



Bracey, Gerald W. (2004) *Setting the Record Straight: Responses to Misconceptions about Public Education in the U.S.* Second Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This book is Bracey's most recent offering in his ongoing effort to uncover and publicize the many ways that research and data have been misused to promote a right-wing education agenda. I'd like to begin by saying how much respect I have for Bracey's work, and what an important contribution he has been making by persisting in this project. In 1991 I opened a file for articles on the topic "Schools Aren't as Bad as They are Supposed to Be," and many of Bracey's pieces have gone into that file. So I know that Bracey has been writing on these topics for over a decade.

I can only imagine (and pick up from comments in his books and articles) how frustrated he must be that he has continued for so long to be a voice calling in the wilderness, and having no discernable effect on the direction of educational change. What he has accomplished, I would argue, is to play a major role in creating an informed opposition to that conservative agenda, an opposition that can cite accurately just where distortion, misrepresentation, and outright lies have been used, and provide countervailing facts.

In this book, Bracey begins each chapter with a question in the form, "What do I say when people say, '[For example] The proportion of high scorers on the SAT is getting smaller and smaller?'" Then he provides a short answer – in this case that the statement is simply false – and a chapter full of related data and analysis. Topics covered, besides SAT scores, include the math behind NCLB, the relationship of test scores to the economy, American students' performance on international tests, the quality of American teachers, effects of charter and private schools and vouchers, and school finance. I find the arguments and the data solid and practical, and believe the book as a whole is an excellent resource.

When the first edition of this book came out in 1997, I eagerly bought it to send to a relative I thought would make good use of it. But I never did, because the proofreading, at least of the copy I purchased, was so bad that I was afraid someone unfamiliar with the quality of Bracey's work would be put off by the many errors. I'm happy to say that this book has only a few minor errors that I spotted. But I still feel that extreme care should be used in editing a book that is to be used to argue against people with strong views – like the proponents of privatization of education. They can be counted on to pick up any errors and use them to devalue the arguments or even the whole book

where they are found.

Since the book could find an audience, at least in part, in the non-academic world, I also want to make a suggestion about data presentation. Many of the chapters make little or no use of graphic presentation of data. Information that could be grasped almost at a glance if it appeared in a bar or pie graph, or in a scatter plot, is often laboriously presented in dense paragraphs of text. This is an area where great improvements could be made in what I hope will be a third edition of this badly-needed and useful book.

Pages: **232** Price: **\$21.00** ISBN: **0-325-00594-X**

Reviewed by: Mary Phillips Manke, Associate Dean, University of Wisconsin—River Falls

Doll, Beth, Zucker, Steven & Brehm, Katherine (2004)
***Resilient Classrooms: Creating Healthy Environments for Learning.* New York: Guilford Press.**

Three school psychologists have built upon their own research and collaborated to write a book that suggests we should look to the classrooms, rather than students, as an important vehicle to develop students with resiliency. Resilient children they define as “children who are successful despite the odds” (p. 1), whatever those “odds” may be. The premise of the book “is that school classrooms can become resilient communities...so that vulnerable children can learn and be successful” (p. 2). I think that initially the authors sell themselves short. It is not just vulnerable children who can benefit; rather, as they state on page 5, *all* children can learn and be successful, and what and how goes on in the classroom can facilitate this. They are advocating that educators keen to effect ecological classroom change apply a model (Telzrow, McNamara & Hollinger, 2000) that has been developed from behavioral research, and one that focuses on the following eight components:

- “A precise description of any missing support that is specific, observable, and measurable.
- Baseline data that describe classroom supports before intervention.
- A goal for improvement that is specific and measurable.
- A hypothesis about why some resilience characteristics are deficient.
- A step-by-step intervention plan that describes what will be done, when, and by whom.
- Evidence that the intervention is implemented according to the plan.
- Data on classroom changes that occur in response to the intervention.

- Comparison on pre- and post-intervention data to assess its impact,” (p.5).

The model should focus on each of six characteristics of resilient classrooms. The authors contend that classrooms in which students can become more successful both academically and interpersonally contain six characteristics; moreover, these attributes form “a two-stranded tether that binds students to their classroom community” (p. 15). One strand focuses on self-agency of the students and is characterized by students’ academic efficacy, their behavioral self-control, and their academic self-determination. The second strand emphasizes the caring and connected relationships among members of the classroom community: the classroom characteristics of effective teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and effective home-school relationships.

The book then discusses the three different types of relationships (teacher-student, peers, and home-school) and how these relationships can become caring ones, so that students can be connected in positive ways with teachers, their peers, and with parents. The format is consistent: first, the type of interpersonal relationship is explained; second, the importance of this relationship is elaborated upon with support from the literature; third, classroom routines and practices that strengthen the particular relationship are provided; fourth, a classroom application is given to illustrate the suggestions made in the section; and finally, an annotated bibliography is provided at the end of each chapter. The practical suggestions for teachers are very useful, very straightforward, and seemingly easily applicable. Each of the examples of classroom applications follows the eight-step model that is detailed above. To reiterate, the focus is on the role of the *teacher* in all these strategies: e.g., how the teacher can structure social interactions to develop pro-social behavior, through such things as group work.

The authors underscore the importance of structured group work, where all in the group know their roles, where groups are varied, and where the size of the groups differs depending on the tasks. Many authors have written on the subject of collaborative learning activities and their benefits. However, the focus here is on the structure of these groups. I concur with the authors’ approach: while we all know the benefits of having students work in groups, the mechanics of putting them into groups is often ignored, yet it is the *how* that is particularly important in the classroom.

I especially enjoyed the discussion on the third type of relationships, home-school relationship. Pages 21 to 26 offer strategies on how the teacher can encourage parental interaction in the classroom, although, they admit that often this is a school or board-based directive. The bottom line is that “ This will require that classrooms be welcoming, use a variety of communication strategies to reach all parents, adjust communications to different languages and cultural expectations, and ...be responsive to parental recommendations once they are made” (p.

26). Again, whole books have been written on this topic, many of which are referred to in the annotated bibliography.

The authors address the three self-agency characteristics (academic efficacy, academic self-determination, and behavioral self-control) in a similar structure as in the discussion of relationships. Academic efficacy is defined as students' beliefs about their abilities in the classroom, with the focus here on the collective belief, as the sum of the individual students' beliefs about themselves and their academic abilities. The authors state that students have to have a choice in what they do, how they do it, and how their work is evaluated; students must have input into their learning and also know how well they have succeeded. One of the practical classroom strategies referred to is the use of small and large collaborative groups; another strategy is for students to use logbooks. The second of the self-agency characteristics is academic self-determination, defined as when students have identified their own personal goals for learning, can identify and solve problems that block their achievement and systemically select actions that allow them to progress toward their goals. They note that the goals should be structured for mastery, short term, and challenging but attainable. As before, they emphasize that the process of learning is very important, and students should have input, and that learning should be active and relevant to their everyday lives. The third self-agency characteristic, behavioral self-control, is described as students managing their own behaviors with help of classroom routines that cue appropriate behaviors.

The authors recognize that, unfortunately and inevitably, "Teachers prefer students who are cooperative, conforming, cautious, and responsible. Attentive, regulated, and persistent students receive higher grades from their teachers." (p. 37) While students may have academic self-determination (i.e., have clear goals for themselves), they may not demonstrate the appropriate actions to be successful. As with the two other self-agency characteristics, the emphasis is on proactive classroom management strategies, where classroom rules and norms exist that are established preferably with student input, and where students are encouraged to interact positively with their peers as, for example, in peer tutoring, peer mediation, and in a buddy system. They note the interdependence of the six characteristics.

As per the eight-step model of Telzrow et al. on which the authors based this book, they describe ways to assess the resilience of classrooms. This assessment is essential to create some baseline data and define the goals of intervention, so that that the presence or absence of the resilience characteristics is visible to both teachers and students. Indeed, data-driven decision-making is advocated for student assessment. The authors go beyond this statement: to ensure that the students who form an intrinsic part of the classroom have input into the solutions. The authors also remind the reader that assessment strategies should follow good measurement criteria, be suitable for quick classroom assessments, and should assess as many of the six reliance

characteristics as possible. Appendix A provides one form of assessment, ClassMaps, that have been developed and used by the same authors. (Doll, Zucker & Brehm, 1999; and Zucker, Brehm & Doll, 2000)

The book outlines the eight-step planning process. Those traditional steps are: planning for change, gathering classroom data, analyzing and graphing the data, setting a classroom goal, discussing classroom data with students, making a plan for change, carrying out the intervention, and monitoring the plan. Each of these steps is explained in detail. While all their points are important, three, I believe, bear repeating: one, the planning must be based on the base-line data; two, the ‘problem’ must be discussed with the students and they should generate the solutions; and three, the planned intervention should be carried out and then monitored before it is altered in any way. The authors attest that this planning process is “familiar to anyone who has worked on a school’s student assistance team,” but remind us again that the main difference is that the classroom not the student or students is the focus of this process (p. 72).

They expand upon the topic to include students in the planning and decision-making. Four steps are assigned to the teacher or facilitator: provide data to describe the classroom’s characteristics; discuss the interpretation of the data with the students; elicit the students’ suggestions; and then allow students to take responsibility for the intervention. They remind us that it is crucial for the facilitator/teacher to hear/interpret correctly what the students are saying, and to ensure that the voices of the students predominate in the discussion. Covey’s (1989) comment about “Seek first to understand, then to be understood,” is most relevant here.

The book, articulates ‘tried and true’ strategies that allegedly promote greater classroom resiliency. Several examples are provided, with the emphasis again on cooperative learning experiences for the students. At least one of the strategies that is given, Human Bingo, is also considered a useful strategy for reducing racism in the classroom. It is interesting how strategies to promote resiliency can also promote equity in the classroom. This, I contend, reinforces the invaluable benefits of cooperative learning activities, activities in which all students actively participate.

The authors devote an entire chapter to describing a process for evaluating the impact of the intervention on students. Although rather self-evident, the steps are worth mentioning, and are explained in detail in the book: clarifying the purpose of the intervention, explaining the measurement strategies, the purpose of baseline data, the intervention plan and how it was implemented, the design of the evaluation, review and feedback, and the presentation of the evaluation results. The authors warn us not to lose sight of the reasons for doing this, and that is to answer three key questions. One, were the resilient classroom interventions effective in improving classroom environments? Two,

were the interventions successful? Three, how large was the effect of the intervention? As in the other chapters, an example of how the chapter's content was applied follows.

The final chapter is titled 'Integrating the resilient classroom with existing school mental health services.' It has two purposes: one, to describe how to integrate change into the schools' (or classrooms') existing practices; and two, to document ways to ensure that the distinctive nature of good resilient classrooms is protected. The approach recommended is to get a willing teacher on board, and once the teacher and the class experience some success then they should advertise how it was done throughout the school. As Michael Fullan has said, "think big, but start small." They end with two final words of advice: one, get the principal involved in this change process; and two, be mindful that the focus is on the classroom environment that will be changing.

Summary comments. I quite enjoyed the book in both its content and the way that it was structured. It is an ideal 'how to' book for teachers or facilitators who are concerned about every student in their class, and in particular the vulnerable ones. It is clear, well referenced, has many useful examples that are appropriately detailed. The references with the annotated bibliographies for many of the chapters are extremely beneficial as well. I believe that treating people equitably results in all students having more opportunities to learn; this book epitomizes that philosophy. +

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Pages: **165** Price: **\$25.00** ISBN: **1 59385 001 8**

Reviewed by Ruth Rees, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Karten, Toby J. (2005) *Inclusion Strategies That Work! : Research-Based Methods for the Classroom*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

The title of this book can be read a number of ways. Taking the first phrase, it might be understood that some inclusion strategies don't work. The second phrase suggests that the methods detailed in the book are directly linked to research and perhaps an interpretation might be that many methods are not research-based. I opened the book to read wondering what might be in store.

The preface identifies the aim as "to facilitate learning for students with and without disabilities by jump-starting teachers with research-based strategies for inclusive classrooms" (p.ix). I interpreted this as focussing on the needs of practising, qualified teachers. I expected to read research and strategies for classroom implementation. What I found within the book was a little different from what the title and preface conveyed.

Karten's text covers twelve chapters and four resource sections in 381 pages. Each chapter follows roughly the same format. Each begins with a clear statement of purpose and this statement is consistent with the text that follows. Chapters move from background information to classroom specifics and back to generalised big picture information. The first two chapters deal with foundational aspects of inclusion such as philosophy, legislation and definition. Chapters three to nine articulate classroom oriented teaching methods. They move from the whole environment of the classroom through plans, social skills, co-teaching, curriculum, and process skills to assessment and grading of students with special needs. Chapter ten addresses the close relationship that is an aspect of including a student with special needs – that of working with the student's parents. Chapter eleven briefly looks at technology in the inclusive classroom and the final chapter uses the content of the book to demonstrate the value of reflection as a learning practice.

The first chapter moves from a definition of inclusion through to United States legislation on general and educational notions of inclusion and the rights of people with disabilities. This chapter also addresses the *research* theme of the title, quoting snippets from 13 sources (over two pages) and distilling these to "Eighteen Inclusive Principles" (p.23).

The author has indeed covered a good breadth of information on a complex topic. She moves from philosophy to practicalities and communication with key individuals involved in the inclusion process. She is consistent with her approach and elaborates through example in many instances. The chapter topics are a comprehensive list of aspects that a teacher needs to be cognisant of in providing facility and environment for a student with special need, or indeed any student, if

student centred learning is enacted.

The methods conveyed are considered amongst current best practice in many of the curriculum areas without being labelled as inclusion strategies. Unfortunately, the majority of content of the chapters does not link the methods to research. The only direct discussion or mention of research is the summary of research in the first chapter. I found this a little disappointing; I was expecting to read some discussion or at least citation of research that specifically supported the methods for use in inclusion practices.

Making notes when reading the text, I found myself consistently being reminded of good practice, and the author has given a variety of exercises and activities for readers to more fully understand and interact with the content of the book. However, I wondered whether these activities would sustain the attention of an experienced general education teacher for any length of time. Undergraduate students of teaching methods and those with little experience of inclusion may gain benefit from reading and referring to this book; however, in my opinion it didn't address the needs of experienced teachers or those wanting more academic justification, which the promise of research implied.

As an Australian educator, I am aware of many of the generalities of inclusive education legislation in the United States of America; however I was at a loss to judge the specific validity of interpretation of the legislation and the breadth or depth of many of the resources listed in some sections. This is another limiting aspect for the audience outside the USA. I did think it a lost opportunity - had some information from other countries been provided, particularly on the legislative front, there would have been a little more rigour for the critical reader.

The book overall has strength of content in many practical areas. It is easy to read and clearly set out and would be beneficial for undergraduates and those beginning in inclusive environments.

Pages: **381** Price: **\$79.97 (cloth), \$34.95(paper)** ISBN: **1412905249 (cloth), 1-4129-0525-7(paper)**

Reviewed by Vickie L. Vance, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, New South Wales, Australia.

Kinnear, Paul R. & Gray, Colin D. (2004) *SPSS 12 Made Simple*. Hove, East Sussex; New York: Psychology Press.

That I was drawn to this book is not surprising: its title is immensely comforting to someone like me, whose background is in the humanities but who can always use a hand with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Given my historical aversion to numbers and limited

experience with SPSS, I consider myself the target audience for Kinnear & Gray's updated and revised text. I have adopted two personas to review it. The first harkens back to how I would have read the textbook as I was discovering statistics and started using SPSS for graduate studies and educational research; the second is me now, more confident with both statistics and SPSS but still looking to learn about its range of statistical analytical procedures.

That was Then

Terrific – the preface states that the text assumes no previous knowledge of SPSS. That's me. If I am to complete this survey methodology coursework, I need jargon-free, practical strategies that will help me make sense of SPSS' complex set of options.

Chapter 1 is a great start. It offers three guidelines for choosing a statistical test – research question, research design, and type of data to be analyzed – and five sample research questions to illustrate different research situations. The five flow charts help me understand the different statistical tests that can be run in SPSS – e.g. to examine the effects of one variable on another (i.e. t-test, ANOVA), the relationships between variables (i.e. correlations, regressions), or to find subsets of variables in a dataset that group together in a meaningful way (i.e. exploratory factor analysis). For the most part, this introductory overview uses non-technical language – and when specialist terms are used, they are identified in bold and explained in such a way that even a quantaphobe like me can follow. I also like how each of the five research situations are picked-up and developed in subsequent chapters.

Chapters 2 to 5 are equally as user-friendly with an aim to get readers comfortable operating in the SPSS environment. Accessible instructions and numerous examples explain its various buttons, drop-down menus, and outputs and invite me to enter and explore data, merge files, and produce graphs and charts. After all, I need to know how to edit and manipulate data before I can describe it, let alone carry-out any statistical tests and interpret the results. I like how each chapter ends with practical exercises for further practice. In fact, the book includes 24 such chapter-specific exercises in all – and ends with 6 general revision exercises. That's great for the self-directed SPSS learner. All the exercises are fairly easy to follow and each takes about 30 to 45 minutes. Thankfully, the larger data sets can be downloaded from the book's web site. I just wish an answer key had been provided, either as an appendix or on the web site, so that I could check my own work. Now that I am somewhat comfortable using the SPSS platform, let's attempt to understand and run a few statistical tests from Chapters 6 to 15....

I think I'm getting this. At least, with what's covered in Chapters 6-12 and 15. Each focuses on one or two clearly explained examples to demystify the procedures of running different statistical tests. Helpful

screen snapshots of SPSS output, windows, and dialog boxes walk readers through the running of statistical analyses to compare differences between two (Chs. 6) or more samples (Chs. 7-10) of scores; measure relationships between two or more variables (Chs. 11-12); and explore the underlying structure to tests and measures (Ch. 15). I was able to follow all of that – and I like how sample write-ups of results in APA format are included, which provides much-needed practical guidance on how to interpret, report, and present the output of statistical analyses. However, I was way out of my league with Chapters 13 (multi-contingency tables) and 14 (discriminant analysis and logistic regression). I had a hard time following the instructions and the advice offered in both chapters.

For the most part, then, *SPSS 12 Made Simple* meets my needs as a beginning (and nervous!) student with little understanding of statistics and a limited knowledge of SPSS. There is plenty of useful, student-oriented, and accessible material to analyze painlessly statistical data in SPSS.

This is Now

Being fairly comfortable with the SPSS environment, I didn't really learn anything new in the first five chapters. Ditto for chapters 6-12 and 15, given my reasonable understanding of statistics, though they were user-friendly recaps. I guess I was looking to learn more about the theory behind the application of different statistical options in SPSS (such as in Chs. 13-14), though this might detract from the book's main purpose and audience.

I also found that the so-called “comprehensive index” had one main shortcoming: it does not reference *by data type* (i.e. nominal, ordinal, scale) the various statistical tests that can be run. This oversight is especially noticeable given chapter one's discussion of data type as one of three key considerations when choosing a statistical test. Though the index does include a limited number of entries for each data type, it does not list the various data-type specific tests that can be run in SPSS (e.g. Friedman test for ordinal data). This limits the book's referencing capacity for those seeking guidance on how to apply the very many, but less commonly used, SPSS functions to analyze different kinds of data.

Consequently, this may not be the textbook for those with some grounding in statistics and SPSS experience. Their needs might be better met in a text such as *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS for Windows* by Andy Field. It includes both introductory and more difficult material, which is designed to be read at a number of levels; and, I believe, better supports the learning and application of more advanced statistics using SPSS.

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Pages: 451 Price: \$23.95 ISBN: 1-84169-524-6

Reviewed by Eric Jabal, PhD Candidate, OISE-University of Toronto, Canada

Lee, Chris (2004) *Preventing Bullying in Schools: A Guide for Teachers and Other Professionals*. London: Paul Chapman; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Written from the whole-school perspective on bullying prevention, Chris Lee's book, *Preventing Bullying in Schools: A Guide for Teachers and Other Professionals* offers a series of activities and discussion points aimed at increasing awareness about bullying and informing school policy and practices. This practical guidebook is aimed primarily for teachers and others working in schools as well as students of education.

One likely use for this book is for professional or staff development. It presents detailed examples and specific small group exercises and includes various perspectives for reflection and discussion. Content is drawn from the author's work and conversations with teachers as well as research. The book could be used successfully as a tool for professional development groups when accompanied by some coordination and facilitation.

Anti-bullying policies and projects use a variety of strategies, and there is no agreement in the field regarding which approach is best for which type of school environment. This guidebook describes a number of approaches, but other sources should be consulted for a fuller picture. This book presents a focused discussion of bullying and prevention. Activities and information regarding the potential risks of not preventing or addressing bullying and the harm that it does to many could be a useful addition.

Some of the details in the book are specific to British schools and some of the approaches may not fit well for those in other countries. However, the overall content is likely to be applicable for educators in many countries.

Pages: 102 Price: \$27.95 (paper); \$61.95 (cloth) ISBN: 0-7619-4472-9 (paper); 0-7619-4471-0 (cloth)

Reviewed by Laurel Haycock, University of Minnesota Libraries

McGee, Lea & Richgels, Donald (2003) *Designing Early Literacy Programs: Strategies for At-Risk Preschool and*

Kindergarten Children. New York: Guilford Press.

Designing Early Literacy Programs is a guide for developing early literacy programs for preschool and kindergarten children who are at risk for reading failure. This book reflects the current interest in early literacy instruction that has arisen in response to the Early Reading First section of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the findings of the National Research Council published in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Designing Early Literacy Programs is divided into ten chapters and two appendices. The first five chapters lay the foundation with a discussion of risk factors for reading failure, literacy development, assessment of early literacy skills, the role of the classroom environment in literacy development, and the interaction of language development and literacy. The following three chapters provide concrete suggestions for early literacy programs with discussions of classroom activities designed to expand children's vocabulary and comprehension, phonological awareness alphabet recognition, and print concepts. The last two chapters provide illustrations of a prekindergarten and a kindergarten curriculum that integrate reading and writing within a themed unit. The two appendices contain a primer on phonics and sample literacy assessments.

McGee and Richgels discuss the impact of both research and policy on designing a high quality early literacy programs. The National Research Council (Snow et al., 1998) published research findings indicating that low income, minority status, and low English proficiency are correlated with reading failure. These findings led Snow et al. to the policy suggestion that these risk factors should form the basis of selection for early literacy programs. McGee and Richgels point out that "an easy mistake is to overgeneralize that all these children have low levels of literacy knowledge when they enter the program, and therefore require the same instruction" (p. 12). The authors propose that early literacy programs need to focus on accelerating learning for children with diverse needs.

McGee and Richgels stress the importance of using assessment to make instructional decisions. They suggest that children be assessed in six critical areas of early literacy development: oral language development, size of vocabulary, concept of story, alphabet knowledge, word concept, and print concepts. The authors believe that both initial and on-going assessment is needed for effective instruction.

Teachers will find the chapters illustrating early literacy training within prekindergarten and kindergarten themed units to be very useful. McGee and Richgels promote the use of learning centers for prekindergarten and kindergarten classes. The authors provide examples of how to incorporate themed units into a variety of class learning centers. Especially interesting is the example of how a bear theme can be used to teach Kindergarten Research by showing children

how to note the differences between fiction and nonfiction bear books.

The only weak area of the book involves English language learners (ELLs). Although speaking a language other than English at home is one of the main risk factors, this group receives only limited attention in the book. McGee and Richgels operate on the assumption that ELLs will develop the necessary literacy skills within the context of a high quality program, as long as they receive support for language development in their native language. The authors suggest that teachers must “actively seek ways to bring speakers of other languages into the preschool or kindergarten setting” (p. 70). Recent research has argued that more direct instruction about English needs to take place for ELLs to learn how to read (McLaughlin, B., August, D., & Snow, C. 2000).

Despite the weakness regarding ELLs this is a well-written and useful book that provides a research basis for implementing early literacy instruction for high-risk children. I recommend this book for early childhood students and educators.

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Pages: **214** Price: **\$28.00** ISBN: **1572308907**

Reviewed by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Bibliographers 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.

McLaughlin, Maureen & DeVoogd, Glenn L. (2004)
***Critical Literacy: Enhancing Students' Comprehension of Text.* New York: Scholastic.**

This book consists of six chapters focusing on different aspects of literacy. McLaughlin and DeVoogd point out very early in the book that their concept of critical literacy extends beyond the traditional

definition of comprehension in that it requires students to understand the text from beyond what appears on the printed page. They further stress that *Critical Literacy* is supported by research that points to the importance of understanding text from multiple points of view and the relationship between individuals.

The book begins with a good explanation of the authors' view of critical literacy. They explain well the concept of becoming critically aware. Critical literacy focuses on exploring an author's perceptions of certain issues and having students reflect on this process. This reflection will then bring about transformation and may result in students taking action to address the issue. In essence, critical literacy focuses on helping students have different perspectives of subjects presented by authors and understanding these problems and their complexity.

Students need to understand the relationship between the author and the reader. McLaughlin and DeVogd stress the importance of knowing that authors have the power to create and present the message; readers have the power and the right to be critics, by reading, questioning and analysing the author's message. This section is well written and comprehensive. The information given is useful and easy to understand.

The book provides some usable strategies to help enhance critical literacy in the classroom. It must be noted that these strategies are based on the assumption that the students using the strategies do not have any reading disabilities and are first language learners. Therefore, it is important for novice teachers to note that these strategies may not be suitable for their classrooms if they have learning disabled students.

The later portion of the book explains the details of carrying out some of the strategies suggested by the authors. It discusses the activities that can be carried out in the classroom to help students see beyond the literal level of the text. The authors suggest using probing questions to help students think and learn about the text. Students are brought a step further in their critical thinking by activities helping them to explore identities within the text. The authors use sample texts to illustrate the manner in which this can be carried out. The texts suggested range from grades K-8. All texts, according to the authors, are biased to a certain degree because they are written from the perspective of a particular author or group of authors. McLaughlin and DeVogd argue that it is important for students to see beyond the bias for critical understanding. This will enable students to feel empowered to make an argument for their perceptions of the story. The final chapter of the book gives a summary of teachers' reflections and students' perspectives to support the effectiveness of critical literacy.

Critical literacy is without question an important part of the learning process for students. It is important to bear in mind that the strategies offered in this book are mainly for students who are not learning

disabled and who speaks English as a first language. The book on the whole is informative and well written with many practical suggestions. It is good resource material for teachers although some of the strategies suggested may have to be tailored to suit its use in other types of classrooms, like an English as a second language class or special education classes.

Pages: 160 Price: \$17.99 ISBN: 0-439-62804-0

Reviewed by S. Chee Choy, P.hD., Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Perak Branch Campus, Perak, Malaysia

Mooney, Margaret E. (2004) *A Book is a Present: Selecting Text for Intentional Teaching*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers.

How can a teacher determine the suitability of a reading text for their students? What are the factors that influence the readability of a particular book? What supports can a teacher provide to insure that all students benefit from required readings? All these questions focus on the importance of text selection and utilization within the classroom and constitute the focus of this book by Margaret E. Mooney. Mooney's interest here is in helping teachers take an in-depth look at the books they use in the classroom; specifically the text of the books, the illustrations of the books, the overall design of the books and how each of these factors influence student learning. Along with knowing the books, teachers must know their students and their reading abilities, says Mooney. Together, these two sets of knowledge, allow classroom teachers to effectively instruct students through texts, both fictional and informational.

A native of New Zealand, Mooney now travels between there and the state of Washington, working with teachers to develop their skills of text selection and classroom utilization. Long a strong proponent of guided reading, Mooney, in this text, takes teachers one step further and asks them to discover the individual texts they use in the classroom and learn how to analyze and utilize the texts for maximum benefit to each student. Mooney recognizes that each person brings unique insights and understandings to text, but she provides general principles teachers can work with in analyzing texts. She also examines how teachers can ascertain the motives and desires of authors and illustrators and how both words and illustrations direct the interaction between student and text.

Mooney considers good books a present, as indicated by the title, and begins her book by suggesting ways teachers can evaluate a book, both its content and its format. She calls Part 1, "Finding the Present," which looks at how books are leveled, how books are categorized, how to link books to student abilities and how books and readers interact. All of the

following, according to Mooney, are important components in book evaluation and selection: cover, title page, table of contents, content, form, language, style, illustrative material, typography. Through the ten short chapters in part 1, Mooney explores these areas closely, helping teachers understand why each is important and the role they play in supporting student success in reading.

In Part 2, “Using the Present,” Mooney moves to the area of application. Through the use of specific examples, she examines how to use texts effectively in reading instruction, linking text features to student preferences and abilities. For examples, in Chapter 12, “*The Hungry Sea Star*—Encouraging Inferential Reading of Text and Illustration, Mooney explores how the book *The Hungry Sea Star* supports inferential reading through its text and illustrations. This chapter includes pictures from the book with leading questions for the readers that allow them to discover how to use the text to encourage inferential reading. Chapter 13 looks at the story *Dear Red Riding Hood* and explores the idea, as noted in the subtitle, “There is More to a Good Text than the First Reading.” The remainder of the book examines three other texts: *The Birds at My Barn*, *Minibeasts*, and *A Storyteller’s Story*, and the reading skills they support. Two of these titles are actually included in shrink-wrap with Mooney’s book: *The Birds at My Barn*, a fictional story and *Minibeasts*, a small informational magazine.

Mooney’s text challenges elementary teachers to move beyond just knowing about a book to really examining a book’s content, both the words and drawings on the pages. She asks teachers to reflectively consider the material they are using in their classrooms and to thoughtfully understand how this material is designed and how this design impacts reading instruction. *A Book is a Present* offers teachers a useful tool for growing in the choices they make when teaching students to read. The book is easy-to-read and attractively organized; supporting the concepts presented in the text. It includes both a bibliography and index.

Pages: 149 Price: \$26.95 ISBN: 1-57274-672-6

**Reviewed by Stephanie DeLano Davis, Spring Arbor University,
Spring Arbor, MI**

**O’Hara, Mark (2004) *ICT in the Early Years*. London:
Continuum Publishing Group.**

Educators are faced with the question of whether information and communications technology (ICT) can offer developmentally appropriate learning for preschool ages. Mark O’Hara discusses the developmental appropriateness of technology and offers pedagogical and practical suggestions for how to use ICT in the early years,

primarily ages 3 to 5. He includes in his definition of ICT not only computers, but also a wide and diverse range of technology such as audio, video, television, telephones, fax machines, personal organizers, programmable and remote operated toys. Practitioner pedagogical knowledge and understanding of young children's needs and characteristics related to ICT is as important as technical know how. The author offers practical examples of how to use ICT in the early years and favors the inclusion of communications media in practice. The examples involve ICT integration in nursery (3-4-years-old) and reception (4-5-years-old) preschool settings taking place during autumn, spring and summer terms. The premise of O'Hara's book is to help educators move beyond time-filler or drill and practice use of computers to a more developmentally appropriate inclusion of ICT characterized by play-based and imaginative first-hand experience to learning.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section includes the reasons and drives to integrate ICT in the early years as well as pedagogical doubts about incorporating it. This section discusses important policy developments, curriculum design and the current practice primarily in England and Wales for the use of ICT in the early years. O'Hara concludes this section with a commentary explaining the reasons for the lack of ICT and inappropriate use of ICT in the early years. The second section examines cognitive, social, emotional development of young children as learners with a brief background of Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky's works. It explains how integration of ICT can help children's growth and development as individuals at diverse and differing rates of development. Practical examples are included and discussed; for example, young children's adoption of male and female roles at early ages. The third section reviews planning the curriculum, organizing and managing computers, selecting software and importance of adult guidance using the Internet. The fourth section discusses the role and importance of early year educators in creating an environment that stimulates and supports children's learning through and about ICT. It includes suggestions on planning the environment, managing and mediating the learning and play, and assessing the early age child's skills in ICT, knowledge and understanding of ICT, and attitudes and dispositions towards ICT.

O'Hara offers a creative approach incorporating a diverse range of play-based examples for integrating information and communications technology in and outside the classroom. His book is not only a valuable source for teachers, administrators and policy makers but also for parents who would like to include a well-founded ICT integration in their guidance to learning and interactions with their children. *ICT in the Early Years* enables us to rethink our concerns and practices of information and communications technology, and opens new venues for investigating developmentally appropriate integration of ICT in education.

Pages: **102** Price: **\$11.95** ISBN: **0-8264-6644-3**

Reviewed by Selma Vonderwell, Cleveland State University

Queen, J. Allen & Queen, Patsy S. (2005) *The Frazzled Principal's Wellness Plan: Reclaiming Time, Managing Stress, and Creating a Healthy Lifestyle*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Dr. and Mrs. J. Allen Queen, a vibrant husband and wife practitioner team, have collaborated on *The Frazzled Principal's Wellness Plan*. At first blush, this self-help book reminded me of an old army exercise manual from the 1960's, the one my father used to show me over and over again as a child. It was essentially an instruction booklet on the correct way we should stand, sit, and breathe. He wanted me to grow up strong, healthy and exuberant, able to live life to the fullest. I studied yoga as a teenager and the Queens cover that also—with several picture demonstrations by Dr. Queen. What I really found so entertaining about this piece was the fact that Dr. Queen chose himself for the principal model. He appears on several pages, demonstrating a myriad of exercise postures. I assume he deliberately chose himself to draw our attention to the material and the idea wholly worked. This is a script that is geared towards the discerning principal educator. This paperback kept my interest and I am confident that it will keep yours.

This volume would make a great gift for any principal and the many principal “wannabees.” Reasonably priced, it covers helpful tips that work fantastically towards “nipping in the bud” some common stress-related woes. The Queens confront head on the issues that result from a principal having to constantly negotiate with so many different people (parents, students, teachers, and board members) whose thoughts and timetables may differ immensely.

The first three sections deal with stress management. Any principal is held accountable to a multitude of vocal groups. An excessive amount of stress just seems to come with this territory. Undue stress can cloud one's thinking and wreak havoc on one's personal life and health. If it is not controlled early, burnout is likely and then the principal just won't be effective. The Queen's offer some suggestions to help manage stress.

The next several sections cover physical responses to stress. We learn at an early age how being physically fit can aid us in positive ways to become more productive. Simple stress relievers can include walking, stretching, and yoga. A few alternate, but popular, exercise forms are also discussed. Different yoga postures and techniques are offered, and Dr. Queen as the model seems very proficient in demonstrating the craft.

The authors contend that today's principal is by and large overworked. The principal is the person who is charged to rectify a myriad of

concerns that will arise, often on an unexpected basis. They offer assistance to help principals prioritize what to do and how often, and to decide who and what to handle first. Being human, we each have a unique personality that sets us apart from other people. A principal needs to use his personality—habits and the like—to work toward and not against goals. The principal must learn that it's ok to occasionally say “no.”

Principals in their capacity as school point persons are the unsung heroes of their schools. Stress (distress especially) is an unwelcome culprit that creeps up unexpectedly and at the most inopportune moment. Yet, the principal needs to meet all stressors head on to survive and ideally to thrive. I believe that Dr. and Mrs. Queen provide a good start toward a much needed remedy. I strongly urge you to purchase this book for anyone currently in, or seriously thinking about, assuming the multifaceted role of a school principal.

Pages: **119** Price: **\$49.95 (cloth), \$21.95 (paper)** ISBN: **076198884X (cloth), 0761988858 (paper)**

**Reviewed by Marla Mutis, MBA, MSOM, Doctoral Student,
College of Education, Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL**

**Rose, Karel & Kincheloe, Joe L. (2003) *Art, Culture, & Education: Artful Teaching in a Fractured Landscape*.
New York: Peter Lang.**

In a short space--152 pages--Karel Rose and Joe Kincheloe have a complex set of interconnected stories to tell. The story that inspired *Art, Culture, & Education* was that of a course the authors taught together to undergraduate honors students at Brooklyn College. "High and Low Art: Good and Bad Taste" occurred in Fall 1999, which coincided with the "Sensation" controversy. This concerned the outcry inspired by this exhibit of edgy and extreme art, particularly Chris Ofili's "Holy Virgin Mary," whose breasts were painted with elephant dung. Controversy returned later, with Renee Cox's "Yo Mama's Last Supper," a photograph depicting herself, with bared breasts, as the central Jesus figure. Then-mayor Guiliani publicly criticized these works and pushed for revoking funding for the Brooklyn Museum of Art for showing them.

Rose and Kincheloe are to be credited, first and foremost, for displaying the pedagogical flexibility to take advantage of current events and integrate them into their course. Secondly, they are to be credited with producing a compelling example to follow by writing and presenting this book.

The coincidence of the "sensation" exhibit and Rose and Kincheloe's class was mirrored by another coincidence: as this book was being

prepared in late 2001 the terrorist attacks of September 11 loomed over all attempts to understand and construct political and aesthetic experience. This coincidence provided the most direct referent for their subtitle, *Artful teaching in a fractured landscape*.

The authors hope to draw a connection between their vision of teaching art and that of artful teaching. These two goals converge in “democratic art education,” which refutes a cultural elite’s “paradigm enforcement” (p. 54) that imposes a canon and expects passive students, as well as that elite’s hypostatization of that canon into something timeless and context-free. Kincheloe describes in contrast “a democratic aesthetic that refuses to surrender artistic judgment to an elite pantheon of arbiters of taste” where “artistic production and aesthetic evaluation become the province of everyone” (p. 55). Such an artistic teaching and learning demands “rigorous scholarship” that leads to an understanding of the power structure, the sociohistorical context, in which a work of art is produced and received.

One recurring effect of an undemocratic establishment and perpetuation of an artistic canon is racial bias. Western artistic elites have historically marginalized the racial and gender other and, accompanied by the likes of Giuliani, continue to do so today. Cox’s and Ofili’s work was berated not primarily for its form or content, but for being the works and perspectives of the Black other, particularly at a time when the mayor was engaged in a racially-charged and devious “clean-up” of the city. The charge of continued racial bias pertains to the artistic establishment as well. Even where art from other groups has been admitted to the canon, it has had to meet White standards to be deemed worthy of this inclusion. Rose and Kincheloe claim that Giuliani reflects conservative, White-victimization sentiments that seek to turn back what few gains have been made in admitting non-Whites into the artistic establishment and other public spaces.

Another recurring theme is the challenge and possibility of postmodernism. Like multiculturalism, postmodernism works to erase the boundary between what is considered “high” and “low” art. A postmodern artistic education allows students to see the aesthetic possibilities of common experience and view with irony attempts to separate off a high, elite genre of art. Furthermore, embracing what Kincheloe refers to as “cognitive cubism,” (pp. 95 ff.) involves seeing reality as inherently multiplex. We must learn to view the world from multiple perspectives all at once.

Despite their commitments to democratic education the main voices we hear in the book are the authors', particularly Kincheloe's. The voices of the students in Rose and Kincheloe’s class, however, don't appear until over two-thirds of the way through, at which point we hear them for only two pages (pp. 112-114). (Later, Rose also includes commentary from students in a different course, pp. 128-131.) The book closes with a brief commentary by the artist Dread Scott. We get the benefit of his authentic voice without, however, seeing him tie his

call for art leading to political action with the authors' concern for education. Because of these omissions, we are left without guidance concerning the practical question we are likely to face in enacting Rose and Kincheloe's artful teaching. How do we overcome students' resistance to pluralistic, postmodern, artful learning? Overcoming this resistance is a daunting challenge. We cannot tell from the text if they successfully met this challenge, let alone how they did so.

In their efforts to promote engagement with the political and social aspect of artistic expression and education Rose and Kincheloe, perhaps unintentionally, marginalize the purely aesthetic. While criticizing an educational functionalism focused on job placement, their emphasis on art for social critique and political change could be accused of its own breed of narrow functionalism. Unfortunately, an appreciation of the aesthetic as such is one more element that has gone missing in contemporary curricula. Kincheloe does not provide us much ammunition in the fight to bring it back; Rose addresses an expanded notion of beauty and the aesthetic briefly, near the end of the book (p.123).

As noted, there are significant omissions to what could have been a well-developed (while not prescriptive) call to engagement in "artful teaching" and "democratic art education." Nevertheless, this book can serve as a case study and source of inspiration to teachers and instructors, at the college or high school level, who remain committed, despite all the obstacles, to having the aesthetic and the critical hold a prominent place in their curricula.

Pages: **162** Price: **\$29.95** ISBN: **08204-5745-0**

Reviewed by Brian Burtt, a PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh. His primary interests are the role of education in political theory and the philosophy of educational research.



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