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reseñas educativas (Spanish)  
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## Brief reviews for March 2005

**Cole, Ardith Davis (2004) *When Reading Begins: The Teacher's Role in Decoding, Comprehension, and Fluency*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

*When Reading Begins* is a guide for scaffolding early readers from pre-reading into fluency. The book is divided into 9 chapters followed by references and an index. There are three major influences on the composition of the book: the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), which emphasizes that instructional methods should be based on scientifically based reading research; the results of the National Reading Panel (1999), which advocate direct teaching in addition to sustained independent reading; and Krashen's (1993) constructivist theory of reading, which proposes a literature-based reading program.

What Cole offers is a plan for scaffolding readers as a form of individualized direct teaching to complement a literature-based reading program. Her approach is based on the assumption teachers will provide reading material in a sequenced manner that will support reading development for each child. Cole believes teachers should help each child to select a "just right text" to read (p. 12). This means that children in the class will read books based on their individual interests and abilities. In order for a program of this type to succeed, there must be a plan for assessing each child's reading level and assessing the text difficulty of trade books. However, this aspect of a literature-based reading program is not really addressed in the book.

What Cole does is to provide an in-depth discussion of how teachers can scaffold the use of graphophonic (letter/sound), semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammatical), and pragmatic (textual/environmental) cues to process texts of increasing difficulty. This means that Cole's strategies are not limited to a literature-based program. Teachers using basal readers will be able to apply her strategies as well.

Cole discusses scaffolding within the context of recent research on reading and eye movement (Paulson & Freeman, 2003). Eye movement research can tell us about the patterns of a reader's focus while he/she is reading. However, it cannot tell us about the cognitive processing that is correlated with the saccades (eye movements). What can be said is that the research is consistent with Krashen's constructivist theory of reading. This helps to support scaffolding as a research-based instructional method.

One of the best sections in *When Reading Begins* is the explanation on differentiating cue levels. Effective scaffolding is dependent on providing relevant cues when a reader needs help in processing a text. Cole explains the difference between providing primary cues that deal directly with the unknown word and secondary cues which deal with the unknown word on a more abstract level. Cole claims that secondary cues, such as telling the child the word has a "short vowel" are ineffective and should be avoided (p. 118). The use of primary cues will vary according to the difficulty of the text and the reading level of the reader. Early readers will require micro-cues such as graphophonic hints to decode unknown words. More experienced readers will benefit from macro-cues such as syntactic or semantic hints from the text surrounding the unknown word.

I recommend this book. Cole makes a compelling case for scaffolding as a tool to help young readers reach fluency.

## References

Krashen, S. D. (1993). *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

National Reading Panel. (2000) *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research on reading and its implication for reading instruction*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Accessed February 3, 2005 from <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.pdf>.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-110. Accessed February 4, 2005 from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>.

Paulson, E. J., and Freeman, A. E. (2003). *Insight from the eyes*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pages: 176

Price: \$19.50

ISBN: 0325006636

**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.**

**Compton-Lilly, Catherine (2003) *Reading Families: The Literate Lives of Urban Children*. New York: Teachers College Press.**

According to Compton-Lilly many inner city students exist in a world where their talents are often not recognized and their efforts are seen as inconsequential. They are discounted and are made to feel as though their contributions are somehow inferior to that of others in their world. More telling, assumptions are made about their abilities and those assumptions govern the way they are treated and consequently the way they react to the educational system and the rest of society. It is therefore, not surprising that many urban students come to the ultimate conclusion that they are incapable of learning anything at all. This is the reality of urban youth in *Reading Families: The Literate Lives of Urban Children*.

The author uses a combination of personal experience and the results from research conducted as a first grade teacher in an urban school, to discount the untruths about the literacy capability of children in urban settings. The early chapters present an excursus of existing myths held by both parents and educators - myths that block the formation of cooperative relationships that could enhance the learning experiences of urban kids. The author attributes a lot of these attitudes to the many teachers who are socialized to believe that not only are urban children unable to readily grasp the concept of reading but that they are products of families that do not value or reinforce reading skills as a part of their lives.

The author's research provides evidence that shows that the discourses held by many mainstream teachers are without merit when they generally disparage the willingness and ability of urban families to help facilitate the process of literacy among young children. On the contrary, most of the parents interviewed by Compton-Lilly displayed urgency around the desire to have their children become successful readers and thus improve their life chances. Further, these parents seemed to have a very distinct understanding of the limitations of illiteracy and expressed aspirations for their children that included reading and learning to navigate the world of education. A preponderance of the evidence also showed that urban parents understood the concept of cultural capital and believed that their children were not being granted fair access to some of the educational resources available to others by virtue of their sociopolitical and socioeconomic status.

The methodology employed in this study maintains a frame of reference that recognizes both the internal and external factors surrounding the efforts of learning to read in urban communities: internal factors such as the experiences, attitudes and beliefs held by families about the ability and talents of their young ones as readers. The external factors may be equally significant because they are embedded in the community's attitudes towards children in general, and the way they are groomed as readers in relationship to their own beliefs, in particular.

As a teacher-researcher, Compton-Lilly is aware that the responses to research questions by both students and parents could have been tailored to meet their perceived ideas about what she wanted to

hear. As a white teacher of predominantly African American and Puerto Rican students, the author first had to gain the trust and respect of members of those communities and had to display a genuine interest in educating urban children.

The social relationships of mainstream and alternative discourses helped the author to make sense of the way in which students, families and teachers often support contradicting discourses. She found that many urban parents, for example, hold conflicting views about how learning to read is envisioned and understood in the homes of fellow urban parents. This understanding works against the formation of an alternate discourse because it also supports the mainstream discourse. Parents and teachers viewed the role of reading in the lives of urban children as a means of survival. The researcher also observed that many parents and community members reinforce a child's sense of self-worth as they are the first teachers that a child experiences.

Compton-Lilly's research leaves readers with a better understanding of the cultural impact of learning to read. The relationship of family and other social influences within the sociopolitical and socioeconomic aspects of a student's life must be understood in order to make relevant deductions about the factors contributing to the process of learning to read for any student. The research also shows that parents and teachers must find common ground to discuss the effects of their influence on the literacy of children because the processes by which students learn to read are embedded in the ways in which all of the learning environments -- such as home, school, and community -- come together to reinforce a child's ability to learn to read.

While conducting this study, the author was able to maintain her objectivity even as she embraced a new perspective on learning to read. She allowed herself to move beyond the constructs of what it means to be a white teacher of urban children in mainstream discourse. As a pioneer of a new way of thinking and behaving, the author was able to make sense of the various factors that contribute to the literacy of young urban children.

My hope, as a mother of six African American children, is that Compton-Lilly's journey will prompt many more teachers to try understanding their students by looking at their realities in a more holistic and realistic manner than is often done.

Pages: **156**

Price: **\$21.95**

ISBN: **0-8077-4276-7(paper)**

**Reviewed by Dana Murray Patterson, Washington State University**

**Gallagher, Kelly (2004) *Deeper Reading: Comprehending Challenging Texts, 4-12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.**

It isn't often that a book reviewer finds a book so compelling that he or she would pay for it, but Kelly Gallagher's work, *Deeper Reading*, is one of those rare gems. Mind you, as a classroom teacher I am biased toward books written about how to teach by those who actually teach, write with a sense of humor, and whose ideas are grounded in application. Perhaps the greatest negative is Gallagher's constant use of personal observations, however that is what makes good teachers relate well and it adds a touch of warmth to a book that otherwise might be considered too much of a "How to do it" work. To me it was excellent; *Deeper Reading* deserves to be part of all reading teachers' libraries and mandatory for every new teacher.

Gallagher taught English for fifteen years in a multicultural area of Southern California and is involved with the California Reading and Literature Project and other programs as well as teaching at the university level. In other words, he is from the working class. As such the book is full of ideas backed up by his experience and successes.

He stresses strategies that are practical and enable the reader to take the ideas and convert them to his or her needs. Metaphors are constantly stressed to make the lessons more personal, more relevant, and to improve comprehension. Some of Gallagher's ideas have been long used, such as KWLR charts and the use of bookmarks for character and setting changes, student collaboration, and the importance of connecting reading matter to the student's interest level. Others have been altered for better results, such as backward lesson planning, using euphemisms, spam and email learning opportunities, metaphorical graphic organizers, theme triangles, group exams, combining multiple choice and essay exams, what does it not say questions, re-reading at the sentence and word levels, embracing confusion, focus groups, "assumicide," framing activities, literary tour guides, and using the

world's shortest mystery story and are worthwhile skills to acquire and/or polish. Naturally, with such a plethora of methods, some might be too vague for an inexperienced teacher, but then, what's a heaven for.

I especially liked his definition, "Literature enables students to experience a safe practice run though the great issues confronting us..." (p. 20). That definition mutes the distinction between non-fiction and fiction books, as both of them can be used to stimulate real life learning. When the fictional Yertle the Turtle and Humpty Dumpty can provide the same insights of human domination as a President's inaugural address you have certainly provoked *Deeper Reading*.

As a social studies teacher I was also impressed that Gallagher integrates political cartoon assessment as part of his book. However, he could have made the book a little meatier by discussing how reading can be readily integrated across the curriculum and that includes physical education classes. He does add currency to his work by helping the teacher use Internet terms and the dangers of online mail. The book does stop short of covering how to evaluate websites for appropriate reading selections.

A look at the table of contents reveals that the book is well organized and clearly directed to both the new and experienced teacher. The index is good and the works cited are quite current and reflect a wide variety of readings.

I would highly recommend this book for even grade three teachers as well as the book's recommended grade four to 12 bunch. Another group that might benefit would be those college students who have not yet mastered good reading techniques. I am not saying that the university teachers should necessarily read this, but it should be assigned to the students so that they can apply these lessons to their own reading.

Pages: **228**

Price: **\$19.50**

ISBN: **1-57110-384-8**

**Reviewed by Alan Haskvitz, classroom teacher, <http://www.reacheverychild.com>**

**Intrator, Sam. M. (2004) *Tuned In and Fired Up: How Teaching Can Inspire Real Learning in the Classroom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.**

This is another of Sam M. Intrator's books that seem centered on the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* type of feel good messages for teachers. In *Tuned In and Fired Up*, Intrator spends about 170 pages discussing his insights on observing one high school teacher he calls, Mr. Quinn, which is a pseudonym for a San Francisco educator. It is a book built around a year's worth of observations done in one highly capable and bright teacher's high school literature class. To add depth to this Intrator has cited rather dated research that goes back to the 1960's, with most citations over seven-years-old.

The usable results of Intrator's findings are general in nature, drawn from the observations he makes of Mr. Quinn's class. The result is a book that is hard pressed to do much but pay homage to Mr. Quinn's admired teaching style. I think every literature teacher in the nation would welcome a book written by Mr. Quinn that would reveal in depth the pacing, rationale, and selections he makes to fire up his students.

Overall, there is little in this book that reveals anything startling to the experienced teacher. Typical of Intrator's insights is that learning requires emotional investment to get the attention of the students. "When students tuned in and connected, they became dynamic, awake and vital" (p. 131). Other advice from his observations of Mr. Quinn and his 32 students are that teachers should embrace their role as performer, give their classroom character, tap into the students senses, manipulate time, pacing and rhythm, plan novelty and surprises, acknowledge that some things are boring, and use the Socratic method. In each of the "case studies" Intrator tries to define the connection between what Quinn is offering and the students' reaction to that message. Always, it seems, for the better.

Intrator has a few lists in the back of the book that take his observations and turn them into rules for success. These are interesting and include loving literature, avoid grading stress and taking a "mental health" day off, and offering a variety of assignments to harvest student interest. But the lists lack insights as to how these rules are accomplished with national and state standards, NCLB requirements, and the fact that accrued "sick days" can be added to your retirement income.

Journalists would call this book a “puff piece” as the main theme is positive in nature without the writer seeking a more detached, objective view. I doubt Intrator intended it as anything but a what he calls “Inspired Learning.” The question an educator on a finite budget must ask is what would be gained by buying this book, since there is no mention of pre or post testing results to prove that “inspired moments” actually improve student learning, or how *Tuned In and Fired Up* methods work with students who have problems reading. The book does not even offer some current bibliographical citations. The main reason to purchase this book would be recreational. Intrator alludes to this near the end of the book when he surmises, “I believe the story told here will share common features with your school, your students, and you. I hope you enjoyed the journey” (p. 156).

It is no surprise the back cover blurbs from reviewers reflect more on the writing style and passion of the prose than being a guide for teachers. One such analysis sums it up best when Marianne Novak Houston writes, “If you seek faith and hope I invite you to spend a day here with Mr. Quinn, a master teacher, and Sam Intrator, a master writer.” If this is what you want, only \$23 separates you from that day. For someone seeking more structured insights, this book is best left as an opportunity cost until Mr. Quinn writes his “how I do it” tome.

#### **Other works by Intrator**

*Stories of the courage to teach : honoring the teacher's heart.* (2002). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.  
*Teaching with fire: poetry that sustains the courage to teach.* (2003). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

#### **References**

Canfield, J. & Hansen, M. V. (1993). *Chicken soup for the soul: 101 stories to open the heart & rekindle the spirit.* Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Pages: **170**

Price: **\$23.00(hardcover) \$15.00(paper)**

ISBN: **0300100221(hardcover) 0300107668(paper)**

**Review by Alan Haskvitz, National Teachers Hall of Fame, Reader’s Digest Hero in Education, NCSS National Teacher of the Year**

**Weaver, Brenda M. (2004) *Ready-to-Use Reading Assessments & Intervention Strategies for K-2: Rubrics, Record-Keeping Sheets, Student Profiles, and Assessments With Reproducible Testing Mini-Books That Help You Evaluate Student Reading and Guide Their Literacy Instruction. Grades K-2.* New York: Scholastic.**

Developed for primary teachers by an educator with experience as a K-5 Language Arts/Social Studies Coordinator, teacher, principal and college instructor, *Reading Assessments and Intervention Strategies for K-2* offers a systematic, interactive approach for assessing reading instruction for kindergarten through second grade students. The book consists of rubrics, record-keeping sheets, student profiles, and reproducible assessments. The results of the assessments are used to plan successful ways to intervene and teach students with knowledge of their deficit areas.

The book begins by discussing factors and aspects of literacy development and then presents detailed assessments for 12 week, 24 week, and 36 week progress in K-2 reading instruction. Next, specific interventions are introduced in the areas of print conventions, word recognition development, comprehension and writing. Each of these chapters contains at least four detailed intervention strategies with reproducible activities.

In addition, the appendix contains reproducible mini-books at each grade level as well as a class record sheet, a literary elements chart, and a letter recognition scoring sheet. Although the mini-books are similar to what is found in the majority of primary reading curriculum, the additional assessments and reproducible worksheets will be excellent supplemental materials for teachers. The author’s strong research to support this book is also described in detail the Weaver Literacy Research Support section.

Because specific instructions are given for administering, scoring, and recording the results of multiple types of assessment tools from rubrics to record-keeping sheets, *Reading Assessments and Intervention Strategies for K-2* will be an invaluable assessment and intervention resource for primary teachers and their language arts programs.

Pages: **224**

Price: **\$23.99**

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**Reviewed by Dr. Melinda Pierson, Associate Professor, Department of Special Education,  
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