



education review // reseñas educativas

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reseñas educativas (Spanish)
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Brief reviews for August 2005

Allitt, Patrick (2005). *I'm the Teacher, You're the Student: A Semester in the University Classroom*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Patrick Allitt's book is essentially a semester-long journal of his experiences and thoughts during one section of an Emory University history course. Allitt writes in an open and friendly style, sharing his thoughts and experiences, allowing readers to feel as though they were being mentored in Allitt's office. New and aspiring faculty members would do well appreciating the contribution of Allitt, who has been recognized for outstanding teaching.

Most of the book follows the chronology of the semester, beginning with Allitt's preparations. He shares his process for writing a syllabus and even provides the syllabus as an appendix. As the semester develops, Allitt uses the occasion of the first research paper to describe his experiences and thoughts on student plagiarism. One diversion from the chronological format is a chapter in which Allitt illustrates Emory's annual summer semester at the University of Oxford.

At times, Allitt's writing is comical. For example, he satirically writes about Emory's efforts to create "global citizens." "In Oxford you could watch as a crowd approached.... The Italian teenagers, dark, lawless, all shouting at once.... Next the Swedish teenagers, quieter, blond, and decorous. Behind them, a cluster of American teenagers wearing baseball caps, baggy shorts, flip-flops, and sloganeering T-shirts. 'Look—here are the Italian teenagers, there are the Swedes...behind them, the global citizens'" (p. 54-55).

Recurrent themes include Allitt's efforts to build students' confidence and respect for their teacher and their teacher's efforts to resist the stream of excuses students convey for poor performance. Reading students' excuses gave me the chance to think, "That happens at Emory, too," which I found both encouraging and discouraging.

As the title suggests, Allitt views the professorship rather traditionally and hierarchically. He certainly incorporates a great deal of student involvement in his courses and challenges students to become personally engaged. Still, he strives to establish himself as the definitive authority. During the first meetings of each semester, he comes to class with a coat and tie, just to demonstrate to students that he is not like them. Further, he writes, "It's wrong to make friends with students who are members of a current course, but sometimes it's OK to develop mentoring relationships afterward" (p. 48).

I found Allitt slightly stoic in such philosophies. Perhaps it is because I invite students to call me by my first name and always welcome conversation with them. Allitt's detachment is probably the reason he consistently laments spending too much time with the least studious students. In his conclusion, Allitt writes, "In the nature of things you have to spend more time dealing with the problem cases than with the successes.... There are so few opportunities to meet and talk with the good ones, because they're steadily doing everything right.... Most will just fade into the background, to be seen occasionally...names forgotten until they ask me, two or three years from now, for letters of recommendation" (p. 231). Such musings are not likely to be used by Emory as marketing jingles, but they illustrate the level to which Allitt opened up to his readers.

Ultimately, I enjoyed *I'm the Teacher, You're the Student*. Allitt gave me ideas and inspirations for my own classes, as well as thoughts to consider. I finished the book feeling as though I spent time with a colleague—not necessarily my exemplar, but nonetheless, a dedicated and experienced colleague who graciously offered me a look into his work.

Pages: **244** Price: **\$19.95** ISBN: **0-8122-3821-4**

Reviewed by Bruce M. Sabin, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Director of Institutional Research, Webber International University, Babson Park, FL.

Boynton, Alice & Blevins, Wiley (2004) *Nonfiction Passages with Graphic Organizers for Independent Practice*. New York: Scholastic.

Boynton and Blevins', *Nonfiction Passages with Graphic Organizers for Independent Practice*, provides a classroom resource for students who are beginning their transition from what Jeanne Chall (1996) called 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'. The thirty nonfiction passages and post-reading activities that are included in this resource help to ease the transition for students in the middle grades (4 and up) as they continue in their journey in reading - away from the familiar words and concepts that they encountered in reading narrative texts in the primary grades - to the learning of new knowledge, information, ideas and experiences found in expository texts.

The thirty passages Boynton and Blevins have included in this resource cover a range of topics that are equally divided between and related to the content areas of science and social studies. The content page allows teachers to easily select passages for student reading based on individual student interests, or for building background knowledge on a variety of content related topics. In one passage, a student may have the opportunity to learn about insect or animal life, in another a historical figure and in another a current environmental issue may be addressed. The passages utilize a variety of visual features that do not simply attract student interest, but help to build important background knowledge (i.e. maps, vocabulary definitions, tables, fact files). Some of the passages are supplemented with world wide web links for those interested in finding out more on a given topic, or reading tips for ensuring effective comprehension.

This is a resource that a teacher will find beneficial for all types of readers (above average, average and struggling). The average length of the passages (one to two pages) and the nature of the post-reading activities allow students to complete a passage independently in one sitting. The activities feature multiple choice questions and short-answer questions. They target a range of comprehension levels: literal using one piece of information, combining several pieces of literal information, integrating across sentences, making connections between text and personal knowledge, and vocabulary.

One of the key features of this book is the utilization of a variety of graphic organizers (i.e. time lines, Venn diagrams, tree diagrams) in the post-reading activities related to each passage. Graphic organizers provide a pictorial or graphic method to enable students to organize information and thoughts. They can be used to demonstrate a reader's understanding, as a memory aid, or as a pre-writing activity. The graphic organizers the authors utilize in this resource will help a child to independently organize important details and ideas found in the text into a clear visual form. In turn, teachers can easily assess the order and completeness of a student's thought process - strengths and weaknesses of understanding become clearly evident.

One of the greatest advantages of this resource is that both the layout of the passages and the post-reading activities are designed in a manner that will facilitate successful and thorough student completion with little or no teacher supervision. The book is also valuable for teachers who are searching for additional resources for nonfiction text passages that utilize specific organizational text structures (i.e. description, cause and effect, compare and contrast), and/or are looking for an introduction for their students to the use of various graphic organizers. It is a shame that Scholastic had not included a cross-reference of both of these aspects (organizational text structures and types of graphic organizers) in its contents page.

References

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Pages: **128** Price: **\$17.99** ISBN: **0-439-59019-1 01799**

Reviewed by Bo White, Queens University

College Entrance Examination Board (2004). *College Counseling Sourcebook: Advice and Strategies from Experienced School Counselors*. New York: College Board Publications.

I should emphasize at the outset that I am writing this review from the perspective of an Australian who has worked as a secondary humanities teacher. Along the way, I was "transformed" into a school counselor with largely welfare responsibilities. Later, tacked onto this position, was the role of careers counselor.

The careers counseling process in secondary schools in Australia has become a much more complex, demanding and formalized process in recent years as it may have done in many other countries. There has also been discussion in this country of the possible legalities of providing accurate, timely information to senior high school students embarking on the application process to higher education institutions. This situation, combined with the fact that careers counselors will often have many other roles within their schools, and that the relevant information is constantly being changed and updated, results in high expectations on relevant staff to complete processes efficiently, accurately and often in short time frames.

For these reasons, the *College Counseling Sourcebook* in its first edition will be of enormous assistance to both experienced and novice careers counselors alike. It is designed as a practical, hands-on manual to be utilized in a way that will be of most assistance to users. It is constructed in a 3 ring binder with eight separate chapters which can be referred to, utilized, photocopied etc in any manner appropriate. The chapter topics include an overview of college counseling, student preparation for college, helping students research colleges, application processes, application essays, tests, and financial aid.

The greatest strength of this resource I believe is its outstanding practicality, usability and wealth of readily accessible information which includes other resources, reference lists, glossary, parent/student questionnaires, websites, worksheets, handouts, monthly calendar of college counseling activities, "tips" boxes in the margins from school practitioners (which I actually found myself reading first). This may well be the result of the fact that it has been created by school-based careers counselors themselves who have detailed working knowledge of how the process works in schools and know what is most helpful to staff and students.

I also particularly appreciated the writing style adopted in the *Sourcebook*. Succinct, straightforward language is used and it is written in a way that is very supportive of the counselors' tasks and efforts eg. Top 10 Survival Skills for School Counselors, p1-19. This approach is also illustrated in the fact that the publication invites contributions from counselors generally for updated versions of the *Sourcebook*.

I commend the College Board and its not-for-profit association for publishing such a comprehensive manual, which celebrates the skills of school-based staff. The *Sourcebook* is written for use in American schools and hence cannot be utilized in its entirety in Australia given the different education systems, roles of counselors etc. I think it would serve as an excellent guide for the production of a similar resource for Australian school-based careers counselors.

Pages: 350 Price: : \$40 in 3 ring binder; \$22 .PDF

Reviewed by Reviewed by Sandy Montgomery, Doctorate of Education student, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.

Columba, Lynn; Kim, Cathy Y. & Moe, Alden J. (2005) *The Power of Picture Books in Teaching Math and Science*. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.

The Power of Picture Books in Teaching Math and Science (grades pre K –8) provides a foundation for doing what the title implies – using picture books to engage students in the learning of math and science concepts. This book begins with a discussion of the importance of literature integration in the classroom and presents a brief introduction to reader response theory. The first five chapters focus on the effective integration of literature into the classroom and suggest methods to integrate literature into math and science lessons. For instance, qualities of a good book are discussed and categories of

books are presented. The National Math, Science and ELA standards are briefly discussed as well. Chapter five bridges this background information to the lesson plans by providing ideas to get “started in the classroom”. It stresses strategies to “match concepts to books to children” and clearly explains the format of the lesson plans that follow.

The authors devote the remaining four chapters to 50 accessible lesson plans that are divided according to grade level. The authors have selected a wide range of books that reach a variety of science and math concepts. The selection of books includes *Over in the Garden*, *The Keeping Quilt*, *The Forest in the Clouds*, and *One Grain of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale*.

Each of the lessons follows the same format. The lesson plan begins with a brief summary of the book. It then quickly mentions academic standards, clear lesson objectives, key concepts, and materials required. The actual lesson procedure is divided into two sections; a “sharing the book” section that gives guiding questions for reading the story (often with a guiding activity as well), and a “promoting concepts” section that provides ways to develop both the key concepts and the objectives. Examples of ways to promote concepts include shared writing activities, creating charts and diagrams with the class, and science experiments that build on the concepts introduced by the reading of the picture book.

The assessment section provides two to three assessment techniques for each book’s lesson. Assessment ideas include performance assessments, suggestions for observation techniques, writing activities, and key questions. Rubrics are included as well. Each lesson concludes with a “making connections” section that is devoted to connections with other concepts, books, and websites.

I recommend this book for use by students of teaching methods and novice educators. It is easy to read and provides a foundation for teaching math and science with picture books. I find it to be particularly useful for preservice teachers working to develop lesson ideas as well as their own teaching strategies. It will serve as a useful guide to the development of a new teacher’s techniques for literature integration in the classroom.

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Ward, J. & Spengler, K. (2002). *Over in the garden*. Flagstaff, AZ.: Rising Moon.

Pages: **226** Price: **\$24.95** ISBN: **978-1-890871-59-8**

Reviewed by Christina Siry, Instructor, Manhattanville College School of Education

Craswell, Gail (2005) *Writing for Academic Success: A Postgraduate Guide*. London: SAGE Publications.

Gail Craswell’s *Writing for Academic Success: A Postgraduate Guide* states that good writing and communication skills are essential for academic success. As the author notes, those skills are not always “picked up” along the way by graduates, or at least, what is learned “by osmosis” is not necessarily the best possible practice (p. xvii). Following through on her statement, Craswell gives us a practical preparatory manual on academic writing. As she explains, this book is “a developmental tool based on my understanding that graduates are not interested in a *quick fix* but rather in building on skills and strategies already in place so as to take control of the different communicative situations in which they find themselves” (p. xvi).

The book provides structured guidance and clear explanations. Drawing on her experience as a senior advisor to graduate students of all disciplines at the Australian National University, Craswell provides step-by-step guidance for graduate students and all other writers who struggle developing their writing and communication skills for college-level research.

Craswell demonstrates an understanding of the graduate students’ environment and the various drawbacks they may face including motivational challenges and the absence of support resources.

Probably the best way to help students with their academic pursuits is to provide them with “a welcome sense of solidarity” (p. 4) and this is where *Writing for Academic Success* begins. All students experience difficulties while adapting to new situations and most of them need to improve their communication and problem-solving skills. With this theme strongly in mind, Craswell introduces some effective stress management practices that will foster a “more positive writing environment.” She discusses how to find funding, handle stress, uncover inspiration, manage relationships, create effective timelines, and positively reinforce your own efforts. The author takes the reader through some key issues of “the graduate writing culture.” She clarifies that within that culture “it is not a matter of being literate but of being multi-literate in various types of writing, which can have different communicative purposes and so require new practices or different combinations of new and known practices” (p.xvi).

While the first part of the book takes the reader through a research skills development program, the second part unravels the process of academic writing. Craswell tells the readers how to write a good academic paper and offers a multitude of effective strategies. Her approach simplifies the different writing tasks and recaps tactics for overcoming difficulties. Craswell offers students the opportunity to study, learn and rehearse academic writing. Following her twenty-three exercises and many practical tips, the reader gains knowledge of how to develop research ideas and distinguish tasks when embarking on different types of academic writing.

Students also will find answers to some of the most common questions regarding academic writing such as the need for a literature review and how to structure it. Students also are shown how to critically assess the existing literature or position their topic in terms of what has already been accomplished in their respective fields. Craswell goes on to discuss writing introductions, drawing conclusions and presenting findings. If you are a student or have students who are struggling to find answers to questions about thesis preparation or seek a better understanding of professional research, *Writing for Academic Success* will help you go through the process and avoid unwanted pitfalls. Being faithful to her intention to create a practitioner’s tool, Craswell offers, in the last two chapters, useful tips on how to develop effective presentations, target an appropriate journal or approach editors for publication.

The book is well structured. Each chapter begins with developmental objectives. Sub-headings and shaded boxes help the reader navigate through the main topics and short examples. Students are active participants invited to piece together, examine, assess, finalize, and redevelop their academic and research tasks. However, it would be helpful if the author mentioned that students and teachers could select which exercise would be most beneficial. For example, for some preparing a research proposal might be a valuable exercise, but others may find it to be less relevant at the present time. Also, while it is a good idea to involve advisors and fellow students in your writing exercises, in some cases this might not be feasible.

Overall, Gail Craswell’s book is practical and accessible. It will not only enable aspiring academics to approach the process of writing a paper, but it also has the potential to encourage interest in academic writing and to inspire creativity. Academic writers in all fields could benefit greatly from Craswell’s structured approach and informed guidance.

Pages: 270 Price: **\$94.95 (Hardcover); \$33.95 (Paperback)** ISBN: **1-4129-0300-9 (Hardcover); 1-4129-0301-7 (Paperback)**

Reviewed by Diana Mitsova-Boneva, School of Planning, College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning, University of Cincinnati

Culham, Ruth (2005). *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for Primary Grades*. New York: Scholastic.

In *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for Primary Grades*, Ruth Culham provides a systematic guide for instructing beginning writers in each of the seven traits of good writing. A wealth of examples and lessons allow theory and best practices to emerge as effective classroom instruction. Through the use of analytical assessment strategies, readers are led to understand the connection between assessment and instruction.

The text introduces the theory related to primary writing and the research supporting this analytical assessment model. An effective argument is employed to place this theory into practice. Each trait is

then briefly introduced. Culham goes on to provide the methods to effectively connect the writing process and trait instruction. The remaining chapters systematically present each of the seven traits in a clear and logical manner. A variety of lessons and resources are provided to support the instruction of each trait.

Readers gain a common language to provide writing instruction based upon the seven traits of effective writing. The book also includes an abundance of children's writing examples and strategies that may be easily implemented in the classroom. The text effectively provides language to respond to children's writing in a manner that will encourage the development of each trait.

Culham has succeeded in taking the mystery out of writing instruction. In *6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for Primary Grades* the author effectively provides a roadmap for teachers as they grow professionally as they nurture young writers. This guide is a must have for all primary educators.

Pages: **304** Price: **\$26.99** ISBN: **0-439-57412-9**

Reviewed by by Talana L. Vogel, Assistant Professor Christian Brothers University, Memphis, Tennessee

Dawson, Peg, & Guare, Richard (2004). *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press.

Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents is a practical resource designed by a clinical school psychologist and a neuropsychologist to provide research-based guidelines for assessment of and intervention in executive function weaknesses in students. The book is comprised of seven chapters, an extensive appendix, references and a subject index. Dawson and Guare begin with a description of executive functions and move on to assessment and intervention. The appendix contains a variety of forms and checklists for assessment and intervention planning. The text is very easy to read and the authors provide vignettes that enable readers to visualize students with executive skill deficits.

In the "Preface" the authors describe executive functions as the cognitive processes used in planning, initiating, monitoring, and completing tasks. From this point onward the authors refer to executive skills. The word choice is important because the authors discuss ways to support and improve these skills. Most research with executive functions deals with special populations such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). See Pennington (1997) for a discussion of executive functions in both normal and special populations. The authors have a previous publication that proposes a coaching program for adolescents with ADHD (Dawson and Guare, 1998). The current work is the result of the authors' belief that many children in the general population have weaknesses in executive skills. The book provides assessment and intervention tools that do not involve medication.

Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents has two theoretical influences. The first influence is Barkley's theory (1997) of ADHD. Barkley believes that executive functions are best described as self-regulation. Barkley is a strong advocate for behavioral modification as a treatment for deficits in executive functions. This influence can be seen in the suggestions of Dawson and Guare. The authors propose restructuring the environment to provide support, asking students to sign behavior contracts, and giving rewards for desired behavior.

The second theoretical influence on the book is the work of Field and Hoffman (2002). Field and Hoffman believe in self-determination as a way to achieve more positive outcomes for students with disabilities. Dawson and Guare expand this idea to include children with weaknesses in executive skills. This influence can be seen in Dawson and Guare's suggestion that children should be involved in the planning and implementation of strategies.

Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents is designed to help students in two ways. The first way is that it offers tools for training children in the skills necessary for completing schoolwork and homework. The second way is that it offers tools for training children to inhibit undesirable behavior such as unwanted physical contact with classmates. All of the strategies involve intensive adult time. In particular, coaching (chapter 5) requires brief daily meetings with students.

The book has two weaknesses. The first weakness is the uneven coverage of topics. Most of the book is devoted to executive skill assessment and interventions for individual children. However, the authors include a short chapter on teaching executive skills to entire classrooms. This chapter contains several excellent suggestions. For example, the authors suggest that teachers should

develop beginning and end of day routines for homework assignments. However, the chapter is very brief and the question of assessments of executive skills for large groups is not discussed.

The second weakness of the book is that the intended audience is not always clear. Part of the difficulty is that while the book is primarily written for school psychologists, the authors include information that is specifically designed for classroom teachers. I came away from this book wondering exactly what level of assessment and intervention should be done by classroom teachers. The book would work best if used collaboratively by school psychologists and classroom teachers.

The strength of the book is that it offers practical and detailed advice for executive skill weaknesses in the general population, while emphasizing the limitations of training and the importance of keeping a developmental perspective. The authors include important developmental information in the first chapter. Table 1.1 on pages 9-10 lists developmental tasks requiring executive skills for ages ranging from preschool to high school. The authors also include important limitations to their training suggestions in the "Concluding Comments". The authors stress that the book is designed for compliant students and warn readers that results will not be immediate.

I recommend this book for school psychologists and graduate students training to become school psychologists. I recommend that classroom teachers who wish to assess and plan interventions for individual students should use this book in collaboration with a school psychologist.

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Pages: **129** Price: **\$25.00** ISBN: **1-57230-928-8**

Reviewed by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Bibliographer at the University of Maine. In addition to her M.S. in Library Studies from Florida State University, she has an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida with a specialization in language acquisition. Her training also includes extensive graduate work in developmental psychology.

Dellinger, John (2005). *The Substitute Teaching Survival Guide: Emergency Lesson Plans and Essential Advice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

When I retired after 39 years toiling in the academic trenches, I swore I would never return, as many of my colleagues have done, to substitute. I have nothing but respect for the folks who come in on very short notice and try to hold things together when the regular classroom teacher is absent. But in all too many cases this challenging chore is made even more difficult due to the absence of lesson plans. Although there is no excuse for inadequate or missing lesson plans, any sub will admit that is one of the downsides to this job.

John Dellinger, a retired Colorado middle and high school teacher, has created a short guide for substitutes featuring emergency lesson plans that should be a valuable asset to beginning substitutes. Even more experienced individuals who have probably devised their own backup plans may find some of the information in this book useful.

The opening chapters on the role of the substitute and classroom discipline offer some solid suggestions. The following very short sections on "The Importance of Substitute Teaching", "Your Comfort Level", and "Is Substitute Teaching for You?" can be skimmed or skipped over without fear of missing anything of importance. Since the focus of the book and the reason for purchasing it rests with the 67 ready-to-use emergency lesson plans, that's the area that deserves close scrutiny. Geared

for students in middle and high school, the subjects covered include English, math, science and social studies.

Since I am a former English teacher I turned immediately to this section. Frankly, I was disappointed with what I found. The author uses the identical format for each lesson , involving reading aloud a brief, one paragraph summary of a literary work and then asking the students to respond to a few questions. "List five reasons why you might or might not like to read this book" (p.47) or "What are some of the things you think the author might be trying to communicate?" (p. 59), I fear, are not going to focus a group of squirrely 7th graders and certainly not a room of 12th grade honors students.

I also don't believe that even on a good day with comatose or extremely cooperative students could this activity fill a short 45 minute class period. What would happen in a block situation where a class might run 90 minutes is anybody's guess, but this activity would definitely not be feasible.

The formula approach was also evident in the other disciplines covered in the book. I won't speculate how well this would work in social science or math, but I think teachers in those subjects would also be rather skeptical.

I have to laud Dellinger for his attempt to provide substitutes with some extra ammunition. Unfortunately, if one is forced to use any of these rounds, they may well misfire!

Pages: 133 Price: \$19.95 ISBN: 0-7879-7411-0

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

Fisher, Mercedes M. (2003). *Designing Courses and Teaching on the Web: A "How-to" Guide to Proven, Innovative Strategies*. Latham, MD: Scarecrow (now Rowman Education).

While *Designing Courses and Teaching on the Web*, is not unique in providing strategies for teaching and learning in an online environment, it makes a significant addition to the literature. The book is a practical, easy- to-adapt guide for designing and delivering web-based teaching and learning. The use of technology is evolving at such a rapid pace that it is hard for practitioners to keep current with the latest technological innovations. Nevertheless, Fisher's book provides practical suggestions that will be useful many years into the future.

As educational institutions transfer more courses from traditional classroom settings to a web-based environment, instructional designers, instructors, and trainers in industry can use the strategies, ideas, and helpful checklists provided in the book to combine technology with constructivist educational theory to produce critical thinking, problem-solving students through authentic learning experiences. Fisher explains how to build a community of practice that includes active learners, committed faculty, and experts in the field towards this goal. Fisher has the expertise to write on the subject, having spent four years developing curriculum and teaching master's level students in Educational Technology at Pepperdine University. Her courses are a blend of face-to-face and web-based instruction.

Fisher says, "Online learning is an epiphany by design" (p. 5). She explains how web-based instruction allows students to learn at their own pace, and how to adapt instruction to fit students' individual learning styles. Students in web-based classes have an increased access to information and learn through interaction with their peers, faculty, and workplace experts.

Fisher explains that educators need to adapt course content to the online environment. The instruction should engage the student, not be a literal transfer of the traditional lecture presentation. Web-based delivery increases enjoyment of the learning process and simplifies assignment and assessment logistics. Educators need to create a learning environment that facilitates and develops creativity, problem-solving, and self-direction skills. Screen design must use guidelines such as the laws of perception to enhance how learners obtain knowledge from the computer screen, using graphics and animation. However, some of the illustrations from Fisher's website are hard to read because of a lack of contrast between the color of the text and the page background.

The instructor needs to provide a support structure for students. Fisher uses a combination of face-to-face and web-based interaction between students, faculty, and workplace experts to create a virtual community. Fisher's rubrics let students know the proficiencies they need to demonstrate. Student assessments cover participation in course discussions, an electronic portfolio, and an action research

project. The project tackles an existing workplace problem over several semesters. The students conduct research, search the literature, and perform an analysis to produce a solution that improves workplace practices. Students are also evaluated by their peers on individual participation in group projects.

Fisher shares some strategies she has successfully applied teaching a master's level program in Educational Technology in an online environment. The book provides a scaffold for instructors to build their web-based instruction on. In the two years since Fisher's book was published several technological innovations such as WebCT, Blackboard, and Centra make synchronous and asynchronous communication much easier to achieve.

The more I delved into the text, the more comparisons I made to my own online educational experiences. Fisher schedules several face-to-face sessions with her students as an integral part of instruction. I think this ignores the reason many students choose the online delivery system. In my experience, students primarily choose online classes because attendance on campus is not required. I am in my third semester of a master's degree program in Training and Development at North Carolina State University. My classes are entirely online. I believe it is possible to build a community of practice entirely in an online environment. My coursework encourages collaboration so that a sense of community evolves between students and between students and faculty members through online discussions, small group activities, and e-mail communications. Our projects also provide authentic learning experiences that will be helpful in our careers.

Designing Courses and Teaching on the Web provides a practical guide to teaching and learning in an online environment. The strategies build on educational theory with a social-learning, constructivist foundation. The book describes how to translate course content to a web-based environment and how to design easily readable computer screens using various software packages. It also describes how to create and nurture a community of practice to assist students. The book describes how to develop proficiencies students need to demonstrate and then design curriculum that fosters these skills. The appendices provide resources for the book's readers as well as examples of communications between instructors and students.

The book is an efficient, practical guide that can be adapted to fit instructor needs. I found it informative, interesting, and engaging. I think others will also find it helpful. Since instructional and communications technology evolves so quickly, other educators and instructional technologists need to extend the research about the online delivery of instruction.

Pages: 160 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 1-57886-052-0

Reviewed by Arline Richardson, a graduate-level student in the Training and Development program at North Carolina State University.

Handwerker, Mark J. (2005). *Science Essentials, Elementary Level: Lessons and Activities for Test Preparation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

In today's world of standardized testing, teachers often feel they face a decision between teaching to the test or teaching using sound pedagogy such as student-centered learning activities. In *Science Essentials*, Mark Handwerker gives 4th grade teachers numerous lessons and activities that engage students in learning science concepts. Instead of reading and memorizing, students have the opportunity to experience science while learning the concepts in the standards. Handwerker also provides pre-tests so teachers can assess student learning, while at the same time preparing them for the types of questions on the standardized tests. This book is well organized, which makes it very easy to use.

This book is nicely laid out in the following sections, Methods and Measurement; Physical Science; Life Science; and Earth Science. Each section has between 12 and 17 lessons. There is an appendix with information for parents using this book to help prepare their students or for teachers to reproduce and send home. There are explanations on the types of standardized tests, terms used in tests and even a sample letter teachers can use to send home to parents about upcoming tests. This is a very practical book filled with exciting lessons that engage students and foster learning.

Each section starts out with a page outlining the objectives of the lesson. Each lesson then starts with a teacher preparation page including the basic principle of the lesson listed, the competency (what

students will be able to do after the lesson), the materials, the procedure, what students should observe and possible answers they may have on their handouts. The student handouts again list the principle, objective, materials and procedure. There are diagrams and thought provoking questions. For example, in a lesson on ecosystems students are asked to "explain what would happen to the ecosystem if a common food source becomes extinct" (p. 174). Students not only perform the activities but are asked to analyze and write their responses. Many of the lessons have students write out the procedures, describe their observations, draw diagrams, analyze data, and make conclusions. These are all excellent skills, which prepare students to begin to design their own experiments. The practice tests are multiple-choice, just like the standardized tests, in order to give students practice in how to take such an exam.

The lessons align well to the standards. I compared them with the National Standards and the California State Standards and found that a teacher could use this book and meet all of their science standards for the 4th grade with nicely laid out, hands-on and inquiry based activities. I used some of the activities with 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers in workshops. I found that the activities were well planned, teachers liked them and found them very helpful. All of the teachers in the workshops wrote down information about the book so they could purchase their own copies for the grade levels they teach. (There are middle school and high school editions of this title.)

There are two areas that this book could contain that would make it an even more useful resource to teachers. For many teachers knowing where to find the materials would be very helpful. With as busy as teachers are, a quick reference list for where to find needed items could make gathering the materials much faster and easier. Also, if there were more explanations on some of the terms and concepts, this book would be a one-stop resource for teaching science.

I highly recommend this book as an excellent resource for teaching science in a pedagogically sound manner, yet at the same time meeting the needs of student knowledge for high achievement on standardized tests. The pages are easily reproducible, the activities are easy to set up, and full of learning and excitement for students.

Pages: **299** Price: **\$29.95** ISBN: **0-7879-7576-1**

Reviewed by Natalie Zayas, MS, California State University, Monterey Bay, Seaside, California.

Miller, Wilma H. (2005). *Improving Early Literacy: Strategies and Activities for Struggling Students (K-3)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

"Far too many young children still are failing to achieve success with beginning reading skills." This, the book's opening statement, tells us what we know only too well, but it is interesting that the target is now *early* literacy. Up until quite recently we did not have the assessment tools to reliably check children's progress in literacy until after four or five years into schooling. By this time, the multiple rehearsal of ineffective literacy practices together with lost learning time and attitudinal issues made the task of what was called 'remediation' almost impossible.

The work of early literacy researchers over the last twenty years has improved and extended our understanding of both the complexity and the sequential importance of early literacy. As Miller says, it is no longer acceptable to wait for young learners to become ready to learn or mature into their reading and writing, and it is how teachers can maximise learning opportunities for these readers at the very beginning of their literacy learning that is the focus of her book.

This is a book of practical ideas to help K-3 teachers in their task of helping young readers and writers get off to a good start. As a glossary of the concepts and activities that currently surround the early teaching of reading and writing the book excels. Scaffolding, semantic webs, phonemic awareness, rimes and diphthongs, zone of proximal development and constructivist theory, cross-checking and self-monitoring, to name a just a few, are all introduced to the reader.

The stance the book adopts with respect to the unavoidable debate over reading methods is pragmatic and eclectic, a practical amalgam of blended good ideas designed to cover all bases and capture all theoretical angles. Miller makes sure that there are short clear theoretical discussions on all the approaches she uses, beginning with whole language and the Language-Experience Approach (LEA), and including listening and oral language, phonics, comprehension and vocabulary. But it is essentially a book crammed with classroom/home-useable, teacher/adult- friendly assessment and teaching

activities, all very helpfully named and arranged in chapters related to one aspect or another of literacy processing.

Miller is well aware of the importance of assessments and provides readers with a range of informal assessments tools and checklists, some designed by others, such as Marie Clay's *Running Records*, and some by herself such as an Individual Reading Inventory: Grades 1 - 5. Yet, the bulk of the book is activity driven. For instance, pages 186-7 in the chapter on Improving Competency in Phonics we read about Hinks Pinks, Word Walls, Mind Reader, Ruler Tap, Pantomime and Several Additional Strategies. Or, on pages 221-3, the chapter on Improving Ability in Word Structure and Context, we learn about Drawing Similes, Crossword Puzzles, Shanker and Ekwall's Strategy for Teaching Context Clues, Linked Cards, Draw a Picture, Magazine Pictures, Riddles, and Word Cards. As well, there are many time-saving templates, charts, tables, lists, diagrams - all of which can be photocopied directly, and easily as the book has a 'lay-flat' binding for easy copying. On page 210 one finds a template of a butterfly designed to assist with compound words; on page 162 a bear outline to use when constructing a tachistoscope in the shape of a bear.

The fifteen appendices provide other useful references - such as the Dolch Basic Sight Words, Cooking and Baking Activities to Review Letter Names, or Books to Promote Enjoyment of Words. Practicality for the busy teacher or interested family member is very much the intent and success of the book.

Very useful as it will be as a teaching companion, it is questionable whether we should think of the book as a tool to use with *struggling* readers. Compared to early literacy interventions with the same aim (such as *Reading Recovery*, mentioned on page 42 by Miller) it does not do justice to the sensitive intricacies of diagnosis and instruction demanded by more fully researched attempts to be successful with the hardest to teach children. The assessment techniques are unacceptably loose both in administration and in scoring to be useful with struggling readers and writers. The activities are given without explicit reference to real children for whom they might at some point be useful.

There is also the difficulty with compendiums of this kind that all theoretical discussions become oversimplified and levelled out, put alongside each other as if all were equal and compatible. A teacher may thus be spared the effort of having to think about the difficult issues but perhaps this is counterproductive in the longer term. The reverse side of describing so many activities is to sink the reading and writing of continuous text under the heavy weight of so many disaggregated subskills. It is not that Miller does not write about whole reading and writing. It is more they are crowded out. Guided reading, the introduction to new texts of just the right difficulty, expected sequences of literacy development, the notion of the development of an integrated system of strategic activities to process text do not seem to me to have been given the predominance they deserve. An inexperienced teacher might be forgiven for concentrating mainly on the letter and word activities and leaving out reading and writing altogether. Finally, although the back cover states that this book is based on solid research, the effectiveness of the assessments and the activities themselves are not supported by any research evidence.

The book could leave an uncertain teacher awash with activity but with no sense of direction. In the hands of an informed teacher, it will be a very useful tool.

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Clay, Marie M. (2000). *Running records for classroom teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 336 Price: \$29.95(us), \$40.00(Can), £19.99(uk) ISBN: 0-7979-7280-4

Reviewed by Blair Koefoed, BSc, PhD, Reading Recovery Trainer, The University of Auckland, Auckland New Zealand. His specialist areas are early literacy and early literacy interventions, the philosophy of literacy, and the sociology of literacy.

Pressley, Michael; Dolezal, Sara E.; Raphael, Lisa M.; Mohan, Lindsey; Roehrig, Alysia D., & Bogner, Kristen (2003). *Motivating Primary-Grade Students*. New York: Guilford Press.

Teachers who wish to improve student learning and engagement in the classroom may first turn to the internet for resources on academic motivation. They are likely to find an abundance of resources on techniques to enhance student motivation. However, the topic of academic motivation is very complex. Educators are likely to find information that is contradictory, overwhelming, and confusing.

Even when teachers seek scholarly research resources, they are likely to find conflicting evidence about what motivational techniques work best, making it difficult to understand which techniques would be most appropriate for their own classrooms. A real concern is that well-meaning educators may unknowingly be using techniques that are, in fact, undermining student academic motivation. In visiting schools and observing teachers, Cook and Cook (2004), two educational researchers, noted that, "despite the importance of using research-based instructional procedures, we frequently see teachers using practices shown to be ineffective by research and fail to see teachers using evidence-based techniques" (p. 240). Developing educational resources that make research evidence accessible and meaningful to educators is the key to improving classroom practices and student learning. Being a former primary school teacher who is interested in teacher professional development and bridging the research-to-practice gap, I was extremely excited about finding an educational resource that effectively translates research evidence into practical strategies that are easy for teachers to implement into their own classrooms.

In *Motivating Primary-Grade Students*, the main goal of Pressley and colleagues is to clearly communicate practical, research-based strategies and techniques that teaching professionals can use to increase academic motivation in their classrooms in order to make learning more enjoyable and classrooms more productive. The authors recognize that academic motivation is multidimensional and involves a complex set of processes. The authors provide readers with an overview of the many motivational mechanisms in education, including a synthesis of research on instructional practices, behaviour management techniques, and teacher and student attitudes and beliefs that enhance student motivation. The main focus of this book is to present findings from a program of research that examined the elements that promoted and undermined academic motivation in primary classrooms (Grades 1 through 3). The authors contrast teacher and student behaviours and classroom environments where student engagement is low, moderate, and high. Highly engaging classrooms are defined as those where 80% of the students were working hard academically (i.e., working on-task and on cognitively demanding activities) 80% of the time.

Pressley has been identified as a top scholar in the field of educational psychology (Kiewra & Creswell, 2000). He is a highly prolific author with over 300 journal articles, chapters, and books. His commitment to teacher development, making research evidence accessible, and improving education is clearly evident in his writings. Best practice strategies from educational psychology research (e.g., explicit strategy instruction, scaffolding, cross-curricular connections, development of self-regulation) have been woven throughout the text. Pressley and colleagues summarized their ultimate goal as, "We hope that this book goes far in stimulating changes in the world of school" (p. 136). In this book, the authors have drawn from a large field of research evidence on student motivation, and presented the information in a way that will be clearly understandable and usable for the reader. To improve student motivation they provide detailed examples of what primary teachers can do, and should avoid doing, with the physical environment, psychological atmosphere, classroom instruction and content, and classroom management.

As this book ties research on academic motivation to classroom practice, it is especially well-suited for primary teachers, pre-service teachers, principals, teacher educators, and school consultants. For most readers, the highlight of this book likely will be the case studies of three highly engaging teachers who each had classrooms where most of the students were engaged most of the time. These case studies provide rich, detailed examples of the variety of behaviours and practices that increase academic motivation in classrooms. Educators will learn how to become motivating teachers and to recognize behaviours that are counterproductive to engaging students in the classroom. Educators will be able to use the strategies in this book to transform their own classrooms. The authors advocate that increasing student motivation is key to better learning: "The route to becoming an engaging and effective teacher is to be a motivating teacher, to flood the classroom with motivation using the many tactics employed by engaging, effective teachers, as covered repeatedly in this book" (p. 164).

Pressley and colleagues have noted that the strategies that they present are not a quick fix: change takes time and effort. While there are many motivating strategies that teachers can employ immediately to enhance student motivation, the authors encourage teachers to develop a long-term plan. Unfortunately, the researchers found that teachers who had less engaged students often did not recognize that they were undermining student motivation. These teachers thought that they were doing a good job. "That teachers lack awareness of whether they are motivating presents some challenges with respect to changing teacher behavior" (p. 141).

This book needs to get into the hands of educators. The significance of this work is that it provides teachers with an understanding of academic motivation and offers practical, effective, research-based strategies that can improve student academic motivation, engagement, and learning in the classroom.

It will be the students who will benefit most from the book. If there is one resource book that teachers choose to read, I hope that it will be this book. It is well worth the investment.

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Kiewra, K. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2000). Conversations with three highly productive educational psychologists: Richard Anderson, Richard Mayer, and Michael Pressley. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12(1), 135-161.

Pages: **198** Price: **\$26.00(paperback), \$50.00(hardcover)** ISBN: **1-57230-914-8(paperback), 1-57230-915-6(hardcover)**

Reviewed by Michelle M. Servais, Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. Michelle's background is in Special Education and Educational Psychology. Formerly a primary school teacher, she currently is a Research Associate at the Thames Valley Children's Centre, a non-profit treatment and rehabilitation centre serving over 6,000 children and youth with disabilities each year.

Robb, Laura (2004). *Nonfiction Writing From the Inside Out: Writing Lessons Inspired by Conversations with Leading Authors*. New York: Scholastic.

As a teacher of writing for the middle grades, Laura Robb combines years of experience to offer a fresh approach for teachers. Starting with the perspective of writers rather than educators, Robb challenges educators to think differently about the art of nonfiction writing. This book is not meant to be mechanically cut and copied. Rather it is a thoughtful analysis on what it means to write and it allows readers to modify her ideas for their own classrooms. Robb provides guidelines on the steps involved in writing nonfiction, coupled with mini-lessons that educators should adapt for their classroom.

Robb is obviously excited about her teaching, and this can be contagious. Her beliefs about what constitutes nonfiction writing set the stage for educators to question their own assumptions. She uses the term 'creative nonfiction' to separate what she teaches from more typical, and often boring, essays. Robb believes that nonfiction writing should be interesting and engaging, and by making it exciting, students will want to learn how to write.

Part of what makes this book intriguing is that Robb stresses the teaching of *reading* nonfiction as much as the *writing* of nonfiction. Educators are encouraged to bring well-written nonfiction into the classroom, such as from journals or magazines (as opposed to the usual textbooks). The assumption here is that before students can write well, they need to read well-written, interesting articles, and to understand why they are well-written. Students do not learn to read just for content, but learn to read for style and for organization. In essence, students learn that good writing doesn't just happen, they learn how it becomes good writing.

Robb's lessons focus on the positive and constitute good pedagogy. An important contribution of this book is that Robb challenges the idea that writing is a solitary pursuit. Many of the mini-lessons make good use of peers and allow the students to talk about reading and writing. Also, students in her classes write in the classroom, not after school as homework. This allows students to talk to each other for support, or to immediately ask the teacher for help. The lessons themselves are cognitively challenging and vary enough to keep them interesting.

Robb's approach might be an intriguing way to teach writing to those with learning disabilities, especially those with an I/d in expressive language. Students with learning disabilities often have difficulty learning what is implicit. This often happens with the teaching of writing – what is good is implicit and the mechanics are stressed rather than the overall product. Students need explicit directions, modeling, practice, and time for reflection in order to improve their writing.

Time is an issue which leads to the one drawback of Robb's approach, the time required to follow all of the suggestions. In most schools, teachers must follow a strict curriculum and do not have the time to spend many weeks teaching nonfiction writing (even though this would be beneficial). However, the book is laid out in a way that educators can focus on just the sections that are appropriate for their

classes.

Overall, this is an excellent book for teachers of writing, regardless of age and grade level taught. It can easily be adapted for the higher grades.

Pages: **336** Price: **\$31.99** ISBN: **0-439-51368-5**

Reviewed by Karen Csolli, PhD Candidate, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/UT. She has taught writing skills to university students with learning disabilities at Brock University.

Sigmon, Cheryl M. & Ford, Sylvia M. (2005). *Just-Right Writing Mini-Lessons, Grades 2-3: Mini-Lessons to Teach Your Students the Essential Skills and Strategies They Need to Write Fiction and Nonfiction*. New York: Scholastic.

Background and Context

Telling readers what works and what doesn't work is what drives the explanatory nature of this text. Discouraging traditional writing instruction (p. 54) the authors argue that teaching grammar in isolation does not augment correctness in student writing. They assert that overemphasizing correctness often discourages students' ability to be creative and produce quality writing (p. 66). Sigmon and Ford instead, petition for a more "natural" writing process that advocates application of skills (Hillocks, 1987).

Including daily writing in the early grades will help students as they enter second and third grades. The authors contend that second and third grade teachers should not assume that all students have mastered the basics, and should take steps to cover them at the beginning of the year. The list of basic skills to be included consists of how sentences look and sound, use of upper and lower case letters and being able to focus on a particular topic (p. 6). The authors point out that instructors do not have to use this text in linear fashion, but may integrate it as needed with other lessons.

Using specific strategies, major standards and creative lesson plans, Sigmon and Ford share their conception of mini-lessons. Mini-lessons last between 10 and 15 minutes and are geared toward giving teachers the tools to teach fiction and nonfiction writing. The book appeals most to experienced teachers, but caters to beginning teachers through short strategy explanations and introductions to each section while recognizing limitations of mini- lessons. The lessons cover 77 of a typical 180 day school year. Beginning teachers who use this guide should read the Table of Contents and introductions to each section in order to successfully plan lessons.

Strategies

Sigmon and Ford use graphic organizers to teach quotation mark usage and introduce contractions. They present charts for sequencing, then use a story called "The Accident," to demonstrate a timeline to further enlighten students on the various forms of graphical data in writing.

Spelling receives more extensive coverage than other strategies. It is integrated with other Language Arts skills such as singular and plural noun usage (p. 57), commas (p. 60) and quotation marks (p. 61). In all, six (6) pages are dedicated to aspects of spelling. Despite this emphasis, the authors note that teachers should not be overbearing on correcting spelling. Doing so can stifle the creative process of the child. They view encouragement at this developmental stage as pivotal for future success in writing.

Sigmon and Ford advocate using journal writing in lessons sparingly. Journal writing gives learners an opportunity to reflect, critically analyze and use grammar and phonics. Though teachers are encouraged to use journal writing daily, mini-lesson journaling activities can be integrated into letter writing, narratives and more.

Technology is lacking in the suggested activities. The Using Technology activity is at the end of the text on page 104. The implicit message is that computer use is not important in writing. Exposing students to writing that involves the use of word processing is a life skill, one that they will begin to benefit from almost immediately.

Final Thoughts

The text lacks the cultural connections to suggest that there is not just one way to write (Au, 1993). Teachers of minority populations might have to adapt this book to fit the curricular, daily and social needs of their students. Letter writing can reinforce other conventions (p. 86) and be helpful in this area. Students can do this through letters to each other, to themselves, to a friend and to parents. This can help to jump start new ideas as students discover writing styles through practice. Often, social events or problems ethnically diverse students face are revealed through letter writing.

The text also needs more emphasis on interactions. The lessons lack richness in student-student interaction in writing. There are too few student paired writing or group-related activities. More evidence of teacher-student conferencing is also needed. Teachers should schedule conferences with students. Authors of mini-lesson activities should make it a point to include this concept for teachers who may not be aware of the importance of timely feedback. Such feedback can help learners focus on what is expected, giving them the freedom to explore different styles of writing.

Sigmon and Ford should consider adding special education/enrichment and E.S.L. sections. With many states adhering to inclusion laws, a text that is able to adapt this material for teachers would be helpful. Enrichment activities for advanced learners would also ensure on-task behaviors for those students who master objectives early. Further, as many school systems deal with immigrant populations who maintain primary languages other than English, lessons that cater to these needs are increasingly in demand.

References

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Hillocks, G., Jr. (1987). Synthesis of Research of Teaching Writing. *Educational Leadership*, 44(8), 71-82.

Pages: **128** Price: **\$17.99** ISBN: **0439574099**

Reviewed by Seth J. Batiste, University of Houston

Starko, Alane Jordan (2005). *Creativity in the Classroom: Schools of Curious Delight*. Third Edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

In this era of intense emphasis on teaching to standards, and at a time when tests measure both student learning and school accountability, is it recommended that creativity be included in the curriculum? The author, Alane Starko, argues that it is, without a doubt, appropriate and recommended to infuse creativity into instruction. Creativity, she indicates throughout the text, supports best practice in education. The result of blending the cognitive with the creative is the enhancement and augmentation of the learning process

In *Creativity in the Classroom: Schools of Curious Delight*, Starko takes the reader from theory to classroom practice in a very clear and engaging manner. She references the work of noted theorists, Amabile, Bloom, Csikszentmihalyi, Gardner, Torrance and numerous others, from the fields of creativity, motivation and talent development.

The text is organized into two sections. The first, addressing "Understanding Creative People and Processes," discusses the nature of creativity, theories and models, characteristics of creative persons, creativity across cultures, and a presentation of the research on talent development.

The second half of the text refers to "Creativity and Classroom Life," wherein the reader is presented with multiple strategies for integrating content with creative processes. Particularly relevant to current classroom needs are the examples and methods Starko provides which can be developed in order to weave creativity into instruction while simultaneously teaching to the standards. In Chapters 5 and 6, the author includes curricular ideas suggested by practicing educators as well as examples from MI CLiMB, a curriculum alignment project developed in conjunction with Michigan's Department of Education. Starko provides examples from MI CLiMB illustrating connections of standards-based content and the application of proposals found in the text. MI CLiMB, which supplements state designed standards in language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics for the State of Michigan, demonstrates that state standards can enhance creativity and that creativity can enhance content learning! This collaborative undertaking may well serve as a first-rate model for all educators since the examples provided address not only content standards but exemplify best practices across

disciplines and grade levels.

Each chapter includes periodic inserts on "Thinking about the Classroom" whereby the reader is provided with suggestions on how information presented in the text can be translated into professional classroom practice. In addition, prior to an extensive listing of references, the author has included a section labeled "Journeying and Journaling" targeted for university classroom application. In this section, Starko poses statements or questions intended to encourage the reader to reflect on the development of a personal and professional plan designed to incorporate creativity into the K-12 classroom.

Although the book has been specifically written for instructors in university departments of education, curriculum or psychology, I believe that it is also very appropriate for practicing elementary and secondary teachers who wish to expand on their teaching methods to include creative thinking as well as problem solving strategies. I would be remiss in not pointing out that the text is also appropriate for university instructors searching for ways to enliven their own approaches to teaching.

Alane J. Starko identified two goals she proposed to accomplish with the text (p25). The first is to give the reader knowledge and understandings of research on theory and descriptions of characteristics of creative individuals. This goal is achieved. Her second goal is that the reader would, with the means and methods offered in the text, alter traditional educational methods and include creative and problem solving strategies into the teaching process. I consider this goal both reasonable and attainable! The text, *Creativity in the Classroom: Schools of Curious Delight* is a "must read" not only for teacher educators but also for all who teach!

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MI CLiMB: Clarifying Language in Michigan Benchmarks. Retrieved July 18,2005 from <http://www.miclimb.net/>

Pages: **499** Price: **\$45.00** ISBN: **0-8058-4791-X**

Reviewed by Ann S. Hernandez, University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, Indiana. She has extensive experience as public and private school teacher and administrator and as a university professor.

Winter, Matt (2003). *Asperger Syndrome: What Teachers Need to Know*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Matt Winter, the author of this slender volume, is a primary teacher who currently volunteers at the Cloud 9 Children's Foundation, a support organization that operates in New Zealand to help children and teenagers who have Asperger Syndrome. The book is written for the classroom teacher, and the author's stated aim is to provide a summary of the information currently available about Asperger Syndrome as well as "quick tips and practical ideas" that teachers can use in their classrooms.

The first two chapters are titled "What Is Asperger Syndrome?" and "What Signs Might a Child Display?" The remaining eight chapters include numerous specific suggestions for the classroom teacher. Topics covered include classroom strategies, helping the child with his/her social skills, helping the child on the playground, and homework. Chapters are short and to-the-point, and the language is nontechnical. Several lists of resources are included at the end of the book.

This book is useful in terms of providing a quick overview of Asperger Syndrome, and teachers always welcome practical suggestions. The author notes that there is no foolproof list of strategies that will work for every child, and he encourages the reader to choose among the strategies that he presents. The readers, however, may find themselves a bit overwhelmed by the number of suggestions. Although many of the strategies should require little extra time on the part of the teacher, others could take considerable time and effort.

Knowing which of the strategies to select could be a significant challenge for the classroom teacher, but this is an area where teachers in the United States have a distinct advantage. The book makes no mention of the role of the special education teacher, the school psychologist, or any other specialists. These professionals are available to classroom teachers in the U.S., and they should play a role in the accommodations that classroom teachers make for students.

Even though the educational system in the U.S. differs from the one described in this book, an inexpensive book primarily devoted to practical suggestions will still have appeal. Recommended primarily for libraries supporting large teacher education programs.

Pages: **96** Price: **\$15.95** ISBN: **1-84310-143-2**

Reviewed by Sharon Naylor, Illinois State University

Wiseman, Donna L., Elish-Piper, Laurie & Wiseman, Angela M. (2005). *Learning to Teach Language Arts in a Field-Based Setting*. Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway Publishers.

This text, as its title suggests, is designed to help beginning language arts teachers link theory with practice in field-based settings. It is designed for use in university classes connected to K - 6 classrooms. Accessible style, clear and attractive layout and practical suggestions all contribute to this valuable learning tool. The text models a constructivist approach by encouraging aspiring teachers to build and explore their own theoretical and practical understanding of language arts teaching through reflective practice using thought-provoking questions to invite readers to critically examine language arts teaching practice. At the same time, the text provides numerous practical examples of appropriate and interesting activities to lead children to build their own knowledge, understanding and skills through literacy. Throughout the book, teacher readers are encouraged to integrate theoretical concepts into their teaching and classroom behavior.

The text consists of a preface and introduction; eight chapters addressing various broad aspects of literacy, language arts, assessment and professionalism; an author/title index and a subject index. Each chapter centers on a particular aspect of literacy and language arts instruction and within each chapter, there are several stand-alone articles addressing specifics of the topic. As a university text, individual chapters or articles can be assigned as readings individually and in the order that best suits the course outline.

Because the authors take a field-based approach, the suggestions for student teachers are clearly linked to and firmly grounded in classroom experience and practice. Each chapter begins with a section called "Window to the Classroom" in which aspects of the content of the chapter are illustrated in true-to-life vignettes of teaching and learning. The "Viewpoint" sections recount the experiences and reactions of student, beginning and experienced teachers to specific facets of language arts teaching from a classroom perspective. "Field notes" assignments ask the reader to experiment with ideas from the text to complete specific tasks in the context of the language arts classroom setting. "Personal Reflections" throughout the text encourages students to pose questions or bring up issues that provoke thoughtful and critical examination of concepts, beliefs and experiences.

The information in the text, the table of contents and the index are well-organized and easy to access. The book is very readable. Charts, graphs, lists, diagrams and other useful pieces of information connected to the teaching of language arts are found throughout the book. Also scattered through the text are Internet addresses which link the reader to useful sites that relate to or enrich the content. For example, in the article on spelling, readers are directed to a website where they can test their own strengths and weaknesses in phonics. In keeping with the emphasis on reflective practice, throughout the chapters, there are ideas for reflections, at the end of each article, there is a "Final Reflections" section, and at the end of each chapter, there is a "Professional Reflections" segment. For each chapter, there is a generous list of relevant children's literature and numerous suggestions for professional reading and research links.

A great variety of strategies and techniques for teaching literacy and language are explained and discussed. There are good sections, all with examples, follow-up activities and questions for reflection, on virtually every language arts teaching strategy, such as Guided Reading, Readers' Theatre, Literature Circles, Four Blocks, Writers' Workshop, Grand Conversations, Storymapping and Response Journals. There is excellent information about such topics as the stages of language development, process writing, reading comprehension and standards-based planning. Guidelines for planning a balanced program, organizing a literacy block, designing themes, setting up a classroom, using multi-cultural approaches and instructional strategies for English language learners are clear and well explained with references to websites, literature and professional resources to support teachers in their diverse classrooms. There are good sections on selecting appropriate children's picture books, fiction and non-fiction.

The chapter on assessment is comprehensive and current, with articles on both traditional and authentic assessment strategies as well as a thoughtful and balanced article on standards and standardized testing. One of the most interesting and valuable chapters is titled Literacy and Visual Representation, Interpretation and Evaluation. In this chapter, we find excellent articles on technology and media, both of which are sometimes neglected in similar texts. The last chapter is also of particular interest. It looks at issues of professionalism, professional learning, collaboration, parental involvement and trends in the field, such as linguistic and cultural diversity, standards and increased accountability, and the impact of media and technology and learning and literacy.

This book is a useful teacher preparation text. The link to classroom practice is a central component of the text, so in order to make the best use of the book, a classroom placement is important. Although there are some references in the book to the language arts standards of several specific states, the concepts, skills and strategies are broad and general enough to make the book applicable in any North American context.

I would recommend this book to instructors and course directors in university teacher preparation programs as well as to those involved in supporting new or experienced teachers refine their skills or try different approaches. This book presents a comprehensive overview of language arts and literacy teaching and learning with an abundance of constructive and valuable suggestions for practical applications leading to best practice.

Pages: **423** Price: **\$48.00** ISBN: **978-1-890871-60-4**

Reviewed by Melanie Tait, Ed. D., preservice and inservice educator at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, and York University, Toronto, Ontario, with special interests in teacher induction, teacher leadership, collaborative school cultures and principal succession.



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