



Enz, Billie J., Kortman, Sharon A. & Honaker, Connie J. (2003) *Ready, Set, Teach! A Winning Design for Your First Year*. Indianapolis: Kappa Delta Pi.

Written by teacher educators long-associated with induction programs and published by Kappa Delta Pi, an international honor society in education, *Ready, Set, Teach! A Winning Design for Your First Year* is a practical, easy-to-read guidebook for the beginning teacher. Organized into nine “lessons,” authors Enz, Kortman and Honaker anticipate novice concerns in the areas of instructional planning and assessment; classroom organization, including establishing relationships with students and their parents; and growing as a professional. For new teachers who find themselves without the ongoing support of a mentor, especially those who come through alternative routes of teacher preparation, this book can help fill the void.

The book’s greatest strength comes in the many immediately useful tips and ideas shared, including instructional strategies for getting to know students at the elementary, middle and high school levels and thoughts on organizing a “substitute folder” for unexpected absences. Although novices come to the profession with a beginning toolbox of instructional techniques and strategies gleaned from prior experience and teacher preparation, they are typically eager for fresh new ideas like those offered in this volume. In addition, scattered throughout are sample templates useful in planning daily lessons, writing a newsletter for parents and preparing for parent/teacher conferences. Importantly, the ideas and tips offered are designed to meet the needs of all teachers, K-12. Further, the text is organized for quick reference. When I shared *Ready, Set, Teach!* with a group of beginning high school teachers, they were uniformly enthusiastic about the practical aspects of the book.

At the same time, *Ready, Set, Teach!* misses an opportunity to shape new teacher thinking in substantive ways. There is little theoretical discussion of the teaching and learning process and few references to the professional literature for continued self-study. To illustrate, in the opening “lesson” readers are encouraged to assess their personal style as Executive, Humanist or Classicist (see Stamm & Wactler, 1997) according to a seven-question survey. The authors introduce this important and useful task with the following statement: “Though each orientation approaches the art and science of teaching in a remarkably dissimilar way, it is important to remember that all three orientations embody effective, successful practices” (p. 3). Certainly this discussion deserves more than three pages and a neutral stance allow. If we are

truly committed to preparing thoughtful and reflective practitioners we must expect that even our newest recruits already recognize basic understandings, such as the need to communicate regularly with parents, but still need help thinking through meaningful ways of doing so. Our challenge during these critical early years is to both address their immediate concerns and take them seriously as learners.

Once left to sink or swim alone, new teachers can now choose from a growing set of self-help books designed to ease their transition into the classroom. From personal narratives to pedagogical guidebooks, these books offer ideas and resources for the novice teacher, as well as words of encouragement and support. Perhaps their greatest gift, however, is the potential to frame how a new teacher thinks about teaching and learning well into the future. Although woefully short on thoughtful discussions about the teaching and learning process, new teachers will likely find the practical ideas, tips and templates found in *Ready, Set, Teach!* to be a handy reference as their first year unfolds.

Reference

Stamm, J. & Wachtler, C. (1997). *Philosophy of education work book: Writing a statement of beliefs and practices*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pages: **79** Price: **\$12.95 (KDP members) and \$14.95 (non-members)** ISBN: **0-912099-45-3**

Reviewed by Cynthia L. Carver, Assistant Professor, Western Michigan University. Research interests include new teacher induction policies and practices.

Parsons, Les (2003) *The Classroom Troubleshooter*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, distributed by Stenhouse.

Les Parsons taught English and language arts for more than 30 years. As an English consultant, workshop leader, and university lecturer, he worked with classroom teachers at all grade levels. His work and innovative curriculum initiatives range from response journals across the curriculum and writer's workshop techniques to effective evaluation and gender equity issues.

The Classroom Troubleshooter is an easy to read five-chapter book without a great deal of educational jargon. Throughout the book, Parsons gives many practical examples of how to apply his concepts. He also provides checklists, guidelines, rubrics, questionnaires, documentation and record sheets, and assessment instruments that may be reproduced for classroom use. The book provides teachers with the tools they need to expedite paperwork, improve discipline and evaluation, enhance learning through a language approach, and enrich

both self and school through the use of structured reflection techniques.

Parsons begins his book on the topic of expediting paperwork by discussing ways to improve organizational skills, appropriate documentation, reducing the time required to grade student work (while also making it more meaningful), and being proactive instead of reactive. The central theme here is establishing routines and becoming “smart” (pg. 19) when processing student grades.

Then, moving on to improving discipline and evaluation, Parsons details the ongoing responsibilities delegated to teachers in maintaining classroom and school discipline. His intent is to develop an understanding of the importance of monitoring student behavior and documentation, how to promote positive behavior, and identify the special needs of students. He goes further to discuss the appropriate application of formative and summative evaluation, how to assess the effectiveness of your evaluation, understanding your intentions and beliefs as they pertain to evaluation, and different forms of evaluation. In concluding his thoughts on this topic, Parsons expresses a concern, “computer technology is insidiously beguiling” (pg. 72), regarding the misuse and misunderstanding of computer-assisted assessment.

In the final chapters of *The Classroom Troubleshooter*, Parsons discusses the reading difficulties students have today, the problems with textbooks, the significance of “student talk” during class time, and setting up discussion groups which he describes as “talk-based learning” (pg. 85). He closes with the process of self and school evaluation and how through reflection a teacher may improve both self and school.

The Classroom Troubleshooter is a “nuts and bolts” book that may be useful for both novice and experienced teachers. As intended by Parsons, the book provides practical instructions and examples of how to deal with day-to-day problems such as student discipline, parent conferences, grading, paperwork and “administrivia.” Additionally, more advanced concepts such as “talk based learning” and reflection are explained in easily understandable terms. Many useful forms and instruments are also included throughout the book.

Pages: 120 Price: \$18.95 ISBN: 1-55138-162-1

Reviewed by Dr. Ronald A. Styron, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Research at The University of Southern Mississippi.

Paulsen, Morten Flate (2003) *Online Education and Learning Management Systems – Global E-learning in a Scandinavian Perspective*. Oslo, Norway: NKI Forlaget.

Navigating the field of online education

Navigating the field of online education requires knowledge of a vast number of concepts as well as insight into the different online teaching techniques. The field of online education is characterized by concepts such as E-learning, M-learning, CMC, CBT, ID, CCT, SMS, AS and LMS. Furthermore, technologies such as WWW, e-mail, conferencing, chat and video make possible teaching techniques such as debates, discussion groups, forums and correspondence studies.

In his book, "Online Education and Learning Management Systems", Morten Flate Paulsen provides an overview of the concepts, technologies and techniques of the complex field of online education. One is overwhelmed by the amount of material presented in the book - and impressed by the clear structure of its presentation. This means that the book itself is a comprehensive catalogue of the many aspects of online education. Furthermore, the book contains a rich number of links to online resources, and it is supplemented by a website (www.studymmentor.com) which experiments with the use of different media. This use of different media and the related website gives the reader the opportunity to further explore the different aspects of online education in multiple ways.

The theory of 'cooperative freedom'

Today, online education is experiencing a massive growth within the public as well as the private sectors. One of the focal points in the discussions of online education is the opportunity to create flexible education. Online education can be flexible in two important ways. First, online education can provide freedom for the student, who can now study at any time and at any place. Second, online education offers the possibility of expanding education geographically. The flexibility of online education means that more people will be able to get an education - people can, for example, combine a full-time job with an education. Flexible learning has many obvious advantages, and, technologically, it is possible to create such flexible learning within online education.

Paulsen acknowledges the advantages of flexible learning, but also identifies the potential problems of a too flexible educational environment. From a pedagogical point of view, free and individual work is not necessarily the ideal form of education. In his theory of cooperative freedom, Paulsen combines individual freedom and group cooperation. As opposed to the ultimate idea of individual freedom and flexible learning, the theory also stresses the importance of dialogue and interaction between the students. Cooperative freedom means that the student works individually and independently, but at the same time cooperates with other students.

As Paulsen emphasizes, cooperative freedom is a difficult goal to achieve, but in the book he argues that it is possible by means of the

technologies of online education. Furthermore, it is difficult to create mass education on the basis of cooperative freedom. The theory is, therefore, an opposition to industrialized mass education in the form of knowledge management where courses are delivered to the students in predetermined units. On the basis of the theory of cooperative freedom, the book reflects a critical and constructive approach to the idea of flexible learning and online education.

Nordic online education

Paulsen believes that the Nordic countries are, in many ways, ahead of the U.S. in the field of online education. The U.S., however, dominates the field in relation to online courses as well as the development of technology. With the increasing globalization of online education, there is a risk of "American instructional imperialism," as Paulsen states. There is a risk that American online tutors and American technology will come to dominate online education in the Nordic countries and the rest of the world.

Therefore, Paulsen argues that there is a need for Nordic online education to be more internationally oriented. The book itself is an attempt to do so. In addition to Paulsen's extensive insight into Norwegian online education, the book also contains articles about online education in Denmark and Sweden by Søren Nipper and Carl Holmberg. The book provides an important promotion of Nordic online education and a significant contribution to the international field.

Pages: **337** Price: **Euro 58 (print); Euro 43 (electronic)** ISBN: **82 562 5894 2 (print); 82 562 6048 3(electronic)**

Reviewed by Christian Dalsgaard, Information and Media Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark

Schuster, Edgar H. (2003) *Breaking the Rules: Liberating Writers Through Innovative Grammar Instruction.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Schuster throws the gauntlet down in the first paragraph of the introduction when he declares, "Most people think students break rules aplenty. Why encourage them? The short answer: in the interest of helping them to become independent thinkers and more effective communicators" (p. xi).

Since not everyone would agree with the implied premise that rules get in the way of thinking and expression, Schuster has already alienated some of his readers. A few pages later he manages to do it again when he writes that a reflective teacher is one who will "encourage students to examine rules and to break them. Why? Because the unexamined rule is not worth keeping. Not to allow students to break rules is to

deny them full access to the linguistic resources of English, resources that people need to express themselves and achieve their own voices" (p. xv). Ouch!

Isn't the inference here that if you insist on following grammar rules you are not a reflective teacher? Plus, since when is disregarding the conventions of grammar synonymous with establishing voice or free expression?

Granted, those individuals uncomfortable with grammar instruction will probably applaud these comments, but they do seem unduly confrontational. Since Schuster does concede that rules of English syntax should be honored, one must overlook the bombastic rhetoric to get at the heart of what this book is all about.

Assailing what he calls "mythrules" (yes, he made it one word!), the author contends that there are a set of grammar rules that aren't relevant anymore. William Safire might ask the prickly question, "By whose authority?" But nevertheless, Schuster questions the strictures governing the correct use of "less and fewer", as well as how one should use "only", and "got". The rules forbidding the splitting of an infinitive and the ending of a sentence with a preposition also come under attack. All well and good since this doesn't constitute a major assault on the English language.

Unfortunately, Schuster's willingness to condone fragments and run-ons in student writing seems to be a little too iconoclastic. In support of their use he writes, "If we deny students the use of sentence fragments and run-ons - particularly the former - we are denying them a key literary resource" (p. 110). Nonsense! Stringing together a series of fragments and run-ons won't get even the brightest student too far in either a university setting or the work- place.

Oddly enough, when not assuming the role of a grammar anarchist, Schuster shares some interesting ways of teaching what he considers to be the non-negotiable "bedrock rules of English syntax" (p. xi). Paragraphing does matter, as does punctuation, so there are plenty of helpful hints on how to get these concepts across to young writers.

Depending on where you open *Breaking the Rules* and begin reading, the book may appear to be gloriously revolutionary or boringly traditional. Like the fabled weather of Chicago; change is just around the corner! You may take issue with the author on one page and a chapter later agree with him fully!

Pages: 256 Price: \$25.00 ISBN: 0-325-00478-1

Reviewed by Robert F. Walch, Retired educator, Monterey, California

Vella, Jane (2002) *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*. Second Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

In *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, Jane Vella explains the basics of, as well as the connection between, dialogue education and quantum thinking in adult education. As illustrated in this book, the principles are straightforward, and can be applied in various cultures. Vella asserts that these principles may take some adjustment for all involved, but if applied correctly, will help adults gain all they can from a learning experience.

This book is divided into three parts. In the first part, the author provides a thorough explanation of the twelve principles of dialogue education, the six concepts of quantum thinking, and the seven design steps. All of these are related, and used in connection with one another throughout the book.

In dialogue education, learners form a dialogue with the teacher in which they share their life experiences, and are given the opportunity to relate learning to those experiences. One of the basic premises of dialogue education is that all learners deserve respect – they all come with personal perceptions based on their own experiences. Relating learning to individual perceptions helps learners to internalize the information, which aids in understanding. The goal is for learners to do what they have learned – to put the knowledge to use.

Quantum thinking, according to the author, is based on the idea that everything is connected or interrelated. There are six concepts of quantum thinking that are discussed here. The concepts are relatedness, duality, holistic perspective, participation, energy, and uncertainty.

It is useful to look at the dialogue principles and quantum concepts in relation to one another, and how they can be applied together. The use of both/and thinking is an essential part of quantum thinking. Examining different possibilities as opposed to deciding on one correct answer is encouraged. And of course, the certainty that change is always occurring is another important aspect of quantum thinking. The author cautions the reader against accepting things as they are, as new information is constantly being discovered. Accepting this, and applying new information to existing theory is a key to learning.

The seven design steps are introduced in part one as well. Vella has provided seven questions (who, why, when, where, what, what for and how) to ask when designing a class for adult learners, based on the principles of dialogue education, as well as the concepts of quantum thinking. The main design concern is how to gauge if learning has occurred. These questions help set achievement-based objectives to measure success. This is also referred to as outcome-based education. Learning should be useable.

In part two, each chapter is dedicated to describing a single principle of dialogue education in depth. Vella provides examples of how she has applied the principles to various teaching situations. While each chapter highlights one principle, all of the examples show the other principles are also in use. The principles are interrelated. Each chapter ends with a design challenge.

The final section of the book offers a review of the twelve principles. The main points of each principle are discussed, and the author provides several suggestions for how to apply each principle to additional teaching situations. An especially helpful discussion involves the signs that verify when a principle is being honored. This gives the teacher several clues to look for to provide guidance in correctly utilizing the principles. This section also serves as a reminder to the reader that all principles are related.

The last chapter provides examples of mistakes often made by those who teach adults. Several of these mistakes include asking closed questions, failing to provide reinforcement, and neglecting to do a needs analysis before the class begins. Reading this book could benefit teachers as they prepare for a class.

This book is easy and fun to read. The use of stories helps the reader to further understand the points made, and illustrate how the principles are used in real world application. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* is an excellent tool for adult educators. The concepts presented are straightforward, and can immediately be applied to real world situations. In addition to adult education, this book could benefit those who work with adults outside the academic setting.

Pages: **249** Price: **\$24.00** ISBN: **0-7879-5967-7**

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