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Brief reviews for December 2005

Fried, Robert L. (2005). *The Game of School: Why We All Play It, How It Hurts Kids, and What It Will Take to Change It*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

If you have ever done an assignment just to get the grade, or if you've taught a lesson only because the material needed to be covered for a test, then you have played "the Game of School". Robert L. Fried's book might leave you wondering just how authentic your own education really was. He contends that students from kindergarten through graduate school are too often not truly engaged in learning but simply playing "the Game" of getting by and complying with the system. What's more, No Child Left Behind Act requirements and high stakes testing only serve to further entrench students and teachers in the Game. The danger in this is the stifling of creativity and "the paralysis of intellect and meaningful inquiry". Although both teachers and students participate in the Game, Fried's intent is not to place blame, but rather to sound a call to action. Throughout the book, Fried includes interludes of real classrooms whose teachers exemplify passionate, authentic teaching.

Indoctrination into the Game begins as soon as children enter school when obedience and pleasing the teacher are rewarded. In middle school, conformity becomes top priority for most students, further jeopardizing self-motivated learning. Competition for grades and college admissions in high school too often replace real enthusiasm for learning. Students (and their parents) seek out the "easy" teachers. Sadly, this trend continues on into college and even graduate school for many.

Too much of what children do in school is a waste of time, according to Fried. It is non-productive "work" rather than true learning. In order to be authentic learning, the student must be engaged in the activity, see the relevance of it, gain a deeper understanding from it, and be able to use that understanding. Fried's ideal classroom is very much child-centered, where "knowledge and meaning have not been predetermined by teacher or textbook, but instead will emerge from their *own* efforts, guided and structured by their teacher" (p. 5). He cites an example of an eleventh grade class that studied the Bill of Rights, and connected it to the students' lives by having them come up with two new "rights" while having to give up two of the original amendments. A lawyer or judge is then invited to speak to the class and discuss students' ideas (p. 4). This is in contrast to the more traditional teacher-centered manner of delivering instruction.

Fried compares standardized testing and curricula to a "state religion" where "form has replaced the substance" (p. 79). When the ends (test scores) are more important than the means (real learning), students lose their propensity to explore new ideas. If every task is tied to a content standard or a test prep question, when is there the opportunity to "pursue the intriguing...to awaken to the new theory or pattern amid the cacophony of conventional thinking"? (p. 80).

In order to show how different students respond to the Game, Fried devised seven categories of learners. True-Blue Learners love learning, in and out of school. Almost all children begin their schooling in this category. To what extent they are affected by the Game determines where they go from there. Go-Getters are high achievers; they pursue the grades and honors. Students who work hard only in classes that interest them are Cherry-Pickers. Pluggers just try to get through the assignments, the semester, etc. Goof-offs or Rebels are often the class clowns, and for the Socializers/Hang-Outers the social aspects of school take precedent over academics. Finally, the Giver-Uppers are those who are so discouraged that they most likely drop out. Fried admits that most students don't fit neatly into one category, but his purpose in delineating categories is to stimulate conversation. It is Fried's belief that through authentic teaching, more kids will

remain True-Blue Learners.

To be able to minimize the effects of the Game, educators need to humanize the school environment. Fried thoroughly examines six aspects of schooling and shows how each can either be skewed to further the Game or to promote authentic learning.

- Classroom management: discipline vs. learning partnership
- Curriculum: rigid, required vs. flexible, relevant, inviting
- Instruction: teacher-centered vs. learner-centered
- Assessment: summative vs. diagnostic, portfolios, and self-assessment
- Motivation: “covering the material” vs. inspiring teachers and engaged students
- Family involvement: uninvolved parents vs. parents as essential partners

At the heart of authentic learning, though, are “passionate teachers”, as Fried calls them. They are excited about their subject, they read and research, and constantly analyze their work. Furthermore, passionate teachers do not work in isolation; they rely on support from colleagues. In an interlude, English teacher Randall Wisehart explains the importance of veteran teachers nurturing new teachers and sharing their successful teaching strategies with them.

The real value in this book is in the chapter entitled “Getting Stuck”, in which Fried challenges teachers who feel ineffective, uninspired or paralyzed by the culture in their school to take action to regain their passion and in doing so, teach authentically. He encourages honest reflection and gives suggestions for getting unstuck. Fried urges teachers to resist seeing themselves as victims in the system, and to transform their professional lives by seeking advice from supportive colleagues or mentors and reading widely in their field, including books about teaching and learning. A “Joy and Misery Index” helps teachers assess their feelings about their profession.

The Game of School is thought provoking, to be sure. Students, parents, and educators will benefit from examining their own attitudes about the ideas presented in the book. Since reading the book, I am asking my kids less about test scores and grades and more about whether or not they are enjoying their classes and what projects they are working on. In my adult basic education classes, I strive to engage students in meaningful learning activities, but I know I can do better. Although the Game is most likely here to stay, awareness is the first step to minimizing its detrimental effects. Remember, the real reward is not the grade, but the enthusiasm and desire to keep learning after the grade is given.

Pages: 248 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 0-7879-7437-5

Reviewed by Lisa Erickson, graduate student, University of Nebraska, Omaha

Goodman, Yetta M., Watson, Dorothy & Burke, Carolyn (2005). *Reading Miscue Inventory: From Evaluation to Instruction*. Second edition. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers.

This is a good book to have in your professional library if you want to better understand the reading process and help students improve their reading ability. Miscue analysis and its underlying theory developed from years of listening to people of varied age, ability, and language background and trying to understand how and why they processed written text as they did. While collaborating with Ken Goodman on his early research, Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke became interested in bringing miscue analysis to teachers in classrooms and clinics.

Miscue describes a situation in which a reader's observed response does not match the expected response. Instead of using the term error or mistake, miscue was used to underscore the fundamental belief that reading is cued by the reader's experiences and language and thus is not random, uncontrolled behavior. Miscue analysis is a quantitative-qualitative procedure for analyzing the reading of a text as the reading takes place. It is complex and time consuming to understand and use; however, it allows the user to investigate reading related phenomena and provides insight into how the reader's thoughts and language are brought to the reading task, how experience aids the reader to interpret the author's meaning, and how the reader constructs meaning. It is a methodology and an open-ended heuristic tool that can be used to help gather information about the reading process. It reveals the reader's strengths as well as the strategies used to understand and construct meaning; and, it provides knowledge about the reading process by including numerous ways of investigating what readers do as they read.

The *Reading Miscue Inventory* book was written to help educators use miscue analysis to understand the reading process, value readers, and investigate reading programs and materials. An overview of Kenneth Goodman's holistic model of reading, which serves as the basis for theories underlying miscue analysis, is included. A historical perspective of the development and use of miscue analysis is presented making it clear

to the reader why, decades before they were introduced, this tool remains a cornerstone to the study of reading. The ideas and strategies developed continue to provide guidelines for understanding why readers read as they do and how knowledge about language, experiences, and the environment influence the process and product of reading.

The authors use a case study approach to present much of the information and support the use of miscue analysis by providing a wealth of examples and forms, including detailed descriptions for preparing and marking typescript. The reader is coached to ask questions about miscues, patterns of miscues, the relationship of those patterns to each other, and how miscues affect the remainder of the written text.

The content of this book is important to the field of reading and reading research. Miscue analysis aids classroom teachers, special educators, reading specialists, and reading researchers in understanding the reading process and discovering ways to support reader's strengths. Those interested in the reading process will find the book valuable for better understanding the reading process and helping readers be proficient in the reading process.

Pages: **305** Price: **\$29.95** ISBN: **1-57274-737-4**

Reviewed by Dr. Kathleen E. Fite, Professor of Education, Texas State University

Kells, Michelle Hall, Balester, Valerie & Villanueva, Victor. Eds (2004). *Latino/a Discourses: On Language, Identity & Literacy Education*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

This volume, which is largely the work of scholars who actively and presently work with Latino students, is of value because it represents the everyday observations of concerned, activist teachers who have at their center a desire for the success of their students as literate human beings. Most of the essays collected in the volume represent observations and reflections, not new theory. The book is based on scholarship presented at the Texas A & M University Literacy Symposium titled "Literacies and Literary Representations: Posing Questions, Framing Conversations about Language and Hispanic Identities."

As detailed in the introduction, one of the first cultural debates the editing team had was about labeling and the use of the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino*. The dilemma of self-labeling is further explored in the first essay by Juan Guerra. The notion of labeling and whether it occurs inside or outside of a group is one of the many, varied topics relating to identity this anthology explores. Most of the other essays investigate notions of identity and expressions of that identity through discursive practices. The contributors are ethnically and racially a diverse group who utilize the work of other diverse scholars in field.

Guerra's essay, "Emerging Representations, Situated Literacies, and the Practice of Transcultural Repositioning" is more a historical survey of the problems and trends that accompany a minority group's ascendance into the public sphere of discourse, than a revelation of new theory. All the major pedagogy/literacy players are mentioned here: Freire, Macedo Heath, Ong, and Gee. The problem of self identification is Guerra's focus and especially the implications for self identification in the problematic circumstances of a country like the U.S. at this particular place in time. The challenging aspect of how to name (or if naming should occur at all) a group that has been misunderstood, omitted, and linguistically terrorized with all the misrepresentational tools of the western world is a difficult one to say the least. Although Latinos will comprise about one-quarter of the population of the U.S. by 2050, questioning the idea of 'self representation' and what that will look like is far from over. The population numbers alone are what make this effort so important.

In this discussion Guerra cites media representation, the music industry, publishing (popular and academic) as sites in which what it is to be Latino is mis-read, distorted, and subject to consumerist models of how to be. Guerra concedes that even academics who seek to explore the issues of Latino identity are also at the mercy of their mandate to succeed both "professionally and economically" (p. 12).

One mode of thinking which Guerra offers as a beginning out of the malaise is the notion of "transcultural repositioning" (p. 8). In an effort to search out "a better understanding of how our multifaceted self-representations and our multiple ways with words can be used to enhance rather than restrict our ability to move fluidly in and out of the porous communities that currently comprise our nation," (p. 8) Guerra offers up transcultural repositioning. Guerra acknowledges in his concept the writing of Vivian Zamel and Min-Zhan Lu, as well as the idea of "continuously changing consciousness" offered up by Stanley Fish (p. 17). This is not a concept that is in any way an ultimate way of viewing oneself, but rather an ever evolving concept for self-identification. The struggle over who represents whom is always a battle when a group has been compromised for centuries by a dominate culture.

Michelle Hall Kells' essay about her failed attempt to analyze code-switching in a group of Latino graduate

students speaks to the strength of insider vs. outsider intimacies. Even when she grants her subjects a limited “collaborator” status they will not reveal that inner dual language which they use only among intimate family and friends. We see how the notion of class and the theory of primary/secondary discourse is tied to this reluctance. Code-switching is a form of communication which these graduate language students have left in their private sphere and it is clearly acknowledged by them that it is considered part of a lower class discursive practice. Standard forms of English and Spanish have become part of their primary discourse over the years of their education. One of the students admitted to using his “teacher’s Spanish” with Kells “so [she] could follow along” (p. 33).

It isn’t that the group doesn’t engage in code-switching, it is that it is not something that can be performed (in the theatrical sense) or recreated for an outsider. And it seems naïve of Kells to think that with such short physical contact (3 weeks), as well as the differences in ethnicity and culture, she could assume a role in their lives as an intimate observer. Because of their education, they view the world with a double consciousness, with each form of language (Spanish/English/Code-switching) occupying its own solidly walled sphere (family, colleagues, friends/colleagues, friends, family /intimate family, intimate friends).

Realizing that Hip Hop has reached outside of the African-American community into other cultures including the world of Latino youth, Jon A. Yasin’s essay, “Keepin’ It Real: Hip Hop and *El Barrio*,” chronicles his work to find common ground between the discursive practices within Hip Hop rhymes and teaching standard composition. Hip Hop is considered in this work to be part of the student’s primary discourse. Yasin’s first task was to find the similarities in the process of writing both. In Hip Hop it is not surprising that he identifies similarities in planning: “identifying and developing an idea: identifying specific, detailed information into a coherent message,” and, organizing the message: “continuously revising that message for clarity as one writes” (p. 57).

Yasin’s ideas aren’t new. At the end of the paper he lists other instructors who are using Hip Hop as part of their pedagogy in a variety of disciplines. But his essay does clarify some of the issues that arise when a teacher decides to bring an alternative discursive form into the classroom on par with the dominant standard. Along with the new language practice, alternative ways of thinking about the world must also be acknowledged. Any instructor who wants to reach students using a methodology such as this must also be willing to stumble upon the counter-messages within that new text. This is the additional value of this essay; Yasin’s reflection on the other cultural variables which will be outed when a teacher tries to reach students using structures embedded in their primary discourse.

An interesting essay that explores language, literacy and culture with implications for visual literacy is Ralph Cintron’s “Valerio’s Walls and the Rhetorics of the Everyday.” In this work Cintron confronts the Learning Disabled label as it is meted out in the school system of one Chicago suburb. When his subject Valerio is labeled LD by the school system *and* his parents, Cintron examines Valerio’s desire to escape the label that surrounds him both at school and home. Valerio constructs a “wall of dreams” in his bedroom - pictures of marines, cars and baseball players that connote strength (normalcy, agency) and it is through this wall that Cintron discerns the future that Valerio is imagining for himself. Valerio’s wall is a site of resistance to, and subversion of the inequities he experiences at school and the lack of hope at home.

There is a shameful political question that Cintron articulates in this essay and that is the application of the LD label to begin with. He problematizes the distinct power differences between the examiner and the student at the point of testing for LD. And he hypothesizes the idea that LD “may be created in the moment of dialogue between participants who are unequally powerful ... [and] that LD may be less in the tested subject and more in the sociopolitical contexts in which the testing occurs” (p. 73).

Ways to empower students to articulate their cultural literacies seems to be the goal of all of these instructors. Daniel Villa’s essay about students who wanted to reclaim their Spanish-language heritage for personal and professional reasons shows us about resurfacing pride in Spanish, and resistance to the notion of English-only models for success. Diana Cardenas relates her personal odyssey through the corridors of the dominant and bigoted education system and her commitment as a teacher today to use political and cultural activism in her classroom to educate and empower her students. Indeed throughout this book there is hope that there are some creative answers to many of the most pressing problems in minority education today.

If one is seeking new theoretical ideas in the field of literacy this is not the volume to read. There are no cutting-edge essays here. All of this ground has been covered by others with perhaps sharper acumen. However, if an account of the successes and failures of working teachers who are attempting to bring new pedagogies into their classes in the real world, not the ivy league or the ivory tower, is of interest, some of the essays in this anthology may be worth the time.

Pages: 127 Price: \$19.00 ISBN: 0-86709-544-X

Reviewed by Dora R. Fitzgerald, University of Texas at San Antonio

Kirchner, Glenn (2005). *Towards Cooperative Learning in Elementary School Physical Education*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

There has been a lot of research in the past several years on cooperative learning in elementary education. According to Kirchner it shows that cooperative teaching produces higher academic achievement, positive attitudes toward learning, higher order thinking, and positive social behavior. In his book, *Towards Cooperative Learning in Elementary School Physical Education*, Glenn Kirchner shares some techniques for incorporating cooperative learning into elementary school physical education.

Although the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends a daily thirty-minute physical education class for all elementary school students, most schools do not have the resources to provide such services. In fact, many classroom teachers are responsible for teaching their students' physical education. Kirchner expresses concern over this reality. His worry is that teachers who are not trained in the methods of teaching physical education in a cooperative manner and do not have proper physical education equipment may rely too heavily on individualistic and competitive teaching strategies. And even though individualistic and competitive strategies have their place in the teaching of physical education, he points out that "cooperative teaching strategies are superior..." (p. 9).

Cooperative learning involves assembling students in heterogeneous groups with a blend of abilities, interests, and backgrounds. Once arranged in groups, members exercise positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, and social collaboration. To help teachers facilitate cooperative learning, Kirchner provides individual lesson plans, student challenges, teacher comments, and photographs demonstrating student activities. He guides teachers in the process of helping "children to use more creative and cooperative strategies in games, dance, and gymnastic and fitness activities" (p. 23).

The book is divided into five sections. Section titles include: Choosing Instructional Strategies; Creative and Cooperative Teaching Strategies in Games; Creative and Cooperative Teaching Strategies in Gymnastics; Creative and Cooperative Teaching Strategies in Dance; and Other Special Uses of Creative and Cooperative Teaching Strategies. Each section focuses on a specific physical education area, while providing information that can be transferred to other areas as well.

One of the most beneficial topics addressed in the book is the use of physical activities to teach academic concepts and skills. Kirchner highlights research that proves "children can learn academic concepts and skills through a variety of movement experiences" (p. 162). He explains that "some children can learn academic concepts more effectively through motor activities than through traditional academic teaching strategies" (p. 162). The book provides activities for mathematics, language arts, and science.

Towards Cooperative Learning in Elementary School Physical Education is a valuable resource for elementary school teachers. The design of the chapters and large photographs provide a quick reference that is sure to be used frequently. The lesson plans are fully developed for swift incorporation into daily routines and easily adapted to various age groups. It is truly a book that will be appreciated by the busy teacher as well as the energetic student.

Pages: 185 Price: \$49.95 (hard); \$29.95 (paper) ISBN: 0-398-07599-9 (hard); 0-398-07600-6 (paper)

Reviewed by Kathy Seibold, Coordinator Career Development at The University of Oklahoma - Tulsa, Oklahoma. She has a Master's degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Oklahoma and is working toward a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education from Oklahoma State University.

Kronick, Robert F. (2005). *Full Service Community Schools: Prevention of Delinquency in Students With Mental Illness and/or Poverty*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

This is one ambitious book. Robert Kronick, professor of Educational Psychology and Counseling at University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK), both documents issues in serving at-risk students and reviews opportunities to support these students through full service schools. Kronick and his university and school partners have been on a several-year path to develop full-service schools in the Knoxville, TN community. This book, which he describes as the third of a trilogy (including Kronick 2000, 2002), documents his vision and efforts in developing full-service schools that meet the needs of at-risk children and youth.

The books starts with an introduction to the work of full-services schools and highlights the principles and practices promoted by Joy Dryfoos (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002) in her national work to develop comprehensive schools. Kronick identifies full-service schools as "...one-stop shopping centers for health, mental health, and

other services. After school programs...provide needed enrichment and education to at-risk students” (p. 54).

The early chapters set the stage by describing features of the lives of children in the southeastern United States. Chapters describe Appalachian cultural dimensions of student’s experiences, the social and political context in which full-service schools must operate, and the limitations of the juvenile justice system in addressing the needs of at-risk youth.

Kronick describes his efforts to recruit many resources for his schools. For example, he used service learning opportunities to move undergraduates into program development opportunities. Undergraduate research funds supported an after-school program focused on African American arts and music. Pre-medical major students were recruited to work in school-based clinics. In many important ways his approaches to full-service schools also provide good examples of university and P-12 school partnerships.

In the later chapters he highlights particular lessons learned while continuing to develop full-service options in three schools in Knoxville. These chapters represent multiple perspectives drawn from a variety of participants in the full-service schools’ efforts. One chapter features the accomplishments of 4 students. Included is a brief description of a school- based health clinic that is staffed by pre-medical students. The book includes a lengthy report and reflection on a series of after-school classes on music and culture written by an undergraduate completing a service learning component. A chapter written by Cheryl Kershaw, a UTK teacher educator, provides a case for using the full-service school as an effective pre-service field experience for teaching licensure candidates.

Obstacles the author encountered are also described. These obstacles include funding difficulties, entrenched school attitudes toward non-academic activities, school- accountability legislation that restricts the curriculum, and lack of space and facilities.

For all its strengths, this book has notable weaknesses that limit its broader use. The intended audience is unclear. Much of the material assumes a reader familiar with issues for at-risk students, an awareness of key debates in education, and a familiarity of the structure of P-12 schools, as well as, post-secondary institutions.

The writing style reads much like I would imagine Kronick sounds when he discusses this information. He is confident in his material, but I frequently found I wanted more specification, more foundation for an assertion, or a reference to additional outside sources. As a result some sections lack the formal structure for information one expects in a typical undergraduate text. Readers with limited educational or youth service knowledge would need more background information to interpret many of the author’s observations. In some cases, theory and research are referenced to account for a set of phenomena, but the reader is not introduced to the basic elements of the theorist or researcher’s work.

Additionally, I wish the book had been edited more carefully. The switching of voices between the author, his collaborators (e.g., students and other faculty) is sometimes hard to follow. Also, I was distracted when the text didn’t maintain a uniform citation style.

All that said, this book covers several vital issues informing the full- service school model for organizing broad community services to address the needs of at-risk children. I can imagine this book used in an undergraduate senior seminar on full-service schooling. Also the book includes ideas that would be useful to higher education planning groups on service-learning, and it would provide thought-provoking reading for P-12 school – university partnership teams while brainstorming ways their programs can meet the needs of diverse children and youth.

References

Dryfoos, J., & Maguire, S. (2002). *Inside full service community schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin cited in the book reviewed in this article.

Kronick, R. F. (2002). *Full service schools: A place for our children and families to learn and be healthy*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Kronick, R. F. (2000). *Human services and the full service school*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Pages: 148 Price: \$31.95 ISBN: 0398075719

Reviewed by Bob Utke, the clinical experiences coordinator for the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, where he is also a PhD candidate in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Special Education. His email is utkex001@umn.edu

McMullen, Carol S. (2005). *Creating a Bully-Free Classroom: An Effective Framework With Strategies and Activities That Build a Safe Classroom Community Where All Children Thrive*. New York: Scholastic.

“Bullying doesn’t happen in isolation; it occurs when many factors come together to produce an environment that supports it.” So claims the author of this book in her introduction, and therein suggests the power of teachers and administrators in creating environments that promote community, acceptance, and justice, and actively deny bullies power. She declares school environments that support *all* children’s self esteem and strengths are one key to combating bullying, and therefore has written this book to suggest strategies and practical examples on how this can be achieved.

The main purpose of this practitioner’s book is to introduce a framework for teachers in creating a bully-free classroom. This can be achieved by breaking the framework into four individual units (aptly named “The Big Four Plan”); Unit 1- No More Bullies/You Have The Power; Unit 2 - Marvelous Me; Unit 3 – Fabulous Friend; and Unit 4 – Conflict Resolution. These can be sequentially or independently taught to help students develop a toolbox of strategies to use when dealing with bullies, and to help students learn to empathise with others and acquire confidence and skills needed to solve conflict with others successfully.

Each unit has a chapter dedicated to explaining its importance and providing practical ideas on creating a classroom programme using lesson plans, activities, resources and templates. An important feature for busy teachers is the author’s own personal experiences of what has worked for her and even examples of actual dialogue to use. It also includes ideas on how to plan out a year long programme within which these four units can be incorporated. An interesting and commendable feature of this programme, which differs from other books / programmes dealing with bullying, is the inclusion of strategies to assist not just those who are bullied, but also the bullies themselves. This is accomplished by providing specific lessons on problem solving skills, recognizing and using potential strengths and developing skills for relating successfully to others.

The inclusion of a chapter on working towards a bully-free school has the added bonus of promoting the importance of a school wide programme, in which the wider school community can be involved in creating successful relationships and a caring and respectful school.

A very worthwhile feature of this book is the addition of references to children’s literature sprinkled throughout each chapter and each of the four units, to share with students in support of the concepts being taught and practiced. For busy teachers, this is a welcome bonus for ideas to engage their students and link to fictional experiences. A more comprehensive list of these books, under each of the four unit headings, is included at the back of the book, as is a list of the professional sources that have been cited throughout the text.

The book itself is written in a very easy to read, understand and utilize manner. A variety of different artistic text boxes appear on the pages, to draw the reader’s attention to main points, the author’s real life experiences and probing questions. This is particularly useful for the busy teacher who can capture the main ideas for easy reference to more detail if needed.

Pages: 112 Price: \$17.99 ISBN: 0-439-59024-8

Reviewed by Stephanie White, Christchurch College of Education, New Zealand

Muldaur, Sheila (2004).) *Genre Assessments for Informational, Biographical, and Procedural Texts. with Reading Passages for Informational, Biographical, and Procedural Texts*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers.

Sheila Muldaur’s *Genre Assessments for Informational, Biographical, and Procedural Texts* is a handbook that provides elementary classroom and reading teachers with instructions for assessing students’ abilities to utilize non-fiction text using the Proficient Reader Record (PRR) system. The PRR system consists of specific reading passages, which are included with the book, and a variety of assessment forms. The teacher administers the assessment to a student one on one, and then evaluates the assessment according to the rubrics included in the book. The book outlines in great detail how to administer the assessments and also gives instructions on how to evaluate the results of the assessments. Guidelines for using the data to increase the reading achievement of the student are provided as well.

In addition to the reading passages supplement and the corresponding reproducible evaluation forms, the book includes blank evaluation forms, which allows the teacher to use the PRR assessment process with other text materials. Data collection forms, which allow the teacher to keep class composite records of test results, are also provided in an appendix.

Muldaur's handbook is very detailed, and the system is heavily scripted. This intensity is necessary, because learning how to correctly and effectively administer an assessment system such as this is a complex task. I participated in a district wide professional development series that taught teachers a similar program. We spent hours working with reading specialists and other experts learning how to not only complete the assessments in our classrooms, but also how to train other teachers. The ongoing collective training process was very beneficial. Trying to teach oneself how to administer and evaluate students using the PRR system may be a daunting task for the already resource and time constrained classroom teacher. An educator who purchases this book will find that the program is effective if one is able to use it as prescribed, but the reproducible materials will be useful even if the evaluation system is not administered as scripted.

Genre Assessments Pages: 127 ISBN: 1572746696

Reading Passages Pages: 12 ISBN: 157274670X

Price for both: \$23.95

Reviewed by Monica Evans, MLIS. Evans is a former elementary school teacher, middle school social studies teacher, and library media specialist. She is currently a doctoral student at Michigan State University, studying Education Policy.

Rasinski, Timothy V. & Padak, Nancy (2005). *3-Minute Reading Assessments: Word Recognition, Fluency & Comprehension. Grades 5-8*. New York: Scholastic.

As the title implies, the purpose of the Rasinski and Padak book is to provide quick and easy reading assessments for teachers to use with upper elementary and middle school age children. Before you shrug your shoulders and think, "Oh great, another book of reading assessments," you should key in on the first part of the title that reads: "3-Minute." Yes, this book sets itself apart from many other forms of assessment because it is so user friendly and the procedures are so simple that the entire assessment process is quick and painless. According to the authors, the administration and scoring of these assessments should take less than five minutes per student. Even at two minutes longer than the title, this should bring a sigh of relief from the many teachers who are expected to administer informal reading inventories, some of which can take upwards of an hour per child, to every student in their classroom two or three times per year. Saving an enormous amount of time while gleaning valuable information, using these assessments teachers can dedicate themselves to providing reading instruction for their students.

The book begins with an introductory chapter that is nine pages long. The chapter gives a brief overview of the uses of the assessments that follow. After a short background discussion, the authors provide specific directions for administering, scoring, and interpreting the assessments. There are three major areas covered by the assessments including word recognition accuracy, fluency (sub-divided into reading rate and expression), and comprehension. The instructions are easy to read because they are clearly written and are also thoroughly and solidly tied to research. In addition to these instructions, page 13 offers condensed versions of all of the directions and scoring rubrics. This is yet another feature to make teachers' lives easier, as stated by the authors, "this page is intended to offer you a handy aid that can be torn out and laminated for use during the administration of each passage" (p. 7).

The next section, which is the main body of the book and is divided into four grade level booklets, contains the test passages. Each grade level has four passages labeled A through D allowing teachers to assess at various times of the year without having to reuse reading passages. The four passages at each grade level provide a variety of subject matters. The forms are organized by themes: Form A passages pertain to family outings; Form B passages are about food; Form C passages cover extreme weather; and Form D passages address unique individuals. Each passage is short in length, about 200-300 words, and fits on one page. I doubt anyone will mistake the passages for great literature; however, they are written with content matter and expressive voice that will keep the interest of the majority of young readers. Take for example, an excerpt from an eighth grade passage about walking through a mall parking lot on a hot day. "The black pavement, a sea of molten tar, seems to boil beneath my sneakers. It licks the soles of my shoes, trying to melt them with its dark, fiery breath" (p. 50). A teacher page accompanies each passage containing the passage with the addition of line-by-line word counts, a scoring section for each area assessed, as well as space for comments.

In addition to the passages, Rasinski and Padak offer recording sheets for teachers to keep track of students' progress. One sheet is designed to record scores for all of the students in a class. Another recording sheet's design covers longitudinal data for one student over the course of a year. This form allows room for detailed comments next to the scores for each assessment. Finally, the book concludes with five pages of instructional ideas for teachers. The ideas are divided into three categories based on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. After administering and interpreting the assessments, teachers can

quickly turn to these final instructional pages and reference the appropriate sections matching the needs of specific students in their classes.

As a person who has spent more than a few hours assessing children's reading, I like this book. In every way this book is designed to be a resource that teachers will take off the shelf and use long after the cover has worn thin and broken away from the binding. From the brief but thorough instructions and scoring rubrics to the test passages to the pages of instructional ideas at the end, the book is a great tool for educators who want to be strategic with reading assessment and still have time to focus on instruction. This book is a must for upper elementary and middle school reading teachers.

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