed to match exercises with specific characteristics of each poem. While the worksheets offer a template to use in teaching and discussing poetry with students, Janeczko encourages teachers to be prepared to "step off the beaten path when an interesting opportunity presents itself" (p. 32).

Janeczko doesn't stop there. He finishes up by encouraging teachers to practice what they preach by offering tips and suggestions on how they can become readers of poetry in their lives. Numerous anthologies, poets, and Web sites are listed as references for the novice reader of poetry. This work is for all teachers who want to find new meaningful ways of bringing poetry into the classroom.

Pages: **128** Price: **\$15.95** ISBN: **0439332079**

Reviewed by Melissa Cast, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Meyers, Ellen & Rust, Frances, eds. (2003) *Taking Action with Teacher Research*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This book attempts to illustrate how teachers can use action research to influence education policy. Action research is the study of the interaction between teachers' actions and student achievement; hence the common focus on reflective teaching practices and professional development. "Without the evidence that comes from systematic examination and assessment of practice, the teachers' voice would be neither focused nor heeded" in terms of education policymaking (p. 156). Using five case studies initiated by the Teachers Network Policy Institute (TNPI) in 1998, Ellen Meyers and Frances Rust present useful, authentic examples of action research, but do not educate the reader on how to use the research to shape education policy. The book's intent is to "demonstrate how teachers in the course of their everyday teaching can make a case for school reform," but the book's title leads the reader to think they will learn the steps of using action research to

change policy (p. 158).

TNPI's mission is to "give teachers an active voice in education policymaking so that education mandates are informed by the realities of daily classroom life" (p. 157). Public school reform is at the heart of education policymaking, and is defined by three themes: (1) resources needed to meet standards, (2) conditions of the workplace, and (3) status of the teaching profession. The five case studies, which comprise chapters two through seven, demonstrate action research related to these themes. The introduction establishes context for TNPI and for the book, while chapter one outlines the action research process, and chapter eight is a conclusion. A complete list of references wraps up the book.

Using Hubbard & Powers' *The Art of Classroom Inquiry* (1993), Meyers and Rust constructed their own version of how to do action research as follows: (1) establishing the "question" or classroom problem, (2) providing rationale for the study, (3) explaining context (school vs. district), (4) conducting a literature review, (5) describing research methods and tools, (6) organizing, summarizing and analyzing data, and (7) translating the results into policy implications. Research tools include student work samples, anecdotal records/observations, journals, audiotapes and videotapes, classroom and peer teacher evaluations, field notes, case studies, student logs, parent/teacher conference notes, photographs, class maps, running records, test scores, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews.

Because of their experience in classroom teaching, action research, and publishing, I found it easy to trust the editors' methodology and their reasons for doing action research. Meyers is a founder and senior vice president of Teachers Network (TNPI's parent company), director of TNPI, and author/editor of five additional books. Rust is the university advisor to TNPI, author/editor of five additional books and numerous articles in prestigious education journals, and president of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators. They are colleagues at New York University's Steinhardt School of Education, Teaching and Learning Department, where they are both professors, and Rust is coordinator of Early Childhood and Elementary Curricula.

While the book's editors are credible and experienced, case studies are inherently limited in their usefulness. A case study consists of one person's experience in one situation, meaning there is no comparison to other situations. Without a sample, it is difficult to assess whether the insights gained in one teacher's situation are applicable to another teacher's circumstances. One teacher recognized this limitation and stated,

While this is only a small sample, it does suggest that something as simple as changing the schedule to allow our students time to read and providing a range of books had repercussions that went beyond meeting the state

standards. Further research might focus on the long-term effects of participating in an independent reading program on student achievement (p. 94).

Another cause for concern is the fact that policy implications for each case study were not emphasized throughout each chapter. Instead they were summarized at the end of each chapter, which made them seem like peripheral content, when actually they were supposed to be the core of the book. Most of the book's content seemed to consist of how to improve one's teaching. For example, in chapter two, we learn more about how to increase opportunities for struggling readers to successfully interact with text than we learn about how the teacher's action research was turned into policy.

As stated earlier, Meyers and Rust present useful, authentic examples of action research, but do not reveal whether the teachers in the case studies were successful in influencing or changing education policy. It would have been nice to know whether the teacher was actually successful in changing education policy, at what level (school, district, etc.), and the process involved in changing the policy. Although the content of the book was on doing action research in the classroom, it would have been more meaningful to the reader to know whether the teachers' research succeeded in changing policy.

I recommend this book only as a supplement to collections that already have both practical books on "how-to" do action research, and theoretical works on the topic.

References

Hubbard, R. S., & Power, B. M. (1993) *The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher-Researchers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: **193** Price: **\$19.50** ISBN: **0-325-00544-3**

Reviewed by Margie Ruppel, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale,

Miller, Debbie (2002) *Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Debbie Miller, a consultant, professor and most notably a primary teacher for the past 30 years has now written a book that explains the "why" behind what she does. Getting into the minds of students can be a daunting task, yet Miller takes it on with full force. In *Reading with Meaning*, Miller takes readers on a tour of her classroom through the school year, month-by-month and explains why she does what she does. The outcome is amazing: students who love to read, sharing what

they have read with their peers, asking questions to clarify, and self-motivated projects everywhere. How does Miller get these first graders to do this? The book explains.

In chapter one, Miller maps out for the reader a daily schedule that shows the "gradual release of responsibility" (p. 10), and the importance of the teacher knowing him/herself as a reader before beginning to teach. The concrete examples in this chapter, of how to begin and plan for instruction, are very helpful.

Chapter two and three go on to show how Miller begins to set up her classroom for reading instruction to take place. Everything revolves around reading and sharing. A social climate in which all students feel accepted is established. Minilessons "focus primarily on modeling and identifying reading behavior and teaching and learning the expectations and procedures of the workshop" (p. 29). Starting the year off this way is crucial. Again, Miller gives very usable ideas for minilessons. In my sixth grade classroom, if I do not start with these key minilessons, the rest of the year proves to be a struggle to engage students in reading. For the past two years I have used this idea of building a strong foundational level of trust and acceptance and have seen my students grow from the foundation level of reading into strategic, deep thinking readers. Miller gives very usable ideas for these minilessons that will help me this year in tweaking my practice.

Chapters four through eleven Miller takes the reader step by step through the process of teaching first graders how to read and think critically. She starts by teaching the students about schema and the importance of using schema while reading. In every lesson or strategy Miller teaches her students she always thinks aloud or models for the students, then they do the work together and finally the students try on the strategy for themselves.

After the students grasp the importance of using schema to understand what they are reading, Miller takes them to the next level and asks them to visualize what they are reading. However, Miller does not let the students forget about using their schema.

When readers create mental images, they engage with text in ways that make it personal and memorable to them alone. Anchored in prior knowledge (schema), images come from the emotions and all five senses, enhancing understanding and immersing the reader in rich detail (p. 77).

This constant building on what the students already knows tends to cement for the students their new learning.

After the students can create mental images in their minds, Miller takes them into deeper conversation about their texts. The level of conversation Miller writes about is amazing. Miller teaches the reader

exactly how to create students who think for themselves about what it is they are reading. The meaning these first graders come up with is very inspiring.

The strategies of inferring and questioning come next in Miller's year. Again, she does not forget about the other strategies she has taught her students but builds on them to create more meaning as they read. The charts pictured in the book give many more applicable ideas to transfer into any teacher's classroom.

Miller ends her year with nonfiction and synthesizing information. Synthesizing is a very difficult strategy to learn and to teach. Miller does an outstanding job of enabling her students to create their own projects and motivate themselves to learn. The excitement for learning in her classroom is felt as you read through the pages of this book.

At the end of each chapter there is a two-part summary. The first part is titled "What's key for kids" (what are the key things students should be able to do after learning each strategy) and the second part is, "Tried and True Books" for teaching each strategy. So, for a quick reference the last page of each chapter would be very beneficial.

Reading with Meaning is a practical, useful tool to refer to at the beginning of every year. Miller shows the reader examples of how her techniques really do create readers who make meaning and truly think about the text they are reading. The subtitle says that it is written for primary grades, but I believe that the same strategies can be applied to upper grades by adding more challenging books. This is a must read for all elementary school teachers!

Pages: **193** Price: **\$21.00** ISBN: **1-57110-370-4**

Reviewed by Molly Petersen, Point Loma Nazarene University

Rief, Sandra F. (2003) *The ADHD Book of Lists : A Practical Guide for Helping Children and Teens with Attention Deficit Disorders*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass .

This is an addition to the educator resource book series of teacher's lists published by Jossey-Bass. Sandra F. Rief is the author of *How to Reach and Teach ADD/ADHD Children*, which has been a respected resource for special education practitioners and parents. Rief, a former classroom teacher, a former member of the CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder) National Professional Advisory Board, a consultant and teacher-trainer is also the author of several other works.

The book is organized into several general sections. Some of the topics covered include understanding, diagnosing and treating ADHD;

preventing and managing behavior problems; general instructional and support strategies for classroom teachers; specific instructional strategies for reading, writing and math. There is also information on the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Rief makes note of the reauthorization of the IDEA act in 2003 after the publication of the book, which might change some of the information given in list 7-1, "Educational Rights of Children With ADHD," (p. 339). The author has also included sections on supporting and improving outcomes for individuals. This section has lists on parent advocacy and ADHD in different age groups.

All lists are cross-referenced to related lists within the text. Each list ends with a bibliography of print and online sources and resources. Most of the websites are currently accessible at the time of this review. There is an appendix of useful charts, forms, and icons for classroom management, self-monitoring and positive reinforcement. Explanations of psychological, medical, legal and educational concepts are expressed in concise, direct language accessible to the layperson. There is no index.

Although the information in this book may be found in other sources and sites, this work provides a quick compendium of information for the student teacher, classroom teacher and parent. The list format with its ample cross-referencing is very user-friendly.

Pages: 412 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-7879-6591-X

Reviewed by Sheila Kirven, New Jersey City University

Singer, A.J., Murphy, M., Hines, S.M. & Hofstra New Teachers Network (2003) *Teaching to Learn, Learning to Teach: A Handbook for Secondary Teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Alan Singer (with the help of Maureen Murphy, S. Maxwell Hines, and the Hofstra New Teachers Network) has written a book that can be quite helpful to preservice and new teachers. The authors' teaching areas are social studies, science and English, but the book is not subject-specific, and can be used by any secondary methods class.

Singer's premise is that a person can learn to teach. Rather than a handbook of prescriptive rules about teaching, Singer sees teachers and students as valuable human beings. Content is important, but as he says in the introduction on page xii "empathy with students and a sense of personal mission are the keys to successful teaching."

The book is divided into 3 sections. Book I has chapters that are common to teaching methods books: "Goals: Do You Want to be a Teacher?" and "Responsibilities: What is a Teacher?" Book II and

Book III use a clever acronym as an organizational device: PRO/CLASS. This stands for Planning, Relationships, Organization, Community, Literacy, Assessment, Support, and Struggle. Each word has a chapter that describes issues, procedures and thoughts that new teachers need to address.

The author refers repeatedly to John Dewey, Maxine Greene, and Paulo Freire. Their child-centered and activist philosophies form the pedagogical approach of the book. Singer suggests that each new teacher can be "another brick in the wall" or "fight the power." Each new teacher has to make a philosophical choice about his or her role in education.

Singer has a readable and personable style-and he admits to not being a perfect teacher. Teaching expertise evolves, and he uses writings by new and experienced teachers to emphasize how teachers work through problems. This is a strong point of the book. It is common for a new teacher to feel that other teachers are perfect, and only he or she is struggling. Singer uses "Join the Conversation" as a way to get the reader to react throughout the book. This device would facilitate discussion in a secondary methods classroom.

The chapter on planning is illustrative of the approach of the author. A variety of lesson-planning formats are described, and actual lesson plans are shown. It is up to the reader to choose what works best for him or her.

The book does have a slant toward teaching in urban schools. However, every new teacher needs exposure to the problems in urban schools, so this is a positive part of the book.

Teaching to Learn, Learning to Teach is a useful general methods text that encourages the reader to be an independent, thinking, passionate, and successful teacher.

Pages: **308** Price: **\$34.50** ISBN: **0-8058-4215-2**

Reviewed by David Brinkman, University of Wyoming

Wiseman, Rosalind. (2002) *Queen Bees & Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends & Other Realities of Adolescence*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Queen Bees & Wannabes, by Rosalind Wiseman, takes readers into "Girl World" with the intention of helping parents and educators understand the challenges adolescent girls face each and every day. *Queen Bees* will teach the reader to develop a "girl brain" and to understand what girl's worlds look like--for example, who has power,

who intimidates her, whom she intimidates, where she feels safe, and where she doesn't. Wiseman dissects popularity and cliques, how "Planet Parent" interacts with "Girl World," teasing, gossiping and reputation, boy crushes and obsessions, and why "Girl World" values boyfriends over almost everything else. Wiseman provides exceptional advice and a practical approach in dealing and working with adolescent girls.

Rosalind Wiseman is the cofounder and president of the Empower Program, a non-profit organization that empowers youth to stop the culture of violence. Wiseman has written several articles on violence against women and girl's self-esteem. She is the author of *Defending Ourselves: A Guide to Prevention, Self-Defense, and Recovery from Rape*, published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 1995. In *Queen Bees* Wiseman recounts her work with adolescent girls in the school setting, examining the various pieces that make up "Girl World."

Queen Bees & Wannabes breaks cliques down, exposing the roles that girls play in them, including Queen Bee, Sidekick, Banker, Pleaser/Wannabe and Target. Cliques are very much a social hierarchy and Wiseman successfully describes what girls gain and/or lose by playing a specific role within a clique. Wiseman also looks at girls' definition of femininity--puberty, the way girls "mark" themselves (piercings, hair dying and clothes), body image and the world of eating disorders. Relationships are one of the most important aspects of "Girl World," especially relationships with boys. Wiseman discusses "boy-crazy" behaviors and why girls, in order to please a boy, will betray and sacrifice friendships with girls. It is understood that teenage girls live in a culture where boyfriends are crucial validation for three interrelated reasons: they increase a girl's sense of self-worth, her friends will hold her in higher esteem, and a boyfriend is proof that she fits into teen culture. These are but a few topics that Wiseman examines in *Queen Bees*, topics that may seem foreign and trivial to some adults, but are crucial to the lives of teenage girls.

A previously mentioned, Wiseman analyzes "Girl World" in an effort to help parents and educators alike understand and "get into" the minds of teenage girls. This information is crucial for adults to understand because it is a prerequisite for the application of tools and strategies adults can utilize when working with and counseling adolescent girls. Wiseman asks parents to "Check your Baggage" and to evaluate parenting styles and philosophies. Parenting styles can impact an adolescent girl's decisions and/or actions, whether those styles are based on love or driven by fear and denial. Strategies that Wiseman gives parents in dealing with "Girl World" include opening-up the lines of communication, listening, learning, suspending judgment, empathizing, and encouraging independent thought (because ready-or-not, in the near future your teenage daughter will be an adult, responsible for making her own decisions and living with the consequences).

As a male school counselor (in training), I found this book to be very helpful and informative in my work with teenage girls, especially at the middle-school level. I had no idea before my student internship how complex female adolescence can be, especially with regard to relationships. I found that Rosalind Wiseman is very accurate in her understanding and portrayal of teenage girls, and in what ways they will respond to good vs. bad parenting, teaching, and/or counseling. I highly recommend *Queen Bees* to all parents, educators and role models that are involved in the lives of teenage girls.

Pages: **336** Price: **\$14.95 (Paperback), \$24.00 (Hardcover)**
ISBN: **1400047927(Paperback), 0609609459 (Hardcover)**

Reviewed by by Seth McCracken, Point Loma Nazarene University

Wolk, Steven (2002) *Being Good: Rethinking Classroom Management and Student Discipline*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Any book with "classroom management" or "student discipline" in the title, especially a book written by a teacher who is offering "practical suggestions," will undoubtedly have a ready audience. In this book, Wolk goes far beyond offering suggestions about how to maintain order in a room full of active youngsters. He challenges readers to reexamine their previous assumptions about children's behavior and about how to manage a classroom. In fact, he admits to disliking the phrase "classroom management." "Goodness," he maintains, comes from within a person, and being quiet, the goal of many classroom teachers, is not synonymous with goodness or an indication that learning is taking place. Wolk views the teacher's mission as changing the hearts and the minds of his or her young charges. Although this may sound impossibly idealistic, Wolk argues compellingly, using his own teaching experience in inner city schools in Chicago. He does not deny that an underlying order is necessary for learning to take place, and he admits that most of the observable changes in students' behavior may be small, even though he views them as vitally important. Wolk also makes it clear that he is not offering "answers" but "suggestions."

One thread woven throughout the book is that classroom management and children's classroom behavior are intimately connected to a democratic way of life. He notes that we are not just teaching behavior, we are "... helping kids create who they want to be and how they want to live as members of...democratic communities." (p. 10) He writes not in terms of "morals," but in terms of "values," and suggests having classroom values rather than classroom rules. Among the values mentioned are "mutual respect," "peace and nonviolent conflict resolution," "thoughtfulness," and "caring for others."

The majority of the book is devoted to practical suggestions. Wolk

offers ideas that can be used by all teachers as well as specific suggestions for different subject areas. The last chapter is entitled "Being Good Through Books." Wolk notes that teaching with real books (as opposed to textbooks) isn't as simple as having kids just read a book, and that learning from books isn't about getting the "correct" point or theme or facts of a book. Wolk believes that for a literature-based classroom to be meaningful, students should spend at least thirty minutes a day in the class reading, and the teacher should read aloud for at least twenty minutes a day. In addition to presenting various activities and suggestions, Wolk also includes lists of suggested titles that can be used.

This thoughtful and timely book should prove to be very popular. Even those teachers who may not entirely agree with Wolk's point of view will take away worthwhile ideas to use in their classrooms. Highly recommended.

Pages: **152** Price: **\$21.50** ISBN: **0-325-00426-9**

Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University

Wormeli, Rick (2003) *Day One and Beyond: Practical Matters for New Middle-Level Teachers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Teacher Education students spend at least four years of their life in university and college classrooms learning to become a teacher. What they learn on day one in their own classrooms quickly teaches them that the learning is not over. In *Day One and Beyond*, author, and veteran middle level teacher, Rick Wormeli shares with new teachers of that volatile age group known as young adolescence, lessons he has learned along the way.

Not a book of theory, *Day One* focuses squarely on the practical realities of instructing this simultaneously engaging, frustrating and inspiring age group. Wormeli's reflections grew out of his journey toward National Board Certification, a process that forced him to think, reflect and write on his experiences as a teacher. One clear message Wormeli sends fellow teachers is the benefits of writing, "I was amazed by the insights and by the quality of my decisions as a result of writing each evening. It was also cathartic, allowing me to vent, dream and renew" (p. 3).

In his introduction, Wormeli states his purpose and intention for this volume, "It's the book I wanted to have at my fingertips but never found when I first started in this profession. I needed a book that answered those rising primal voices regarding basic classroom survival" (p. 3).

Separated into twelve chapters, Wormeli begins his book by discussing the unique characteristics of middle level students. As he aptly notes, students in this age group, 10-14, are experiencing change (physical, emotional, social) at an unparalleled rate. One minute these learners want to engage in sophisticated discussions about the nature of the universe, the intricacies of algebraic equations, while the next minute they are discussing their latest bodily functions, or practicing the art of relating to the opposite sex Wormeli instructs first year teachers on how to understand and effectively deal with the often-conflicting needs of this age group, including the challenges of discipling students in the middle grades.

Throughout the remainder of the volume Wormeli focuses on a variety of issues, both pedagogical and practical. There are chapters covering classroom organization and administration, homework considerations, parental relationships as well as professional development. His chapter on homework is especially valuable, including his principles for creating motivating homework assignments. Wormeli spends a chapter instructing new teachers on how to manage students in the classroom through grouping. He also discusses the role of middle level teachers in the teaming process, a common strategy in many middle schools today.

The book is rounded out with two appendices that contain sample newsletters, rubrics and other guides and a listing of selected resources. A focused, valuable resource, *One Day & Beyond*, helps new middle level teachers constructively deal with the students that daily come through their door. As Wormeli states in a concluding poem, which he wrote, "Hey, you up there at the front of the room....What matters is what I take with me after being with you. I am here to master all you have to offer.... Please don't settle for mediocrity" (p. 180).

Highly Recommended for middle level teachers, administrators and parents.

Pages: **208** Price: **\$19.50** ISBN: **1-57110-355-4**

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