

Early Literacy

BOOK REVIEWS

Book Title: *The Sandbox Investment
The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics*

Author: David L. Kirp

About the author:

David L. Kirp is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of 14 books, most recently *Shakespeare, Einstein and the Bottom Line*.

Publisher: Harvard University Press, 2007

ISBN: 0674026411

Book Type: Education, preschool, politics, sociology/Non-fiction

Summary:

The Sandbox Investment presents a strong case for high-quality early education. The author taps arguments from history, sociology, neurology, economics, politics and education to heighten the need for Pre-K programs in America today. Building on the results of the Perry Preschool longitudinal study, Kirp also cautions that preschool programs cannot be available only for some children in America, but must be available for all.

Opinion:

In light of the current political spotlight on the importance of early childhood and preschool programs, this is an important book. It explores the history of the preschool movement in the U.S., the political realities and the economic arguments for its importance. Like Jonathan Kozol's books, it is a startling and eye-opening look at an issue in every community in the country. The historical perspective and the description of preschools challenge to the reader is to take action, not to crumble in despair. This book clearly defines the arguments for high quality preschool programs for all. Advocates already use this work. Generalists in public education would benefit from a thorough reading as well.

By Kathleen Graham Kelly, Ed.D
NYSUT Research and
Educational Services

Book Title: *Ready to Learn*
How to Overcome Social and Behavioral Issues
in the Primary Classroom

Authors: Jeanne Shub and Amy De Weerd

About the authors:

Jeanne Shub is a child psychologist specializing in learning and school-related problems. She has taught in the primary grades and been a school consultant supervising teachers, school psychologists, school social workers and speech therapists. She created Interplay in 1983 and has led professional workshops on it throughout this country and abroad.

Amy DeWeerd has spent the past 20 years teaching elementary school. She has taught the Interplay program as a graduate course in Albany, N.Y., as well as leading workshops for parents, teachers, administrators and social workers since 1994. She also writes children's stories.

Publisher: Heineman, NH 2006

ISBN: 0325008752

Book Type: Education/Non-fiction

Summary:

Shub and DeWeerd's book clearly describes the elements of a classroom practice that is designed to help young children understand how their behavior affects others. Interplay, a classroom practice or activity, can be woven into instruction for primary students, special-needs students in activities that require 40 minutes of classroom time once a week. Part 1 describes the principles and strategies of the Interplay model and its research foundations. Part 2 gives specific steps for putting the Interplay model into practice.

The Interplay model uses creative problem-solving, stories and role-playing appropriate for very young children to help address social, emotional and behavioral aspects that can compromise students' readiness to learn. Through metaphorical adventures the students are led to develop positive attitudes and thinking skills related to the following values: believing you can learn, enjoying

continued on following page

Book Title: *Ready to Learn
How to Overcome Social and Behavioral Issues
in the Primary Classroom*

(continued)

learning, showing self-regulation and self-awareness, being willing to make mistakes and take risks, paying attention, respecting your own and other students' efforts, accepting help and direction from others, and understanding and practicing the social rules for functioning in classroom activities. The techniques of change built into the model include scaffolding, metaphor, intentional modeling, dramatic role-play, stories and reframing.

Part 2 of the book presents lesson designs for units to be used in kindergarten, first, second and third grade. While the units can stand alone, the power of the potential for change is in the scaffolding of the metaphors from year to year. Each lesson includes the goal, materials required, a copy of the metaphoric story, teacher tips and potential problems with solutions. The book concludes with an appendix with specific directions to the teacher and a subject-specific bibliography and Web site resource list.

Opinion:

The testimonials from a BOCES superintendent, a principal and teachers convinced me that this book is a valuable resource for classroom teachers. With the narrowing of curriculum created by the assessments in No Child Left Behind, a plea for retaining creative play has been shouted by early childhood educators across America. This program gives the teacher a creative approach for addressing non-productive behaviors while still building language-rich activities that lead to higher thinking skills. The units are fun, creative and active with scripting provided for the teacher and adaptation encouraged.

Although Interplay was first developed as a behavior modification strategy to be used with special-needs students it could easily be used with small and large groups and in inclusion classrooms in groups of any age through middle level.

Book Title: *Kindergarten Literacy:
Matching Assessment and Instruction in Kindergarten*

Author: Anne McGill-Franzen, Ph.D

About the Author:

Anne McGill-Franzen is professor and director of the reading center at the University of Tennessee. Prior to joining the university faculty, she was a professor of literacy at the University of Florida. She earned her Ph.D. at the State University of New York at Albany, where she was a professor in the reading department and associate dean of the Graduate School of Education. Previously, she was a Title I remedial reading teacher and special education consultant teacher. The focus of her professional work has been struggling readers, including policy that supports or constrains teachers' efforts to support children at risk.

Publisher: Scholastic

ISBN: 0-439-80034-X

Book Type: Education/Non-Fiction

Summary:

This approach to kindergarten literacy begins with a teacher's examination of instructional practice, including teacher goal-setting. The underlying assumption is that the most critical factor in the success of a kindergarten student is a well-informed and inspired teacher, not a cookbook of scripted activities. The author urges the reader to begin with self rather than with outside forces. But that is just the beginning. The book itself provides a framework for kindergarten literacy and includes both practical strategies for addressing literacy instruction in kindergarten and the research base that suggests each practice. Chapter 2 presents the research about print awareness, speaking and listening vocabulary and teacher-centered professional development through references to the Tennessee Kindergarten Literacy Project. In response to the overuse of DIBELS, an assessment tool required in Reading First schools in New York, the book describes a collection of practical, timely, easy-to-use assessment tools for systematically observing, documenting and interpreting children's literacy knowledge at the beginning, middle and end of the year. Chapter 4 takes the assessment results to the next phase, feedback to the teacher to modify instruction. She addresses the questions of how to use results, comparisons in local norms, and the use, strengths and weaknesses of assessments that accompany commercial materials. Chapter 5 presents a wide variety of instructional practices, routines and strategies for teaching the alphabet, names and words. Chapter 6 does the same for

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Book Title: *Kindergarten Literacy:
Matching Assessment and Instruction in Kindergarten*
(continued)

learning to write, including a sequence for writing development and accompanying instructional routines that foster children's written expression. The final chapter introduces the reading routines that help children increase their ability to decode and comprehend text.

Opinion:

Kindergarten Literacy is a core resource for teachers in that critical beginning school experience of kindergarten, as well as a valuable reference for all early childhood educators. It is teacher-friendly and it demonstrates belief in the importance of teacher as instructional decision-maker. The link between teacher professional development and change in literacy practice is at the heart of this book. This author is able to blend the competing interests in the dynamic field of literacy and especially in early literacy instruction. It should be a resource book in every kindergarten in New York.