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Brief reviews for May 2005

**Cary, Stephen. (2004). *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*.
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.**

Normally I would never think of beginning a review with a confession but in this case I think it is necessary. When this book arrived late last year, I took one look at the title, grimaced, and put it at the very bottom of my pile of books to consider for a review. There it sat until I recently knocked the pile off the shelf and rediscovered it!

In rearranging the books, I gave the book a cursory look as I was about to jettison it. The quick glance turned into a fast read. Admittedly, I am one of the comics-phobic educators the author addresses in the book's introduction. Although I am not convinced of the legitimacy or the efficacy of comic book use in most classrooms, I do think that in some situations, such as a multilingual setting, it might definitely be worth a try.

To decide if this approach and, more to the point, the 25 activities the author presents will work for your students, I would recommend turning right to Chapter Three where these assignments are outlined. Each activity is well explained. After listing the needed materials and pinpointing topics and strategies, Cary provides the background needed and then looks at the process and breaks it down step by step.

If you decide to purchase the book, read the opening Theory and Research Chapter later if you need ammunition to rationalize using comics with a department chairman or some other school administrator. On the other hand, at the back of the paperback is a resource section that will prove invaluable if you need a source of comics or comic reviews. Actually, the students themselves can probably provide plenty of resources. A word to the wise, though: spell out precisely what is not appropriate material for classroom use before you request they bring "samples" from their own libraries!

Stephen Cary is a second language specialist whose previous book, *Working with Second Language Learners: Answers to Teachers' Top Ten Questions* was published in 2000. He serves as adjunct faculty in the University of San Francisco's teacher education/multicultural education programs.

Especially for second language learners, taking a pragmatic approach and being open to anything that might help them quickly acquire new language skills is probably worth a try. Certainly the majority of the students will find this material interesting. Unfortunately, convincing parents and administrators that this approach is valid may be more of a challenge!

References

Cary, Stephen. (2000). *Working with Second Language Learners: Answers to Teachers' Top Ten Questions*. Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann.

Pages: **218** Price: **\$22.00** ISBN: **0-325-00475-7**

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

Hill, Lynn T.; Stremmel, Andrew J. & Fu, Victoria R. (2005) *Teaching as Inquiry: Rethinking Curriculum in Early Childhood Education*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

When we think about the image of a 'teacher,' what occurs to us? What does 'teacher' mean or 'be (com)ing a teacher?' This book provides satisfying answers regarding those questions and does so through a new lens. With a refreshing tone, and visionary intention, it offers an alternative approach for young children's educators not only for beginning teachers but also for experienced teachers.

"Teaching is intentional and purposeful. It is a highly moral profession that calls for us to see the students (children) as competent persons and allow them to learn in ways that bring out the best in them" (p. 5).

The authors intentionally reconsider previous assumptions to inspire lifelong questioning and discovering regarding teaching and teachers. Four major themes are interconnected to make the text come alive for practitioners. Beginning with a review of historical theories and their contributions to early childhood education, the book attempts to blend theory and practice. Moreover, the review of early childhood allows readers to formulate their own image of the child and consider how this image coincides with questions of "the image of teacher." The authors are provocative in the discussion of learning about teaching. They place strong emphasis on the willingness of the school to share with families and provide a detailed description of the classroom. They also assert that curriculum can be negotiated between teacher and child. With abundant real life examples, the book demonstrates the model of creative, engaged and meaningful curricula in a learning community that includes children, families, and teachers.

More than a text it becomes almost a personal journal documenting the development of a learning community. Using "inquiry" as the basis of rethinking curriculum creates a generative space for looking at the way a teacher can function in the classroom. The most powerful aspect of this text is the authors' use of the real voices of student teachers in portraying a humanistic approach to documentation. These lived experiences and the accompanying reflections collaborate to have an emotional impact on the reader. Using these stories to encourage readers to engage with the text makes the complex concepts presented come alive and become real. This book will be a useful guideline for self- reflection for current and future teachers.

I highly recommend this book to pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. It pushes their boundaries as both practitioners and researchers.

Pages: **248** Price: **\$46.80** ISBN: **0-205-41264-5**

Reviewed by Jiryung Ahn, a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia in Canada. She is interested in early childhood education, specifically, young children's oral and visual narratives and narrative inquiry for young children.

Levine, Mel D. (2005). *Ready or Not Here Life Comes*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Dr. Mel Levine's latest book, *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, focuses on preparing youth ages 11-19 for work and career success. The subject of this book is a term Levine has coined *work-life unreadiness*. This applies to the challenging developmental period of transitioning from school to career — the startup years. The book is about life prep; preparing kids for the rigors of adult work life.

The author of two national bestselling books, *A Mind at a Time* and *The Myth of Laziness*, Levine is a professor of pediatrics and director of the Clinical Center for the Study of Development and Learning at the University of North Carolina Medical School. He is also founder and cochairman of All Kinds of Minds, a non profit institute for the understanding of differences in learning.

According to Levine, alarming numbers of young adults are poorly prepared to enter the workforce, "Our graduates may well lack the practical skills, the habits, the behaviors, the real-world insights, and the frames of mind pivotal for career startup" (p.5). Though Levine is passionate about the effects of work-life unreadiness, his book does not give any quantitative data regarding the number of young

adults experiencing this crisis or the severity of the problem. The book is pleasantly filled with interviews and examples from Levine's 30 years of clinical experiences. Each chapter heading has an experience describing an individual's struggle with work-life unreadiness. Case studies dot the chapters and help explain the concepts depicted.

In *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, Levine challenges the educational system, parents, and young adults themselves to examine the relevance of ingrained practices and skills that may not have enduring relevance in today's career and job market. He declares that parents and educators are not keeping pace with preparing kids for the real world. Levine gives specific advice for individual situations as well as systemic solutions to the problem of preparing children and adolescents to be functioning, working adults.

Levine reviews 12 vital growth processes for life-ready young adults. The Twelve Growth Processes focus primarily on the individual, the parent, and the educational system. These growth processes are categorized into four general areas, also known as the four "I's": Inner Direction, Interpretation, Instrumentation and Interaction. Each of the four "I's" is detailed in individual chapters.

Inner Direction, has specific application to school counselors. The challenge of this growth process is in helping individuals understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Levine considers inside insight, foresight, and self-launching three key growth processes in this area. By following his suggestion of using school data such as report cards, test scores and teacher feedback, school counselors can help students analyze the results and build on their strengths. The book includes a sample of a strengths and interest inventory that parents or educators could begin as early as elementary school. Levine's suggestion of an interest portfolio that would follow the student each year would clearly be a function of the comprehensive school-counseling program. This would align with the Individual Planning component of the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs.

Interpretation challenges schools to foster the three growth processes that contribute to accurate interpretation of the students' world: comprehension, pattern recognition, and evaluative thinking. These suggestions are more readily applied to the classroom and home environment.

Teachers should be able to answer the question: "Why am I teaching this? How will my students be able to apply this material in the short and long run? And how can I provide them with some immediate real-life practice in making use of what they are learning?" When faculty members are unable to answer such questions, they should seriously consider revisions to their curriculum" (p.131).

This change in teaching methodology may be difficult to integrate in today's teaching world with the current education trend so focused on test-taking and accountability

The tools necessary for start-up include: skill building and adaptation, work efficiency and productive thinking. Part of the skill building growth process involves teaching so called "life-skills." One example that is especially pertinent is Levine's example of enhancing working capacity by establishing mental energy control. The charts and examples offer clear and adaptable ideas for parents and teachers to try.

Levine believes that "...schools are mainly responsible for teaching kids how to learn and that parents should take on the assignment of teaching them how to work" (p.153). However, he offers no recourse for the kids whose parents do not teach these skills. One area that is not addressed in *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, is the plight of low socioeconomic, non-traditional two-parent families, and diverse ethnic populations and the effect these conditions have on learning processes.

Although Levine mentions many case by case ideas for change and sweeping reform ideas, he does not address targeted ways to go about an educational system change necessary for widespread implementation of the concepts outlined in *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*. Many of the strategies in the book could be implemented under the direction of the school counseling department through a comprehensive counseling program. The ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs have many standards that address Dr. Levine's concerns. Each area of the National Standards, Academic Development, Career Development, and Personal/Social Development, address the issues of preparing students for the world of work and future career success. Levine failed to recognize this powerful model.

Written with personal passion, *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes* is a wonderful blend of Levine's experience and learning. He outlines specific ways to be a successful startup adult. From parents to

educators and young adults themselves, all who read this book can find examples and practical application for preparing young people to be career ready.

References

American School Counselor Association. (2003). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

Pages: 286 Price: \$26.00 ISBN: 0-7432-6224-7

Reviewed by Alene B. Walker, second year Counselor Education student at Adams State College, Alamosa Colorado.

MacBeath, John E. C. & Sugimine, Hidenori. (2003). *Self-evaluation in the Global Classroom*. London : RoutledgeFalmer.

"It has been said that fish were the last to discover water and that, sadly, school students are often the last to discover learning" (p.10). This is a quote that everyone involved in education systems should take from this book and then consider how they can help students discover learning. In their easy to read book, Macbeath and Hidenori explain The Learning School Project. Their work comes at a time when the education system (at least in the United States) is leaning more toward standardized testing, whereas researchers are telling us to listen to the students. Students can tell us what they are learning and in doing so can help educators foster learning in more meaningful ways. School improvement needs to come from within and from the students. *Self-Evaluation in the Global Classroom* is an excellent example of how this can be done.

In the Learning School Project students from the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Sweden, South Africa, South Korea, and the Czech Republic travel to another country and live with host families for up to 6 weeks. During this time, the visiting students attend and evaluate the schools and the students within the schools. The data they generate are then relayed to teachers and administrators for possible policy changes.

Readers have the opportunity to hear the students' perspective as well as the perspective of the various teachers and administrators. Chapter 4: "A lifetime of learning (in one year)" is a powerful chapter. I wish I could type in the entire chapter; it is very moving. Instead I have chosen a few quotes from students.

One thing the Learning School did for me and probably for everyone else who has done a similar thing is that it has opened the doors in my mind, and I now I believe that I can do anything. The question we all have to ask ourselves is, are we brave enough to jump out there into the unknown not knowing what we might find or would we rather stay on safe ground? One last word is, jump! It is only you who are holding yourself back. If you do not take the step out you might regret it for the rest of your life but if you do, you can always come back to safety again (Karolina) (p. 36).

Or from Jimmy who commented on not being given guidelines and felt this would have made life easier, but then said, "the feeling of achievement is now greater because it was us that accomplished it. With some help from the universities and the schools, the end result is above my first expectations. We could also look at aspects we found more interesting because our hands were not tied by instructions" (p. 36). Not only did the students learn about learning itself, they also learned about themselves. Jolene states, "The more I have learnt about other people this year, the more I have learnt about myself" (p. 40). This chapter is full of these great, inspiring testimonials showing how students learn from each other, from other cultures, from forming friendships, and about learning. Even though in a classroom setting we cannot do exactly as the Learning School has done, we can learn from this project and attempt to incorporate other ways of fostering this type of powerful learning.

Chapter 5: "The impact on the schools" is just as inspiring as Chapter 4. It gives the reader the perspective of the teachers. Each school commented on how the project helped them see weak points in their system and make changes for the better.

Part II, "Insights into the school experience from the Learning School Students," contains 15 chapters covering topics such as the school day, comparisons of classes, who students learn from the most, how students react differently to the same lessons, the impact and perspective of parents and the

topic of lifelong learning. There are many tables, graphs, pie charts, diagrams of how classrooms are arranged and how this affects learning.

Macbeath makes a statement in his postscript that really stood out for me. He states,

The importance of culture shines through every page. The problematic relationship between teaching and learning is a continuous strand. We see how much of learning is individual and how much of it is social. We discover anew how motivation and achievement are shaped by peers, both positively and negatively. And we are reminded of the influence of teachers – neutral, negative and positive – and how different their impact can be for different students (p. 232).

This is a powerful quote that teachers, administrators, and academics who teach the future teachers should note. Macbeath continues: “As Learning School 4 embarks on its world journey with an expanded group of schools eager to be involved, we live in the hope that the powers to be will sit up, take notice, and learn something themselves” (p. 232). Policy makers do not want to listen to researchers, perhaps they will listen to the students themselves.

This book is inspiring; it gives a voice to the students, while at the same time showing data to reinforce the importance of students having a voice in their education. The book reaches out to schools, teachers, administrators, academics and educational policy makers.

Pages: **241** Price: **\$150.00 (hardcover) \$41.95 (paper)** ISBN: **0415258251 (hardcover) 041525826X (paper)**

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

Mahony, Terry. (2003). *Words Work! How to Change Your Language to Improve Behaviour in Your Classroom.* Carmarthen, Wales: Crown House.

This book explores neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques as a model of communication and behavior applicable to all classrooms. With three goals in mind: developing a strong rapport among persons, designing effective information gathering about others' mental maps, and practicing strategies for promoting positive behavioral change, the author draws from a variety of educational theorists to argue the merits of conscious and careful use of language to establish and maintain a positive learning environment.

The author divides his argument into four parts. First, he describes levels of meaning and motivational patterns attached to word choice that link thinking, feeling and behaving. He asserts each individual possesses a bias toward a particular vocabulary based on senses of hearing, seeing, or feeling, thereby urging teachers to observe individual student's preferences as a means to gain and maintain rapport. Second, he refers to a range of behavior management theories and focuses on anxieties that trigger responses. He urges emotional coaching for teachers and students to develop skills to defuse conflict and promote personal and social competence. Third, Mahony takes a positive approach to improving communication by employing a meta-model of language to fill in deleted information, smooth out distortions, and challenge unhelpful generalizations. The final section offers examples for practice.

The theoretical base for this argument lacks substantial rigor. Whether or not a person's "preferred" sensory choice of words or, for that matter, "preferred" anxiety truly govern one's thoughts and consequent actions remains to be proven. However, the attention to one's personal beliefs and attitudes underlying effective communication does merit careful consideration by teachers and teacher candidates.

A very practical guide, this book offers guidelines, cues, and clues for self-reflection on the part of teacher and student, enabling both to re-direct actions through a more careful and conscious selection of words. Exercises promote reflectivity to acknowledge one's emotional and linguistic strengths and identify areas for improvement. Thus, the premises of the book serve to raise instinctive effective communication to a conscious level of positive communication.

Pages: **168** Price: **\$27.95** ISBN: **1899836985**

Reviewed by Patricia A. Gross, University of Scranton

Sklare, Gerald B. (2005). *Brief Counseling That Works: A Solution-Focused Approach for School Counselors and Administrators*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

School counselors and administrators are constantly trying to find the time to fit everything into hectic schedules. Many times counselors feel as if they are lacking the skills to effectively deal with situations in a brief amount of time and still have rapid, observable results. *Brief Counseling That Works: A Solution-Focused Approach for School Counselors and Administrators* combines a step-by-step process with meaningful vignettes to provide a all-encompassing and realistic approach to the basic principles of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) with elementary and secondary students.

The foundation of this book is an approach to counseling that focuses on solutions rather than the etiology of the client's problems. By focusing on solutions rather than problems, counseling becomes brief. Students are guided to learn how to set small goals, discover resources available to them and repeat past successes. Sklare accomplishes this by looking at each of five steps and breaking them down into meaningful sections with many examples to illustrate how to accomplish each step. This short but concise book also offers many useful tools like reproducible materials and sample forms, vivid case studies that help to illustrate the point of each step in SFBC, and exercises to practice the steps. Other professionals such as social workers, licensed professional counselors, and school psychologists would also find this book a relevant tool. *Brief Counseling That Works* provides the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively use SFBC with school age children.

Gerald B. Sklare, EdD, LPCC, who is a professor at the University of Louisville in Kentucky, has done a fantastic job of drawing on his many years in the field of psychology to create a practical hands-on approach to SFBC. This book offered me the basic foundation of skills necessary to implement the process immediately. While the theory behind SFBC is briefly mentioned, the implementation of SFBC is covered adequately and each step and process is repeated over and over again throughout the book to reinforce what should be said and done during the counseling session. Through the vignettes and case studies I was able to get an idea of what the theory is supposed to look like in action. It was beneficial to see how to handle situations that went the way they are expected to as well as what to do when clients were not progressing as expected.

Schools today are required to meet the needs of a very diverse group of students. In fact "projections indicate that by 2020, the majority of students in public schools will come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and/or racial backgrounds (p. 8 as quoted from Campbell, 1994). *Brief Counseling That Works* amply deals with the diverse needs of every student. Sklare focuses on how to use SFBC with diverse populations and gives suggestions on how to make sessions meaningful with these students. Many of the case studies are based on African American students who come from lower socio economic backgrounds. There is also an emphasis on how to work with students who have been referred to counseling (mandated) and reluctant students. This section was very helpful because all counselors encounter clients who don't see the benefits of counseling.

All in all I would highly recommend this book to school counselors, administrators and anyone else who would benefit from the brief counseling methodology. *Brief Counseling That Works* has provided me with the basic skills and knowledge to implement this process effectively with my students. It is a wonderful guidebook with a comprehensive look at SFBC that is practical for use in and out of the school setting.

References

Campbell, P.R. (1994) Population projections for states, by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin: 1993 to 2020. *Current population reports, Series P25-111*. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census

Pages: 165 Price: \$27.95 ISBN: 1-4129-0458-7

Reviewed by Stacie R. Schoellman, Adams State College. A student in the MA program for School Counseling. She is also a counselor at Gunnison Middle School in Gunnison, Colorado.



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