



**Angelillo, Janet (2003) *Writing About Reading: From Book Talk to Literary Essays, Grades 3-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

*Writing About Reading* grew out of the author's classroom experiences teaching students in the upper grades. Angelillo one day came to the realization that her students were suffering from what she calls a "middle-school malaise." She notes that her "...students rarely if ever read each other's writing about books, and they rarely wrote with a sense of authority or had something original to say about a text" (p. 1). These observations are consistent with some of the research findings we have obtained about writing from sources in upper grade classrooms in Texas and Canada (Horowitz & Olson, in press).

By introducing a conceptual shift that included consideration of real world, authentic writing activities; book reviews; book clubs; online chat rooms; and real genres of writing about reading for many people beyond the classroom teacher, Angelillo found that students could produce writing about reading that enhanced thinking and was related to the goals of much reading instruction. This approach, writing *about* reading to develop thinking about reading, is also related to student talking and conversations about books. Angelillo contends that teachers should project a seriousness about writing about reading so that students learn to respond powerfully to books and that this is "...one of the great truths they will learn in school" (p. 4).

The book shows teachers how to get started with writing about reading instruction and lessons. Angelillo offers a year-long schedule and timetables, provides guidelines for writing to be shared among students, reading aloud to model types of thinking, and student class partnerships. Response to literature has been given attention in educational research and practice, due to the work of Louise Rosenblatt. The present book is timely in that it specifies unique, new ways teachers can ask students to write, think, and talk about books that will ultimately enhance their reading and writing. The author shows prospective classroom teachers how to schedule units of study and mini-lessons, and provides teaching points and samples of lessons, short-term and yearlong, plus assessment approaches that are doable.

The author is persuasive because she is reality-based. She conveys the hurdles students in grades 3-8 may experience as they face what are multi-task writing requirements, usually to please the teacher. She says, "Watching children, you can see how hard it is for many of them to write. First they have to find their adhesive notes, then they have to sharpen their pencils, and finally, they must work hard to use their best

penmanship so the teacher can read it. By the time they start to write, they've forgotten the smart things they wanted to say: they've muddled it with worrying about how to begin, how to spell it right, or how to say it in full sentences. By the time they start to write, they have nothing left to say" (p. 23). How true! But she doesn't stop there. The pages go on to clarify what the teacher can do to model short, quick and efficient note taking-- a unique first step in writing. She suggests creating student partnerships, one student serves as the scribe and the other as the one who dictates the text. With time, students are writing about and producing their own literary essays or book-length manuscripts.

This short, swift volume, readable by the expert in one sitting, will be a valuable approach to reading instruction for students. Writing *about* and *after* reading becomes a vehicle for teacher scaffolding of new subjects and ideas to write about, development of student stances, and text structures and designs.

The author covers new ground in several ways. First, Angelillo's book follows work published by Linda Flower and others on Writing-to-Read. Writing researchers have looked often at writing before reading as a means to stimulate and nurture reading. Instead, Angelillo's book provides knowledge and insights for teachers on writing *after* and *about* reading beyond the short-response of fill-in the blanks. The writing proposed, progressing from "jots of information," to tracking information on adhesive notes, to more extended note taking, to journaling, to reviews and finally to essays represents a new approach to elementary school writing.

Second, Angelillo's book is new in that it considers the forms writing will take about texts characterized as content genres. Angelillo considers how to use information for fresh, original thinking that would fit in with Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter's notions of knowledge building in schools. Students can gain practice producing book reviews, author profiles, editorials, commentaries, and literary essays or position papers.

Third, this book offers suggestions for assessing writing about reading in ways not sufficiently addressed in the theoretical or applied instruction-based research. Writing about reading interestingly enough may result in students repeating the structures and styles that they read. While this copying of writing styles may sound undesirable, it is actually a child's first step in learning about writing forms and how to compose them.

The book would be strengthened by some references to research studies to support the claims and approaches advocated. Some cases are incorporated – but they are incomplete portraits. Although not addressed in Angelillo's book, two studies are pertinent and do provide research evidence for writing as a follow-up to the structures found in reading. Barbara Eckhoff (1983) reports how reading affects children's writing, showing that children mimic the forms of writing that they are

exposed to after they read. Almost ten years later, Peter Smagorinsky (1992) discussed how reading model essays affects writers, speaking to older students, and advocated the benefits of model essays.

Some other limitations are in order. The book does not speak to use of the computer or other media for writing about reading. Nor does it address the range of writers, from different locations in the world, with diverse first languages, and different knowledge or book backgrounds. Finally, the author calls for changing the lives of students “forever,” at the closing of the volume. More needs to be said about how to do this through assignments that are provocative as they stimulate writing about reading.

I do recommend the book for undergraduate reading and writing courses, particularly for courses housed in reading departments. In fact, it appears that many reading educators may be searching for a book like Angelillo’s to meet the needs of their new attention to writing to help reading and thinking. The book may even be useful in diagnosis classes that highlight writing for reading.

Angelillo accomplishes the goals she has in mind at the onset of the volume. Her book is a clearly presented source of information on writing following reading, is organized, and utterly useable. The author has used as a base for her thinking work by Lucy McCormick Calkins, having worked with her, and now as an affiliate of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. In addition, Angelillo also draws from Wayne Booth, Thomas Newkirk, Barbara Rogoff, Louise Rosenblatt, William Zinsser, and other respected writing experts. Janet Angelillo is also the author of *A Fresh Approach to Teaching Punctuation*, a book that I hope to read.

Libraries serving teacher education programs should purchase this book.

### References

Angelillo, Janet & Calkins, Lucy McCormick (2002). *A fresh approach to teaching punctuation: helping young writers use conventions with precision and purpose*. New York : Scholastic Professional Books.

Eckhoff, Barbara. (1983, May). How reading affects children’s writing. *Language Arts*, 60(5) 607-616.

Horowitz, Rosalind & Olson, David R. (in press). Texts that talk: The special and peculiar nature of classroom discourse and the crediting of sources. In R. Horowitz (Editor). *Talking texts*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Smagorinsky, Peter (1992). How reading model essays affects writers. In J. Irwin & M. Doyle (Eds.). *Reading/Writing connections: Learning from research*. (pp. 145-59). Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Pages: **160** Price: **\$18.00** ISBN: **0-325-00578-8**

**Reviewed by Rosalind Horowitz, Professor, Discourse & Literacy Studies, at The University of Texas--San Antonio. Horowitz is recipient of The Gordon M.A. Mork Award, a distinguished alumni award, from The University of Minnesota for outstanding international contributions to literacy research.**

---

**Barrett Dragan, Pat (2003) *Everything You Need to Know to Teach First Grade*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

On one level the title of this book is particularly accurate; the contents do exactly what it describes. The author is a highly experienced teacher and in her book she shares with the reader her many tips and practical strategies for working successfully with children in the First Grade. She addresses an aspect of First Grade in each of the eighteen chapters. The book is well structured and easily accessed via a comprehensive index.

The appendices contain a set of sheets that can be photocopied, plus an illustrated ideas bank. Also included are examples of letters to parents, and samples of copyright-free poetry. In the final section, resources, there are details of a range of useful organisations plus full references to the books cited earlier in the text. These contain both professional books and books for children.

The book itself is illustrated with examples of children's work, photographs of class resources and children using them and further examples of how to construct useful class resources, the "milk carton math machine" was particularly inventive. Each chapter is prefaced by an apposite quote, sometimes from the children. In the text, links are identified to further reading, for example with reference to a "literature connection", or to a "children's literature connection" or an "ELL and an ESL connection". Also interspersed throughout the text are a series of hints entitled "Pat's Tip."

The book contains a wealth of information and to some extent the amount is itself problematic. The author has taught for more than 30 years and it is as though she is attempting to tell the reader *everything* she knows about teaching First Grade. But as tempting as this is, we do need to discover for ourselves. The end result of her mammoth task is a book that is so full of detail that it is at times overwhelming. Each of the 18 chapters has so many sub headings, plus tips, plus illustrations plus connections that the reader can easily be defeated by the mass of it all.

Reading this book in a UK context there were inevitable difficulties with terminology and although this was initially entertaining it did begin to irritate. However, also from a UK context it was fascinating to discover the USA requirements for daily and weekly lesson planning and how this compares to the UK. Further the inclusion of a "Daily Class Schedule" brought home the significant differences between UK

and USA early years experiences. Inevitably “Meet on the rug for flag salute and sing our class song” will be alien and possibly exotic to UK readers, but more importantly the early years curriculum as it appears in this book, will appear to be quite impoverished to UK readers. The almost exclusive focus on literacy and numeracy means that all of the other curriculum areas appear to be relegated to very low status positions. This is interesting since in the UK there is at present concern that there is too great a focus on formal learning at this age and in particular an emphasis on literacy and numeracy to the exclusion of other curricular areas. This concern that is now reported to be shared by the UK’s Minister in charge of Primary Education, Stephen Twigg (Hofkins, 2004) and has led to a movement to widen the curriculum so that teachers do not feel that they are in a “straight jacket” but that they should provide a rich curriculum, “that all children need and deserve” (David Bell, Chief Inspector of Schools. However, compared to the emphasis on literacy and numeracy, so evident in this book, the UK early years curriculum appears positively hedonistic.

It could be seen as unfair to criticise a book for doing precisely what it claims to do. My main concern is that this book offers a wide range of activities but without any discussion about why these are suggested, the focus is solely on “how to”. This is not to deny the importance of staff providing a variety of stimulating and enjoyable activities for the children, but somewhere there needs to be an exploration of where these activities are coming from, upon what assumptions they are predicated, indeed why we are providing them. I did hope that the professional books listed in the appendix would provide some guidance on where readers could go to explore the philosophy underlying this book, but these lists mainly refer to other “how to” books.

Where there are exceptions it would have been useful for the author to have made more explicit the reasons for this, for example, precisely why is Gardner’s “Frames of Mind” included? By setting the book in even a slightly theoretical context, the book would REALLY provide everything you need to know to teach First Grade...just as importantly, and why you need to know it.

### References

Hofkins, D. (2004). View to a Bridge. *Times Educational Supplement* 19/3/04. Retrieved 5/17/04 from [http://www.tes.co.uk/search/search\\_display.asp?section=Archive&sub\\_section=Primary&id=392258&Type=0](http://www.tes.co.uk/search/search_display.asp?section=Archive&sub_section=Primary&id=392258&Type=0)

Bell, D. (2004). Richness Within Reach. *Times Educational Supplement* 19/3/04. Retrieved 5/17/04 from [http://www.tes.co.uk/search/search\\_display.asp?section=Archive&sub\\_section=Primary&id=392261&Type=0](http://www.tes.co.uk/search/search_display.asp?section=Archive&sub_section=Primary&id=392261&Type=0)

Pages: **452** Price: **\$29.50** ISBN: **0-325-00391-2**

**Reviewed by Iris Keating, Manchester Metropolitan University**

---

**Cloud, Robert C., editor (2004) *Legal Issues in the Community College. New Directions for Community Colleges, No. 125. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.***

Riding back with professors from the Council for the Study of Community College meeting in Dallas a year ago, I asked if there was a book on the law as it directly concerns the community college. No one knew of any such book. Robert Cloud and the fine authors and editors of *New Directions for Community Colleges* have remedied this gap in the literature. Breaking new ground is always challenging. This book should be seen as a good start but much work remains.

Cloud states in the Editor's Notes that the primary audience is college trustees, administrators, faculty, and other professional staff. Perhaps this audience explains the "Chicken Little" approach and tone. In the same section, Cloud claims that community colleges "are being sued with increasing frequency over a wide range of issues" (p. 1). No citation is provided for this assertion. Perhaps if something is repeated enough, it becomes a truth. The back cover indicates that community colleges exist in a highly litigious society. Apparently, the sky is falling and has been ever since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the civil rights movement, the student movement, and all other assertions by marginalized people of the rights guaranteed them under the constitution. We must insist that these assertions be supported by evidence.

Many long for the simpler days on campus when all "those" people weren't around causing trouble. Those people include persons of color, women, and the poor and working class. Sociologist of law, Donald Black, asserts as scientific principle that marginalized people are much less likely to invoke law and when they do are less successful (Black, 1976). This hysteria of a litigation explosion fits well with the dominant neoliberal play of fear to keep people opposing one another rather than opposing the dominant global military-industrial complex. Society becomes less civil as violence is glorified by military conquest and rugged market individualism (See Saltman & Gabbard, 2003). This increasing harshness is noted by Boris in chapter four concerning the academic life future faculty face as a result of less public resources and privatization. A further example is found in chapter 8 "Risk Management in the Community College Setting" where Brett Sokolow laments that community colleges are enrolling students with "more and more complex psychological and behavioral problems. Are we then to see students as the problem and to fear people with disabilities?"

Despite the major contextual flaw and bias, this book is a worthy purchase for the intended audience and anyone interested in community colleges. The book is useable and practical. Especially noteworthy is Carol Kozeracki's chapter entitled "Legal Resources for Community Colleges." She provides summaries and contact/reference information on general legal sites, organizations, books, and ERIC documents. At

the end of chapters there are nice lists of case citations, and both legal and general reference works. Some chapters have notes that provide links to useful information. One example is the citation to the Texas A & M risk management site, which shows how the university has responded following the bon fire tragedy.

Community college in-house counsel report that issues related to course delivery and the internet are and will continue to be issues (Simpson, 2004a). The chapter "Copyright Issues and Technology: Mediated Instruction" by Salomon and Goldstein offers an exceptional introduction to copyright basics, the TEACH Act, and the issue of ownership of ecourses. It is concise and clear. The proposed checklist for ownership issues and the areas an audit should consider are most practicable.

The hottest issue indicated by in-house counsel continues to be employment issues (Simpson, 2004a). Three of the nine chapters in this book deal with these issues: "Employment Issues in the Community College" by DeMitchell, "Collective Bargaining and Community Colleges" by Boris, and "Academic Freedom and Tenure" by Fossey and Wood. DeMitchell outlines Title VII and other discrimination law superbly. Too much space is allotted to the Michigan cases for affirmative action and the Bakke case is referred to negatively but not cited. It seems that poor white men are still expected to bear the costs of affirmative action for some people despite what the Supreme Court said. Fossey and Wood seem to ignore the attacks on faculty and students by Lynne Cheney and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni but present a useful chapter overall. I would like to see tables and charts like those in *Legal Rights of Teachers and Students*, which I reviewed in March for *Education Review* (McCarthy et. al, 2004; Simpson, 2004b). This holds for other chapters in this book as well.

Two chapters deal with students: "Student Rights, Safety, and Codes of Conduct" by Mawdsley and "Accommodating Students with Disabilities" by Hawke. Garfield deals with issues faced by governing boards and offers some very practical ideas for college administrators and boards. In his chapter on "Risk Management in the Community College Setting," I wish Sokolow had provided links to information on risk management programs and organization.

This book is a fine start into the complex and rather vast realm of the law and community colleges. I hope future authors can expand on the chapters in this book and present the other matters glossed over or not covered here such as the impact of the Patriot Act. However, this book is worthy of being a part of any practitioner's library.

### References

Black, D. (1976). *The behavior of law*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

McCarthy, M.M., Cambron-McCabe, N.H., & Thomas, Stephen B. (2004). *Legal rights of teachers and students*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Saltman, K.J., & Gabbard, D.A. (Eds.). (2003). *Education as enforcement: The militarization and corporatization of schools*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Simpson, M.W. (2004a, April). *The in-house two-year college legal counselor*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges, Minneapolis, MN.

Simpson, M.W. (2004b, March). *Legal Rights of Teachers and Students*. [Review of the book]. *Education Review: A Journal of Book Reviews*. Brief Reviews March 2004. Retrieved February 28, 2004, from <http://edrev.asu.edu/brief/mar04.html#6>

Pages: 108 Price: \$29.00 ISBN: 0-7879-7482-X

**Reviewed by Michael W. Simpson, who will enter the doctoral program in Educational Policy Studies this fall at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. He is completing a M.Ed. in adult and higher education at the University of Oklahoma. He holds a J.D. from Oklahoma City University. Michael has practiced law, served as a mediator, and taught in the community college, a prison college program, an alternative charter high school, and in Upward Bound programs**

---

**Compton-Lilly, Catherine (2004) *Confronting Racism, Poverty, and Power: Classroom Strategies for Changing the World*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

The author set out to write a book about the issues of racism, poverty, power, and strategies. She ended up writing a book about how racial understanding and its concomitant empathy may influence the instruction of reading and writing in the lower grade levels.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is entitled, "A Few Tough Questions." Here, the author relates common assumptions about minority families, and attempts to employ her own school experiences to dash misconceptions.

In the first chapter, Compton-Lilly provides a backdrop to the rest of the book. She paints a picture reminiscent of the literature on white privilege: discussing how as an individual from the majority culture in America, she experienced a life of privilege and power, unbeknownst to her. Those from minority cultures do not share in this privilege and power, but are rather assumed to harbor certain deficiencies. These assumed deficiencies are extrapolated onto the educational landscape in certain critical ways.

The author shows how schools have lower expectations of minority students. She discusses a related misconception of minority parents as having low expectations of both their children and schooling. She illustrates how such misconceptions are reflected in general attitudes towards minority education in diverse ways using literature and case



stories to challenge her readers.

Section two is entitled, “Learning Lessons and Confronting Myths.” Here the author confronts twelve myths about poor and diverse parents. These myths include issues regarding minorities on welfare, teenage parenthood, and the general lack of educational concern within the minority community. She uses case studies to attempt to dissolve these myths. Unfortunately, many of the cases are not convincing enough to dispel such myths. For example, in attempting to annihilate the conception that poor and diverse parents are content to be on welfare, Compton-Lilly, after having randomly interviewed ten participants, writes:

While all of the families had been on welfare in the past, only five families received welfare as of the time of study. One family was receiving only supplemental benefits, and four families were totally free from welfare. (p. 32)

Here, the author inadvertently proffers that having six out of ten of diverse or poor parent-participants in a study to currently be on welfare would dispel a powerful, standing myth. The numbers involved, however, do not make for a convincing enough argument.

Section three is entitled, “Building on What Children Bring.” This is the most interesting part of the book for several reasons. First, it demonstrates how to extend specific literature into practical classroom experiences. In this regard, the author explores the notion of “third space” (p. 53) and defines it to mean the process whereby the home literacy lives of students are linked with their classroom experiences. She also mentions the power of “critical literacy” (p. 55). Here, the teacher is viewed as a power-granting agent who is capable of legitimizing students’ societal knowledge. The author shows teachers how to make knowledge both locally relevant and malleable

Secondly, and concurrently, the notions of “third space” and “critical theory” legitimize the native knowledge of the inner city children. Compton-Lilly cleverly portrays the process of how teachers could potentially employ students’ extant knowledge for instruction. She explains very good critical literacy projects in a manner that is replicable in other educational settings.

The last chapter of this book is somewhat interesting only because it adds another voice of advocacy for urban education; something that should be cherished by all who care about the future of America’s education. Todd K. Lilly, Compton-Lilly’s husband, authors this chapter, providing some biographic notes on his limited urban teaching experiences. Some of the content is rather condescending in that, while recounting details of his problems in urban teaching, the author prevaricates and obviously hides his true feelings about urban education: that it is a challenging endeavor. This part of the book is more the biography of a lone voice that captures one school’s culture to

paint the picture of urban education. Some of the content is clearly incongruous with the general theme of this book and appears rather contrived.

The author indicates that this book is the by-product of her dissertation. Some parts are redundant. Such repetitions, characteristic of dissertations, should have been excised. For example, the lengthy overviews are not justified in view of the detailed table of contents.

The claims made by the author by way of the book's title; "Strategies to Change the World," are obviously too grandiose, and clearly unachievable, and unachieved. The literature review is rather thin, there are some illuminating anecdotes on the order of Payne's (2001) *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. The book does not, however, command the legitimacy of Nieto's (1996) *Affirming Diversity*, with its buttressing powers of a strong literature review, under-girding directed interviews, and broader cultural diversity. This book could have benefited from extra research and more refinement in order to command some presence in urban education literature.

At minimum, this book reinforces the axiomatic notion that, "If you change the way you look at something, what you look at changes." It embraces the notion that the inner city has its own culture; one that is teeming with knowledge, culture, and life. Problems arise when an educator with a different culture — call it a different worldview — encounters that difference. Then the two worlds collide. However, when the teacher — not the children — changes, then suddenly, the children become educable. Teachers then better craft lessons that both employ, and speak to the extant issues of the local community. That is when the children respond.

A lot of the content resonates with both intuition and common sense, and yet may possibly be the missing ingredients in perfunctory teaching practices. Compton-Lilly shows how to re-inject common sense back into teaching. This book illustrates to its readers, between the lines, that knowledge is constructed, using pre-existing knowledge as building blocks. It is can be useful for teachers who are looking for a quick, easy read on how to better their craft in urban elementary schools.

### References

Payne, R. K. (2001). *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (New rev. ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

Nieto, S. (1996). *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. New York: Longman Publishers.

Pages: **144** Price: **\$16.50** ISBN: **0-325-00607-5**

**Reviewed by Charles B. Hutchison, Asst. Prof. of Education,  
MDSK Dept., College of Education, University of North Carolina**

at Charlotte.

---

**Daniels, Harvey & Zemelman, Steven (2004) *Subjects Matter: Every Teacher's Guide to Content-Area Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

It doesn't take long for Harvey Daniels and Steven Zemelman to get to get the readers' attention. "There are two main problems with reading in secondary subject fields: first, students are reading the wrong stuff and second, they don't understand what they read," the pair proclaim. "Other than that, everything is fine!" (p.14) Helping teachers offset the results of this situation (low test scores, ignorance of vital information, and negative attitudes towards reading) and make students effective readers is what *Subjects Matter* purports to do.

Daniels and Zemelman offer advice buttressed by specific assignments to make sure students possess the cognitive strategies they need to understand the core reading in any subject. They provide a repertoire of tools and structures that will enable teachers in any discipline to achieve this goal.

Those who wish to "cut to the chase" can probably jump right to Chapter Four. For readers who are already fairly cognizant on how smart readers think and who realize that textbooks are badly designed, hard to read, and all too often inaccurate, there's no reason to wade through the authors' rehash of this information.

The discussion of creating a balanced diet of reading is a good starting place. Not only do the authors present their case for why students should be reading content material in other genres (newspapers, magazines, websites, biographies etc.) but they also offer 28 pages of titles that will get a teacher started in diversifying a situation that is currently an "all textbook" classroom. Likewise the bulk of the following chapters on "Tools for Thinking: Reading Strategies Across the Curriculum" and "How to Use a Textbook" consists of practical suggestions applicable to the various academic disciplines.

If the material in these three chapters is useful, then page through the remainder of the book. How to create independent reading workshops and organize book clubs is helpful, but it's more of the frosting on the cake. The sections on inquiry units and helping struggling readers offer some solid ideas, but if these are areas of interest, the reader would be better served by titles that focus on these topics (*I Read It But I Don't Get It* by Cris Tovani, *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers* by Richard Allington, or Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm's *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*).

The authors cleverly anticipate potential reader antipathy to their approach. "Hey, excuse me, but I do have a textbook to get through. I

have a curriculum to cover. It is mandated by the district and I can just barely cram it into the school year as it is. My kids have to take a departmental exam and a state assessment. If they don't do well, both the school and I could be in trouble" (p. 13). Agreed, there's a lot on every teacher's plate right now, and Daniels and Zemelman, both associated with National-Louis University in Chicago, are quick to point out that implementing their suggestions take time. But once a commitment is made to reading skill improvement, the results will be dramatic enough that the sense of accomplishment will carry the teacher forward.

### References

Tovani, Cris. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Allington, Richard L. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: designing research-based programs*. New York: Longman.

Smith, Michael W. & Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. (2002). *Reading don't fix no Chevys: literacy in the lives of young men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: **288** Price: **\$25.00** ISBN: **0-325-00595-8**

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

---

**Gallagher, Kelly (2003) *Reading Reasons: Motivational Mini-Lessons for Middle and High School*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

The publisher's web page claims

In *Reading Reasons*, Kelly Gallagher offers a series of mini-lessons specifically tailored to motivate middle and high school students to read, and in doing so, to help them understand the importance and relevance reading will take in their lives. This book introduces and explains in detail nine specific "real-world" reasons why students should be readers. The book contains forty practical, classroom-tested and reproducible mini-lessons that get to the heart of reading motivation and that can be used immediately in English - as well as other content-area - classrooms. These easy-to-use motivational lessons serve as weekly reading "booster shots" that help maintain reading enthusiasm. (Stenhouse web page)

Now days, teachers are bombarded with teaching the standards. They are overwhelmed with meeting the requirements set forth by the State and District. Motivating them to read can seem like an additional and

unnecessary task. I agree with Gallagher on the importance of motivating students who ask "Why do I have to read?" The lessons covered in this book are applicable to daily living situations thus providing "able" students with a better understanding of why reading is important. The reasons the author provides are wonderful and convincing for those students who can be reached by engaging them educationally. However, most of the mini-lessons are suitable only for students who are able to read at least at grade level. The book does not explain how to modify the lessons in order to meet the needs of all learning abilities. It does not target all student populations, such as students who are in intervention classes or special education. It is these students who often ask "why do I have to read?" The book also does not target English language learners and other student populations who may need differentiated instruction to comprehend the meaning of the lessons in the book. Gallagher's failure to reach out to the students most likely to need help, makes the book a disappointment.

### References

Stenhouse Publishers online catalog. Retrieved 5/3/04 from <http://www.stenhouse.com/storefront/scripts/product/ProductView.asp?prodID=0356>

Pages: **180** Price: **\$19.50** ISBN: **1-57110-356-2**

**Reviewed by Maria Hernandez-Becerra, St. Mary's College of California.**

---

**Johnstone, Bob (2003) *Never Mind the Laptops: Kids, Computers, and Transformation of Learning*. New York: iUniverse.**

Bob Johnstone, a journalist by profession, traces the history of computing in education. He does so by looking at some of the pivotal leaders and events that brought computers into the classroom. He continues by highlighting schools that are on the cutting edge of technology and how this influenced education. Johnstone divides his book into four sections that approximates a timeline of the last fifty years.

He entitles Section One "Broom Closet Days" because technology was often placed in a closet, preferably in the classroom. Because of the size of computers in the fifties and sixties space and cost was often a large issue. Colleges used them for the Skinner method of programmed instruction and they were thought to replace a tutor. During this time Fortran and Basic languages were developed and newly organized computing departments began to teach them.

Section Two, "Powerful Ideas" focuses on Seymour Papert and the

powerful ideas proposed in *Mindstorms*, which introduced children to programming through his Logo program. He also pioneered the notion of “constructionism” where knowledge is built by the learner, rather than supplied by the teacher. Another key player was Alan Curtis, who wanted students to have access to technology at all times, both at home, and at school. He wanted computers that students could transport from school to home or wherever they were. He envisioned this Dynabook being able to link to other Dynabooks and the library facilities. However, John Ellenby in Scotland was also thinking along this line for business and his efforts of going from company to company to gather the necessary components created the first laptop available for sale on a wide basis.

Part Three, “Marvelous Melbourne”, demonstrates how these laptops could transform education and the visionaries who first place them with the students rather than in a classroom. David Loader of the Methodist Ladies’ College in Melbourne, Australia, became one of the first champions of using laptops in the classroom when he required all fifth grade students to have a laptop. Thus in 1990, the first laptop class began. Australia took the lead then in using the computer as a tool for all classes. Many of Papert’s ideas have become reality. This leads us to Section Four, “Boomerang”, where we are introduced to Tammy Morrison, an employee of Microsoft’s Education Customer Unit, who saw what was happening in Australia and convinced Microsoft to take a look. With the aid of the Microsoft Foundation, teachers in the Seattle area were trained and given the resources to duplicate the Australian model. In 2000, Angus King, then governor of Maine, took the largest leap in providing the money to Middle Schools in that state that would loan each eighth grader a laptop.

Johnstone, however, is not overly optimistic about technology and education. He feels that education trails every other field with incorporating technology. He has focused on the shining examples, but also includes initiatives that did not work very well. Laptops in high schools did not promote the same learning experiences because they found high school students tended to play games and download pornography. Much of the funding for technology has provided the hardware and software; but education often spends little on teacher training, unlike businesses, so that technology is under utilized. Schools often do not provide support personnel; so that when a computer breaks, or becomes corrupted, no one has the knowledge to fix the machine and money is not allocated to keep computers running.

For me, one of the best features of this book was clearly the writing style. Johnstone vividly portrays these incidents; so that I felt as if I was inside the Methodist Ladies’ College watching these students learn. I can picture Governor King riding around on his motorcycle, or the relief that teachers felt when Microsoft sponsored their conference at a spa and gave each teacher their own room and paid for all the little extras. Although not an essential purchase, this book will spark discussion on how technology can be better integrated in the classroom

and provide insight into what has succeeded in the past.

### References

Papert, Seymour (1980). *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, and Powerful Idea*. New York: Basic Books.

Pages: **360** Price: **\$23.95** ISBN: **0-595-28842-1**

**Reviewed by Regina Pauly, University of Wisconsin - Platteville**

---

**MacKinnon, Fiona J. D. & Associates, editors. (2004)**  
***Rentz's Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education.***  
**Third edition. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.**

I attended national conferences for both student affairs and instructional officers in the last month. My question was the same at both: where are the students in all of this? This question, in the words of one of my fellow participants, makes me a troublemaker. Thankfully, Fiona J.D. Mackinnon and Associates join me in making-trouble for the status quo in higher education. The preface recognizes that we should not be admitting the best students and then getting out of the way but rather we should be getting in the way in a constructive manner to help students make connections.

The text recognizes three important paradigm shifts: student learning outcomes, systems perspectives for enrollment management, and the potential and power of technology. The preface caused me to turn to the last chapter of the book concerning issues in student affairs. This chapter is a must for anyone involved in education at any level. Those who believe that neutrality is good should be warned; one main theme is social justice. This chapter highlights questions to ask of ourselves, of others, and of our institutions. This final chapter also reinforces the educator's role for student affairs and should be made available to all, including instructional officers and faculty. Education is about the students, period

Inserted between the preface and the wonderful final chapter are 13 chapters each with extensive reference list at the end. The first two lay an important foundation in philosophy and history, both generally and more specifically to education, higher education, and students. These two chapters do not shy away from important concepts such as epistemology but explain and deal with them in a clear and practical way. Educators all must understand and explore these foundations if they are to help others explore the "issues" of student affairs.

After laying a strong foundation, the rest of the chapters deal with the content areas of student affairs work: from admissions to enrollment management, academic advising, career services, counseling centers,

discipline and judicial affairs, multicultural affairs, orientation, residence halls, activities, financial aid, and health. The technology resources section in most chapters is a nice “modern” addition to the book. For instance, in the chapter on counseling centers, 12 web sites are provided which include listservs, pamphlet collections, and examples of counseling center web sites. This section also often contains listings for the professional associations associated with the given chapter. When these characteristics are combined with the extensive reference section at the end of each chapter, this book gains a very practical value.

The book does not shy away from controversial issues within content areas. For instance, the enrollment management chapter includes discussions on the role of standardized tests, merit-based financial aid, and college rankings. This seems to be done “in passing” and I would have preferred to see these issues made more problematic. For instance, on the issue of college rankings how can student affairs professionals deal with low rankings by popular services? Can the National Survey of Student Engagement be used to focus prospective students and their parents on important questions? Can schools such as St. John’s College be emulated? This school refuses to give popular ranking services any information. Perhaps a short case study could be used to help start a discussion. In addition, issues surrounding militarization and corporate globalization could be included. Such issues might include whether the federal government should be able to force campuses to accept military recruiters.

The panel of contributors is impressive and includes Edward Whipple, John Schuh, Ellen Briodo, and Maureen Wilson. The layout is attractive and readability is enhanced with headings and sub-headings. The contents section provides a nice outline of the book and is useful. The inclusion of both an author and subject index is helpful. Future editions might consider addressing differences in student affairs across institution types.

This book is a highly recommended addition to any student affairs professional’s library. It should make a wonderful basic foundation text for higher education student affairs programs. In fact, this book should be shared across the campus. Page Smith noted the loss of spirit in *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America* (1990). This book helps student affairs professionals, as fellow educators with faculty, to put the spirit with the intellect so that students not only become smarter but wiser.

### References

Smith, P. (1990). *Killing the spirit: Higher education in America*. New York: Viking.

Pages: **422** Price: **\$95.95 (hardcover) \$65.95 (paper)** ISBN: **0-398-07468-2 (hardcover) 0-398-07469-0 (paper)**



**Reviewed by Michael W. Simpson who begins his doctoral studies this fall at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in educational policy studies. He is completing a M.Ed. in adult and higher education at the University of Oklahoma.**

---

**Marten, Cindy (2003) *Word Crafting: Teaching Spelling, Grades K - 6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

The title of this book is the first indication that you are about to read an intriguing approach to spelling instruction. Moving beyond the volumes of published spelling texts that provide ready-made classroom spelling lists accompanied by ready-made spelling tests, this book proposes ideas and activities that explore the real power in learning to spell. Rather than just assigning and testing spelling, Marten advocates an approach emphasizing the linguistic elements of our language in which “students engage in inquiry and wonder about words” (Marten, p. 3).

Marten’s extensive background with the Writer's Workshop is apparent in her approach to spelling. She thoughtfully explains the use of best practices while advocating an eclectic approach. A quick scan of the bibliography demonstrates the breadth of the research that was reviewed in order to complete this book. Citing Regie Routman's *Invitations* (1994) and Marilyn Jager Adam's *Beginning to Read* (1990) gives the reader the sense that Marten looks at spelling as one piece of a much larger, more complex, picture. One in which spelling is more than a classroom activity; where spelling moves beyond the classroom to become a tool for lifelong empowerment. Notwithstanding, she also recognizes the emphasis (and at times overemphasis) placed on spelling in the current educational climate.

*Word Crafting* demonstrates how to use a text book and high frequency word lists without losing the emphasis on authentic reading and writing. Marten does this by emphasizing the more complex goal of integrating spelling into the culture of learning rather than by demonstrating particular spelling activities. Through a distinct weaving of spelling behaviors into a developmental framework, Marten encourages those involved in the classroom to treat spelling as foundational to learning rather than tangential to teaching. She creatively exploits examples of student spelling errors using them to reveal learner-specific, and developmentally appropriate, details on how the learner goes about the art of crafting words. This, in turn, gives the teacher a rare glimpse into cognitive functions revealing *how* a learner is learning, or in this case, mis-learning.

Marten aptly provides teachers with an extensive collection of effective “tools to add to their spelling tool box.” The stages of spelling development are clearly explained as is the type of instruction needed at each stage. The appendices of this book are a wealth of information.

Marten includes an evaluation form to be used for evaluating spelling programs, lists of "No excuses" words and reviews of reference books, children's literature, and software, games and web sites that may be utilized to aid spelling instruction. She also provides a thorough spelling assessment and directions for analyzing the results. In addition, she takes the reader through the process that Marten's district went through when choosing their own spelling program.

In his forward, Donald Graves asserts this book "is filled with respect for teachers" (p. vii). As a thirty year veteran teacher, Cindy Marten strives to empower teachers to be the classroom decision maker. As veteran teachers, these reviewers felt she accomplished just that. Cindy Marten understands that the purpose of spelling is, fundamentally, to be able to clearly communicate. She obviously values spelling and thoughtful spelling instruction and conscientiously encourages teachers and others to reflect on their own experience as "word crafters." In the process she also enlightens us to more than just the intellectual underpinnings and everyday activities of learning-to-spell, taking us into the realm of spelling as artful, even playful, but most importantly, powerful.

This book is a resource of both classroom based strategies and research-based thinking which leads to well-planned instruction. The strength of this text lies in three specific areas. First, its respectful presentation that emphasizes a development approach to understanding children's spelling abilities. Second, its dual emphasis on both differentiating instruction according to individual needs and, more broadly, connecting spelling to literacy as an effective communication tool for all students. Third, its array of resources, educational tools, strategies and techniques provided for those involved in teaching and learning to spell.

Teachers of grades K - 6 who are working to create lifelong spellers need to read this book. Administrators who are involved with curriculum decision-making should also take the time to study these research-based approaches. Parents who wish to understand how to support their child's spelling development beyond the Friday test will also be interested in this text's approach.

Pages: **164** Price: **\$18.50** ISBN: **0-325-00322-X**

**Reviewed by Christine O'Reilly, Hillside Elementary School,  
Niskayuna School District, New York, and Pamela Jean Thérroux,  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

---

**McTavish, Sandra (2004) *Life Skills: 225 Ready-to-Use Health Activities for Success and Well-Being (Grades 6-12)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.**

*Life Skills: 225 Ready-to-Use Health Activities for Success and Well-Being (Grades 6-12)* is a terrific book by Sandra McTavish, a former Canadian PE teacher and coach who now teaches college part-time and writes educational resource material. This book for teachers of 6th-12th grade students contains 225 ready to use worksheets for health education. I was impressed by the breadth of topics the book covers and its serious, explicit presentation of accurate health information. McTavish's book is clearly designed for educators and provides an incredible resource to supplement health education, especially in schools with a well-established curriculum in place.

The book comes in an easy-to-use format, sized in 8 1/2 " x 11" sheets with a lay flat binding. The worksheets are divided in eight sections: 1) Drugs, Alcohol, and Smoking, 2) Sex and Sex-related Issues, 3) Love, Relationships, Marriage, and Family, 4) Life Skills, 5) Stress, 6) Food and Food-related issues, 7) Know your body and Body Image, 8) Self-esteem and Knowing Yourself. The book begins with a brief overview of its eight sections, with one short paragraph to describe the aims of each topic.

My interest in this book stems from my background in education, my experience as a classroom teacher, and my current work in public health research and promotion. As a teacher, I was interested in how health information was presented to students in lesson form. In this respect, I was not disappointed. Curricular design is definitely this book's strength. With 225 lessons, one would think that the lesson models would quickly repeat among sections of the book. Surprisingly, I never felt that this happened. The entire book is filled with fresh, new ideas that present life skills in ways that teens will relate to and will remember long after completing a unit. As a teacher, I believe I could easily integrate these lessons into a comprehensive health education program without much extra work.

The book's holistic approach to the self is key for effecting well-adjusted teens that can adequately cope with typical teen issues. This focus of the book I believe is appropriate for middle and high school students' everyday concerns. However, my public health colleagues would correctly appraise the book's need of more background information. Many of the life skills dealt with in the book are weighty and require adequate teacher preparation to ensure responsible use of the information and accurate answers to students' questions. While the book does include an "Answer Key" for all worksheets and a comprehensive bibliography list, I still believe that the book could have benefited greatly from more background information, at least at the beginning of every section, available as an option for teachers who may not be well-versed in health topics and could use more information to bolster confidence.

Each worksheet/lesson is very well-designed. However, some of the terminology may not be appropriate for all parts of the United States or all ethnic groups. For example, the use of "homogenized milk" to refer

to "whole milk" might be perplexing to some students. Also, the use of popular language may preclude relevance to some ESL students or new immigrants, which is a big concern in some parts of the country. This may be due in part to Ms. McTavish's teaching and living in Ontario, Canada. The book should not be used on its own as a school's health curriculum, which might be the tendency of some due to its breadth of topics, because it lacks the structure and intentional sequencing that is necessary in curricular units. In addition, these worksheets should be used alongside other interactive lessons that accommodate the needs of more learners.

Overall, I would recommend this book's supplementary use in 6th- 12th grade health education, especially in conjunction with comprehensive health resources such as a textbook available for teacher and student use. Most of the lessons are appropriate to all of these grades and I believe they would greatly enhance current practice in health education, providing much of the critical information teens need for "success and well-being" in today's world.

Pages: 262    Price: \$29.95    ISBN: 0-7879-6959-1

**Reviewed by Michelle Castaneda Ed.M., Institute for Community Health**

---

**Parker, Jeanette Plauché & Begnaud, Lucy Gremillion  
(2004) *Developing Creative Leadership*. Portsmouth, NH:  
Teacher Ideas Press.**

*Developing Creative Leadership* is a timely publication. Almost daily, one encounters the phrases "creativity" or "leadership" in the titles and descriptions of conferences, books, and articles; the entire January 2004 issue of *Harvard Business Review* is devoted to "Leadership." Here the emphasis is on developing leadership skills in American middle to high school students. Both authors bring solid backgrounds in gifted education. Parker--long known for research in leadership--first published her Leadership Training Model (LTM) in 1983 and later introduced it as a fundamental model for gifted program development in a text published in 1989. LTM philosophy states that "(1) in order to ensure gifted and integrative leadership for the new millennium, leadership development should be a major goal (if not the major goal) of programs for gifted student; (2), the development of potential depends on the cultivation and application of those skills required for effective leadership. The model is designed in such a way as to incorporate those strategies that have been effective in the training of gifted students into a structure on which gifted programs are based." (p. 11)

The book begins by giving perspectives on leadership, outlines of LTM strategies, and instructions for using the model as a foundation for

curriculum planning, and methods for identifying leaders. The overview of leadership (Part I, Ch. 1) explains four theories of leadership such as Trait, Position, Style, and Distributed Functions (Situational) and notes the two modes of indirect and direct leadership identified by Howard Gardner (1995) (p. ix). Indirect leaders are those who model by example, such as Beethoven and Einstein. Direct leaders are the ones out front--typically, CEOs of large corporations and leaders of nations. The goal put forth in *Developing Creative Leadership* is direct leadership because of its potential for development in the educational system.

The core of Part I is the second chapter, "Developing Gifted Leadership for the New Millennium," which explains the LTM framework and its application to curriculum design. The chart summarizing the LTM (p. 11) consists of four primary components, arranged to reflect theories about left/right brain capacities. On the left are what are commonly considered left-brain categories: Cognition and Problem Solving. On the right half are right-brain categories of Interpersonal Communication and Decision Making. Creativity is subsumed under "problem solving"--an example of pairing different but complementary mental functions. Similarly, critical thinking and logic are subsumed under Decision Making. The authors acknowledge that creativity is traditionally thought of as a right-brain function. They note that "much of the classic literature in cognitive psychology (notably the writings of John Dewey) clearly affirms that creativity is a cognitive process" (p. 11). Although the authors give a thorough discussion of cognition and cognitive process, and list resources, (p. 12-24) I found myself wanting more specificity about the ties to Dewey's writings along with supporting sources.

Chapter three shows teachers how to use LTM as a foundation for curriculum planning with activity planning charts as guides for designing units. The Activity Planning Charts, illustrate how more than one LTM component can be covered in an activity to allow for integrative teaching along with a variety of strategies to accomplish various goals. Chapter four rounds off Part I with the Leadership Identification Scales, deliberately designed as a non-standardized instrument for assessing individual and group strengths and weaknesses.

The second half of the book (Part 2, Chapters 5-10) provides a set of academic units for 6th to 12th grades. The units are also adaptable for younger students. Each unit is designed for students to experience all four LTM components on topics as diverse as nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and fables; science; advertising; the Depression era; and Shakespeare. Reference sections are provided as well as a template for creating additional thematic units using the four components of the LTM. Originally designed around the subjects of general leadership for summer enrichment programs, the academic units have been modified for classroom use. For example, Chapter Five, "Dreams of Greatness" provides nine lessons for students to identify leadership qualities in

themselves and others along with a Library Resource Map for biographical research, sample acrostics and other activities. Nursery rhymes delve into literary development while the science unit pairs science and art. "From Babe Ruth to Breadlines" is a social studies unit and "Shakin' up Shakespeare" combines both social studies and language arts.

Each unit provides a wealth of examples for teachers to use alone or mix in any number of possible combinations. The authors encourage the teacher to be creative and supplement with personal choice additions. For example, reading through the "Shakin' up Shakespeare" unit I thought about building a lesson around Shakespeare's great tragedy, *King Lear*. I imagined how reading and discussing Lear's abuse of his leadership role and the ensuing consequences could be meaningful for adolescents who are particularly attuned to hypocritical and immature behavior in adults.

The authors underscore the importance of values education, particularly democratic values. Because the book uses business models for leadership, I would caution that the emphasis might be more on the individual rather than the collective. As noted in the Preface, John Gardner (1990) posits that democratic leadership along with leadership by teams is highly desirable (p. ix). *Developing Creative Leadership* would be, as Mackler (2001) notes in reference to another work "more Socratic if it emphasized teaching students to be always aware that he or she is a human being among a plurality of human beings who share a common world." In a world where one third of the population lives in abject poverty, it is going to take the combined talents of many to begin to address and solve the problems waiting for this generation of students.

Fischman's (2004) most recent book, coauthored with Howard Gardner et al., calls for a return to 'trusteeship' so that young people will be motivated by ethics rather than competitiveness in order to do service to the greater community. In the not so distant future, the success of gifted leaders will hinge on their ability to bring out the latent talents in others. These leaders, according to Kouzes and Posner (2002), model the way for others, inspire a shared vision, invite others to challenge the process, enable others to act, and last but not least, encourage the heart.

### References

Fischman, W., Solomon, B., Greenspan, D. & Gardner, H. (2004). *Making Good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas at Work*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gardner, H. (1995). *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*. New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, J.W. (1990). *On Leadership*. New York: The Free Press.

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (2002) *The Leadership Challenge*, 3rd Edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Mackler, S. (2002). Review of the book *Hannah Arendt and Education: Renewing our Common World*. *Education Review* August 29, 2002. Retrieved May 18, 2004 from <http://edrev.asu.edu/reviews/rev183.htm>

Parker, J. P. (1983) The Leadership Training Model. *G/C/T*, 29, 8-13.

Parker, Jeanette Plauché (1989). *Instructional strategies for teaching the gifted*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Pages: **158** Price: **\$25.00** ISBN: **1-56308-631-X/2003/150**

**Reviewed by Terri McNichol, President, Ren Associates, Creative Community Collaborations Consultants, Princeton, New Jersey, and adjunct associate professor at Mercer County Community College. She can be reached at [tmcnichol@renassociates.com](mailto:tmcnichol@renassociates.com).**

---

**Rog, Lori Jamison (2003) *Guided Reading Basics: Organizing, Managing and Implementing a Balanced Literacy Program in K-3*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

As knowledge and information about the reading process expands, so do the options and choices for reading instruction in the classroom. This variety is essential according to The International Reading Association, “there is no single method or combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read” (p. 190). Effective reading instruction today contains variety in the types of instruction offered and in the types of materials used. This diversity is not only important to facilitate instruction, but is needed to help meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population filling classrooms.

One essential reading instruction strategy, guided reading, is the focus of author Lori Rog’s book, *Guided Reading Basics*. In this book, Rog enthusiastically shares with readers the practical information needed to implement a successful guided reading program in a K-3 classroom. Qualified for the task, Rog has been spent 20 years teaching and currently works as the K-12 language arts consultant for Regina Public Schools in Maine. She has served on the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association and is frequent speaker at conferences.

What is guided reading? In her introduction, Rog states, “Guided Reading... involves working with small groups of students at similar levels of development, using texts that are carefully matched to their needs, and providing instructional support to build reading strategies and increase independence” (p. 5). Challenging, yes, but rewarding in terms of the results accrued in increased student reading ability.

Through Rog's book, teachers can learn the skills, techniques and tools required to make guided reading work in a classroom.

While practical in its approach, *Guided Reading Basics*, is research based and contains foundational knowledge about the guided reading method of instruction. Divided into 3 sections, the book starts with a look at how to organize and manage a guided reading program. In this section, Rog describes the role of guided reading in an overall literacy program and explains how to create guided reading groups, choose materials for the groups and assess student work.

In the next section, Rog moves to lesson planning for guided reading. This includes an overview of the principles of guided reading, and explanations on using guided reading with emergent readers, early readers, developing readers and fluent readers. Her final section contains guidance on using guided reading to instruct students in specific reading tasks, such as phonics, vocabulary and word study, comprehension, and responding to texts. Rog concludes her book with a chapter on how to use informational texts in guided reading instruction.

Guided reading represents just one method for helping students learn to read, a skill essential to academic success. It is a method, though, that works and helps students gain the technical skill of understanding language. This skill in turn contributes to the inner satisfaction that comes from reading success, the love of reading that all teachers want for their students.

A bibliography, an index, illustrations, charts and reproducible handouts all enhance the usability of *Guided Reading Basics*. Highly recommended for all elementary teachers and those involved in reading instruction.

Pages: **160** Price: **\$19.00** ISBN: **1-57110-383-X**

**Reviewed by Stephanie D. Davis, Spring Arbor University**

---

**Selwyn, Douglas & Maher, Jan (2003) *History in the Present Tense: Engaging Students Through Inquiry and Action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

*History in the Present Tense* offers several adaptable social studies projects that begin in the "present tense" with students' interests and backgrounds. Projects include timelines, collages, and photodocumentaries. While the authors' goal is not to "throw out the textbook," they advocate creative class projects combined with various resources, including textbooks. This book takes advantage of Douglas Selwyn's experience with the topic; his publications include *Living History in the Classroom* (Zephyr Press, 1993) and *Social Studies at*



*the Center* (Heinemann, 2000).

The authors focus on teaching history with these four tenets:

1. significant learning occurs when students care about the subject matter and can relate it to themselves
2. cooperative learning fosters participation in learning and important citizenship skills
3. enjoyable learning develops lifelong learning
4. multiple intelligences are employed when learning involves various methods: journal writing, presentations, readers' theater, group work, open-ended research, etc.

In addition to these four tenets of teaching history, the authors cite three essential social studies skills: distinguishing fact from opinion, recognizing cause and effect; and working as a group.

There are several things that add value to this book: scoring guides and rubrics; flexible project guidelines; bibliographies and extra resources; lesson extenders; use of multiple intelligences; and references to NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies) standards. Each chapter discusses a broad social studies topic (e.g. consumerism) and describes extensive projects to be carried out in the classroom. Within each chapter, Selwyn and Maher include dozens of ways to adapt and extend each project, which allows teachers to be creative and to adapt it to specific age groups. At the heart of each project is the use of multiple intelligences. They lend themselves easily to using alternative ways for students to succeed: orally, written, etc. "Drama projects are inherently multiple intelligence theory in action" (p. 168). A short bibliography and lists of extra resources (books, videos, web sites, etc.) conclude each chapter. The extra resources are helpful because they are briefly annotated. A few of the chapters also include scoring guides and rubrics.

Keeping these elements of "added value" in mind, I must also mention ways in which the book is disappointing. There is no concluding chapter, nor is there an index. The book ends with the last page of the last chapter, which is about readers' theater. An index would be helpful for obvious reasons, for example, if the reader wanted to find every mention of the NCSS standards. I recommend this book as an additional, but not essential, purchase.

#### **References**

*Expectations of excellence: curriculum standards for social studies.* (1994)  
Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies.

Lindquist, T., Selwyn, D. & Varner, W. (2000) *Social studies at the center: integrating kids, content, and literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Selwyn, D. (1993) *Living history in the classroom: integrative arts activities for making social studies meaningful.* Tucson, Ariz.: Zephyr Press.

Pages: 192 Price: \$19.50 ISBN: 0-325-00570-2

**Reviewed by Margie Ruppel, Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale**

---

**Senn, Diane S. (2004) *Small Group Counseling for  
Children, Grades K-2*. Chapin, SC: Youthlight, Inc.**

To succeed in school, children must learn to have confidence in themselves and their abilities, know how to get along with others and handle problems that arise, and know how to utilize the skills for success in learning” (Back cover).

*Small Group Counseling For Children, Grades K-2* is an educator’s resource full of social and emotional curriculum for students in kindergarten through second grade. Author Diane S. Senn, Ed.S., states her clear point of view about what she has observed in successful children. The book is an extension of Senn’s earlier counseling curriculum guide, *Small Group Counseling For Children, Grades 2-5*.

With recent legislation and trends in current education, educators seem to be strictly focused on the academic achievement of students. It is important not to forget the key components to living a successful adult life: getting along with others, self-concept and school/job success. Many adults who don’t have these skills, struggle in life. Social and emotional education of young children is so vital. Senn has created an excellent instructive resource for school counselors, administrators and teachers. The author’s approach to group counseling in the early grades is geared to all students with the results of those groups focusing in on problem-centered small groups.

Diane S. Senn is an Elementary School Counselor in South Carolina and has been in education for over 20 years. She earned her Master of Education and Education Specialist Degree in Elementary School Guidance and Counseling. She has co-authored many other books revolving around primary school counseling. I have been searching for a strong, comprehensive, skill-focused counselor resource for elementary grade group counseling. It seems so much literature is focused on secondary guidance counseling when we really need to be directing our attention to young children; to be proactive rather than reactive in our efforts as counselors. The author is a strong supporter of small group counseling and has combined all of the needs for small groups into one source for grades K-2. The structure and format is simple for the user and fun for kids. I no longer need to have twenty different small group counseling books focused on different areas. I have found the only resource I need for successful group counseling and social and emotional education in the primary grades.

Much of the program structure and resources are factual in nature. Theories aren't specifically stated but the lessons have been designed to be theoretically and developmentally appropriate for each age group. The lesson structure and resources are comparable to *Complete Group Counseling Program for Children of Divorce* by Silvia Margolin, and I see myself using *Small Group Counseling for Children* in much the same way. The preparation is quick; there are many hands-on and visual activities for those visual-spatial learners and great resources for parents and teachers.

The author has organized the book so that the reader's understanding of the subject area is crystal clear. The presentation of the material is balanced, sequential and instructive. The book is basically divided into two sections, Growth Centered "Mini" Groups and Problem-Centered Groups. The groups are flexible to fit any style counselor. However, I would have liked to see some explanation on the theory base, to demonstrate how certain theories meld with the author's strategies for small group counseling. Upon completion of the groups, the author concludes that the student will be more self-confident, know how to get along with others and how to utilize the skills for success in learning.

The Growth Centered "Mini" Groups provide small group guidance activities for all students. Providing group guidance for all students is a great way to get to know the students' strengths and needs. It would be a great way to start off the school year. There are different developmentally appropriate, grade-specific lessons for each grade level and they build on each other from year to year. What an intimate and valuable way to connect with children on a personal level!

Based upon the counselor's interaction with the students during the Growth Centered "Mini" Groups, the counselor can assist the classroom teacher in identifying appropriate students for the Problem-Focused Groups. The Problem Focused Groups have 24 small group skill building activities focused on three areas, self-concept, friendship and school success skills. The counselor is able to target the group skill building activities by analyzing the results of the provided needs assessment.

Senn offers extra resources in each section including a student group roster and planning form with an attendance column and space for notes on specific needs. A needs assessment for teachers and parents is provided for the Problem Focused Groups. The needs assessment lists a specific skill or behavior and a rating system to analyze the behavior. There are 24 skills or behaviors, which align with the 24 problem-focused small group sessions. The result is a focused and productive group session for the student and accountability for the counselor. The needs assessment can also be used as a referral form. A reproducible page of a general needs assessment is provided or the author offers ideas on how to create one.

The structure and pacing of the lessons are appropriate. Guidelines are

offered for the first session and a list of references is listed in the back to access more information. Each lesson includes a group description, goals and objectives aligned with state counseling standards, estimated time for the lesson, materials needed, a lesson procedure with a clear beginning, middle and end, a review of previous concepts, a game-like activity and methods for closure. The group and individual activities include cooperative games, experiments, worksheets, role-plays and puppets. Games and worksheets are provided as reproducibles, making planning quick and easy.

Each lesson begins by accessing the student's previous knowledge and humor is used throughout, so all participants feel comfortable. The lessons use many sheltering and English language learner techniques, which can grasp any learner's attention. For the problem- focused groups, a review sheet reinforces lesson concepts in written form with picture clues for what the learners need to Think, Say and Do to master the skill.

Many lessons incorporate other areas of the student's day, such as literacy with character education stories, musical instruments to characterize feelings, math skills with cooperative learning games and gross and fine motor movement. A few of the lessons seem to incorporate too many other areas, which results in the lesson not being quite as focused. Questions reinforce learning throughout the lessons and there is opportunity for reflection at closure.

A huge benefit this resource is the connection to the companion book, *Small Group Counseling for Children Grades 2-5*. That book connects the lessons from the K-2 book and focuses on anger management, friendship, school success and self-concept for students in grades 2-5. It also includes a parent newsletter example, student reminder notices, twenty pages of icebreakers and energizers and service learning ideas. Because both of the above books have been such great resources for me as an elementary school counselor, I have been motivated to view Senn's other books, which address the topics of character education, coping with conflict and classroom guidance.

I definitely recommend this book to other elementary school counselors. Across the lifespan, different age groups have different educational needs and strengths. The author has honed in on an appropriate developmental education program for those in need of social and emotional education. *Small Group Counseling for Children* is a unique approach to stimulate positive interaction and learning. Users who utilize all the resources provided in the book and follow the group guidelines and sequential procedures will have both accountability and an intimate connection with the children.

#### References

Margolin, S. (1996). *Complete Group Counseling Program for Children of Divorce*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Senn, D.S. (2003). *Small Group Counseling for Children, Grades 2-5*. Chapin, SC: Youthlight, Inc.

Pages: 172 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 1-889636-66-5

**Reviewed by Monica K. Curcio, Adams State College**

---

**Stern, Sheldon M. (2003) *Effective State Standards for U.S. History: A 2003 Report Card*. Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.**

*Effective State Standards for U.S. History: A 2003 Report Card*, sets out to assess states on their respective efforts to ensure that teachers and students are learning their history. The assessment explores each set of standards based on their comprehensive historical content, their sequential development, and their balance. The author argues that such an assessment is necessary given the central role that standards play in teacher education programs, curriculum development, selection of reading materials, and more.

Most readers of this report will be immediately drawn to the Appendix where their particular state's U.S. History standards can easily be compared to the other states in six different tables. Here you will find each state's standards scored, graded, and compared on the basis of content, development, and balance. The final table matches the rankings of this year's report with those of the previous two series of rankings in 1998 and 2000. Once the scores have been reviewed the most logical place to turn is the assessment narrative, offered alphabetically, in order to ascertain what the grade and rankings mean. Here the concise and precise grading scale is given a fuller explanation on the specific strengths and weaknesses that led to the assigned scores.

Anyone who looks into this report solely in the areas mentioned will exit the report with only a narrow understanding of its intent and framework. Such readers will be doing themselves a great disservice. Only by reading the forward, introduction, and conclusion will one get a full understanding of the rationale behind this report and the author's biases. Only then will it become clear how one should read and react to any specific assessment of any one set of standards. Only then will it become clear that a reader's agreement or disagreement with the rankings will be preconditioned by their agreement or disagreement with the views held by the author, and by extension the purposes of the Fordham Institute.

Stern's third category of analysis, balance, is called into question, for it is clear that he has a highly charged and politicized notion of balance. In his introduction he takes on the "leftist ideologues" (p. 14) who, in his view, have hijacked (and he uses references to 9/11 liberally to make certain that the reader will link the two groups) the academic

curriculum with their overriding sense of shame, guilt, and perceptions of America as an “uniquely evil and oppressive society” (p. 15). He bases his attacks on the writings and ideas of James Loewen. Admittedly, Loewen does not deserve the unadulterated, unexamined praise and attention that he has gotten, for there are some highly questionable premises used to establish his ideas, but neither does anyone who might find some value in a critical examination of the country’s past and a growing sense of inclusion, deserve to be treated to such castigation. There are times when Stern puts forward such statements as “honest history education” and his desire to see a focus on “genuine historical understanding” (p. 19) but the narrative quickly reveals that these phrases are only used in support of achieving a particular view.

Unfortunately, these biases carry over into the narrative explanations, which are none too helpful as a result. They are brief, often discuss aspects that are tangential, reveal the selective approach taken in assembling the report, provide, and vary in focus so widely from state to state that it is hard to see any comparison or correlation.

Perhaps the best aspect of this report card is its potential for sparking debate and discussion. The grading system and its categories are certainly not universally acceptable, nor are the rationales or the conclusions. States, and the teachers who teach in the various state systems, would do well to at least give some consideration to the assessments—all standards, even the few given passing grades by Stern, could stand to be improved. However, whether or not Stern’s conclusions about the extent of any set of standards’ influence on teaching and learning are true, is another matter best left discussed in another forum.

Pages: **103** Price: **online or single copies free from 1-888-TBF-7474**

**Reviewed by Jerome D. Bowers, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Northern Illinois University**

---

**Taylor, Shirley (2003) *Your Top Students: Meeting the Needs of the Gifted*. Markham, Ontario: **Pembroke Publishers, distributed by Stenhouse.****

This book, adapted from an Australian publication entitled *Gifted and talented children*, has been edited by Cheryl Duquette for the Canadian and American market. Gifted and Talented students make up approximately 5% of the student population and yet they tend to be the most under served of all students since teachers and administrators often mistakenly assume these students are smart enough to take care of themselves. Teachers challenged by these students often lack the understanding to meet the needs of a gifted child and find themselves

with few support mechanisms. This book was written to provide a basic background in the theories related to giftedness and specific ideas for classroom strategies, all within a short user-friendly format. The text is designed specifically for teachers with limited knowledge of the field of Gifted and Talented, and acknowledges the extremely tight time constraints of a classroom teacher.

The book is organized into five chapters that assist the teacher to: identify gifted students, interpret observations, and plan for these students within a regular classroom situation. The author starts off with a list of the most common myths about gifted students and then moves quickly onto a short background of theories related to giftedness. The intent is to provide some general understanding of the current notion of "giftedness" and "creativity" without becoming a chapter from a psychology text. Sufficient references are given for any teacher wanting to get a fuller understanding of any particular theory. The author then moves along to discuss the identification of a student who may be gifted. Characteristics are given in bulleted format for indicators of: general abilities, multiple intelligences, specific abilities, underachievers, creativity, and task commitment. Added to this outline is supplemental information including examples and a sample data collection sheet for analysis of observations.

The author provides assistance with interpreting the observations and planning for enrichment within a regular classroom setting. A four-step method for unit planning provides teachers with a way to take into account the inclusion of enrichment material from the very beginning, rather than as an add-on later. Each step includes initiating, reviewing/gathering, planning, and assessing. There is an entire chapter on "Ideas for Your Classroom" providing teachers with a repertoire of strategies that naturally integrate enrichment activities. The author ends the chapter with a short discussion of the importance of a positive teacher attitude, an essential component for any effective teacher.

The rich appendix holds samples of five pertinent forms to assist in identification and planning for enrichment activities, as well as a list of "Recommended Reading for Children" separated by age groups. The references provide an excellent overview of current researchers in the field of gifted education and would allow any teacher efficient direction for further study. The book concludes with a Web Site list and a detailed Index.

The strength of this book is in the excellent topic coverage, all within a teacher friendly format. Seldom does one see a book cover a topic so succinctly. While the book is directed at teachers facing the challenge of a gifted child in a regular classroom, it has the added value of providing ideas for automatically enriching all lessons. This gives the book value for every classroom teacher.

Pages: **63** Price: **\$17.50** ISBN: **1-55138-159-1**

**Reviewed by Elizabeth Jordan, Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia**

---

**Thompson, Frances M. (2003) *Ready-to-Use Math Proficiency Lessons & Activities*. 4th Grade Level. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

Frances M. Thompson's *Ready-to-Use Math Proficiency Lessons and Activities* provides a viable connection between the students' world and mathematical knowledge for elementary school fourth grade children. This link is especially helpful to teachers who have perhaps been taught mathematics in a rote procedural manner. The author emphasizes the use of word problems that incorporate the everyday knowledge of the child, such as movie tickets and CDs. Through the author's innovative use of graphs, charts and maps teachers are encouraged to visualize the concept being presented. Taken together, this forms an added aspect to the teaching situation.

The table of contents lists five major areas: computational algorithms and estimation; graphing, statistics and probability (often neglected in other texts); geometry and logical spatial reasoning; and measurement. The author also devotes a section of each chapter to possible testing errors that may occur for each objective. The "errors" section gives the reader an opportunity to peer into the mind of the child and understand from his/her perspective what might be some of the difficulties. This section assists teachers in understanding the complexity of children's thinking and finding various ways to explain a concept to the class.

The attention to estimation as a major issue assists the teacher in helping students understand how numbers behave. The other issue covered more fully than many texts is statistics. This is a great aspect of Thompson's book that attends to the practical aspect of mathematics: everyday our newspapers inundate readers with data. Teachers need to give great examples of how to understand and interpret data as early as first grade. This book is replete with examples with which to do so.

The book is carefully laid out so it is appealing to the teacher who needs information at her/his fingertips. The author is also aware of the need to create good constructivist language in order to make mathematics meaningful. She encourages and insists on the use of manipulatives in the classroom so students will engage at a deeper level than mere numerical manipulation. Even in operations on fractions she insists that students estimate the answer through the use of *greater than* and *less than* one or one half.

The book is thoroughly and thoughtfully prepared in both reading and mathematical literacy. The only drawback is its size: 381 pages, a



potentially daunting amount of mathematical problems, especially for teachers new to the profession. To offer a slight structural critique: choosing to divide the text in half or thirds or even separating each of the five major areas, may assist a teacher looking for a particular section for analysis. I would certainly encourage teachers to purchase this book for use in their classrooms.

Pages: **381** Price: **\$32.95** ISBN: **0-7879-6596-0**

**Reviewed by Eileen Quinn Knight, St. Xavier University, Chicago**



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