

tools for the 21st-century information leader

MAKING STANDARDS USEFUL IN THE CLASSROOM

Robert J. Marzano and Mark W. Haystead

Of the hundreds of speakers every year at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) national convention, few draw bigger crowds than Robert Marzano. Known for his What Works series of books that spotlight research-supported practices for teaching, learning, and schooling in general—Marzano's extended view of education—backed by a long career of experiences with top thinkers, makes him a major attraction. This year, he spotlighted this new book (its full first printing was sold out in a matter of hours of release), which has some major practical suggestions.

As Marzano traces the standards movement in the United States, he notes that our school curriculum is bloated and suggests it would take at least 22 years to deliver if it were all covered the way it is laid out in the various standards documents. This is because mathematicians tend to think their subject is the most important one in the curriculum, and so they want it all covered. This can be said, too, of all curricular areas, and add to those the concerns of teacher-librarians. His solution? Reduce the number of topics for a school year to a maximum of fifteen so the current rush to cover would be replaced by more in-depth studies. This reviewer could not agree more. The knowledge of the world is expanding rapidly and if we continue to try to cover everything, we are all doomed to failure.

The second thing Marzano does is to recommend a standardized rubric for measurement across the various content areas—a scale upon which all teachers could agree and learners could expect. His scale goes from 0–4 with half-increments such as 2.5 or 3.5. The scale is appealing because at 3.0, a student has mastered the standard and gets the A. If the student scores above 3.5, that student has pushed into the excellence range, or what we would term, “the expertise to compete globally”. Such a notion counters the current mediocrity of NCLB, which only concentrates on students achieving the minimum at their particular grade level. These two ideas are exciting indeed, but only as far as they go. Some will argue that the power of letter grades is not covered well in his rubric scoring system because a 2.0 equals a C, a 2.5 is a B, and a 3.0 is an A—meaning there is a very narrow range between 0 and 4 where normal grading practices are understood by parents and students. That one can be solved, we think, but there are two major issues missing for teacher-librarians and the major ideas being pushed by the Partnership for 21st-Century Learning.

The first idea is “learning how to learn” (information literacy, media literacy, critical thinking, creative thinking, etc.) and the second is the explosion of information and technology. To be fair to Marzano, he does suggest rubrics for what he terms life skills including participation, work completion, behavior, and working in groups. But there is a world of learning necessary to learn strategies that Marzano has never addressed in his interests or in his research. The same goes for the expansion of the world of information and technology. These two areas seem not to have come onto Marzano's radar screen. This lack of understanding becomes quite amusing when he sets up rubrics for research in the language arts rubrics. (By fourth grade, students who can use an encyclopedia article to extract information will get an A and excel with a 4-point score if they can do detailed Internet searches.) These two blind spots are major deficiencies in our opinion. If we cut the number of topics studied, then students need to build and reflect on their learning skills simultaneously so they begin to understand that while they know and can do a great deal about some topics, they also have the power to learn and master anything they wish to learn. Students can understand. They are smart and they know how to learn. It is a powerful two-pronged thrust into global excellence. Thus, to teacher-librarians, this book is half the story and thus a challenge to its author to expand his vision into the real world of 21st-century information and technology systems. It is a challenge that many educators wish to ignore because they feel pressured to cover

just what is in the textbook. So, consider carefully the Marzano proposals in this book. (ASCD, 2008. 294 pp. \$30.95. 978-1-4166-0648-2.)

Bottomline: Teachers will surely have opinions about his recommendations. And, perhaps that is the sign of an engaging book. Is there such a thing as a half recommendation for a book? We will rate this one on Marzano's own rubric as being 1.5: "Partial knowledge of the simpler details and processes but major errors or omissions regarding the more complex issues and processes."

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN PRACTICE: TRAINING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND SUPERVISION, 2ND ED.

Gayle H. Gregory and Carolyn Chapman
This handbook is a companion volume to *Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All* written by the same author and published in 2007. The two books together provide a recommended and very practical plan for instituting differentiation in an entire school. The handbook provides many handouts, planning sheets, and flow charts for each stage of planning, developing, teaching, and assessing the work of both the adults and the students involved. A CD contains all the forms in the book so they are reproducible. Like many other professional books in education, there is no reference to the one vast store of information, materials, and knowledgeable partners who would and could be the key to differentiating for a diverse group of students—known as the library and the teacher-librarian. I suppose one cannot complain because none of the other specialists in the school receive any attention. So, once again, the onus for success is entirely on the classroom teacher. However, the framework for collaboration is stressed in the plan, so that any specialist who noses their way into the "tent" of the professional learning community would find much to contribute. There are a number of great books about differentiation on the market including the works of Carol Ann Tomlinson. And, the strategies of Richard and Becky DuFour are must-have guides. That being said, there are enough interesting strategies,

complete with planned handouts, in this work to make it a worthwhile purchase. (Corwin Press, 2008. 150 pp. \$65.95. 978-1-4129-3652-1.)

Bottom line: Recommended.

75 OUTRAGEOUS IDEAS FOR LIBRARIANS TO IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: FUN IDEAS TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS AND INSPIRE COLLABORATION

Laurie Noble Thelen

Of the many definitions of the word *outrageous*, we suppose our author means "highly unusual or unconventional; extravagant; or remarkable." Thus, one approaches this thin book with high anticipation. As we read the various activities, we applied the question Are two heads better than one? That is, would the combined efforts of teacher and teacher-librarian be better using these activities than if either of the partners tried to do them alone? This reviewer also looked at the process of collaboration, asking: Does

the information literacy goal for the lesson support the learning of the content objective? Does the assessment actually measure both the content and the information literacy skill to be taught? Does the learning activity actually match the objectives stated? Are the learning activities "outrageous?" Was there a "so what" activity at the end of the learning activity to stimulate higher-level thinking? And, finally, how likely would the activities contribute to achievement as stated? We think such questions should be emblazoned on planning sheets, posters, and into the minds and hearts of every teacher-librarian. When given the great gift of collaboration, how do we actually perform? We did find a few activities here that were mildly interesting, but not enough to justify the purchase of this book. However, the purchase might be justified for a professional development session with teacher-librarians at a district level. Take a copy of the book, cut it up, and distribute pages to teams of teacher-librarians. Using the rubric questions above, have the group critique

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and reinvent the activity they critique. Perhaps we could all gain better ideas of how we could contribute to teaching and learning. One plus is the accompanying CD that contains reproducible activities. (Linworth Publishing, 2008. 89 pp. \$39.95. 978-1-58683-232-2.)

Bottom line: So, in a strange way, buy this book and then be outrageous enough to move beyond it as you test your own creativity and skill.

100 MOST POPULAR NONFICTION AUTHORS: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Bernard A. Drew

High school students who have outgrown those juvenile novels and series books to become more sophisticated readers, they are often in search of more substantive nonfiction materials and authors who might stimulate interest in fields to major in during college, but also to stimulate personal exploration of new ideas. This collection of biographical sketches complete with lists of works written and sources for further information provides a guide to the major nonfiction authors of our time. You will recognize such authors as Frank McCord, David McCullough, Stephen Hawking, and Bob Woodward, but there are a host of other authors whom, as readers' advisors, we should know and be able to recommend. So, if you can afford this volume, it is a fine guide to the adult literature our teens should be familiar with before they go to college or into a specialty area. One negative is the index to genres in the back of the book. We wish the author had included the names of the authors. While you could Google every author included, the compilation of "the best" does have merit. (Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 459 pp. \$65.00. 978-1-59158-487-2.)

Bottom line: Recommended.

HOW TO COACH TEACHERS WHO DON'T THINK LIKE YOU: USING LITERACY STRATEGIES TO COACH ACROSS CONTENT AREAS

Bonnie M. Davis

Instructional coaches, specialists within the school, and teacher-librarians all have

something in common as they attempt to collaborate with classroom teachers—locked doors. Davis is not thinking about teacher-librarians, but writes eleven chapters that can be read/used as professional development conversations in any sequence. Her topics overlap teacher-librarians' concerns: moving from teaching students to coaching teachers; organizing to save stress, time, and mistakes; coaching teachers who don't think like you; scheduling time for coaching; and, coaching teams of teachers to improve instruction. Davis assumes a coach does not have a warehouse to tend as teacher-librarians do, however, there are enough good ideas here to consider for collaborative strategies not already in the literature of teacher-librarians. The idea occurs to us that if there are other specialists in the school who are having the same problem we are, then why not ban together as a professional learning community of specialists with concerned administrators and get a focused program of coaching going throughout the school that has a better chance for real change and impact on achievement. (Corwin Press, 2008. 214 pp. \$35.95. 978-1-4129-4910-1.)

Bottom line: We recommend the book for ideas not only for ourselves, but for other struggling professionals like ourselves.

TWELVE ROLES OF FACILITATORS FOR SCHOOL CHANGE, 2ND ED.

R. Bruce Williams

Teacher-librarians who wish to be leaders in the school need to read the leadership literature, "talk" its major ideas, and walk them. Williams writes for anyone intent on school change through a very collaborative strategy. It is worth noting the chapters of the book:

(1) A process leader sees the big picture, builds consensus, and steers the process.

(2) A skills trainer devises strategies, leads the team, and announces the game.

(3) A resource consultant organizes the project, overcomes obstacles, and advertises success.

(4) A group energizer stays true to the score, harmonizes the environment, and celebrates the performance.

The various chapters can be read individually rather than serially. It is really valuable

that each chapter has the excellent graphic organizers and "worksheets" for the use of professional learning community groups who are focusing on the topic of that chapter. Thus, this book is instantly useful, not just for its ideas, but also for an immediate use with teacher, specialist, or administrative teams. The various organizers are reprinted in the back of the book for easy duplication. For teacher-librarians who want to lead from the middle and not from the spotlight, read the various major ideas and pass the book to the person who will lead, and together you can plan the various techniques that will push faculty to consider real change in the school. (Corwin Press, 2008. 257 pp. \$80.95. 978-1-4129-6112-7.)

Bottom line: Highly recommended for its combination of good ideas and practical strategies.

SUMMARIZATION IN ANY SUBJECT: 50 TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

Rick Wormeli

We usually do not review books older than a year, but this title drew attention to itself at a recent ASCD conference. So few books or articles give attention to the skill of summarization or synthesis that we thought it necessary to review this one. Perhaps language arts textbooks cover this topic. Perhaps teachers regularly teach it. Then why is it so difficult when kids and teens need to do research using many different sources? Why is it so difficult to pick out the main ideas and then describe those ideas in synonymous terms but not the actual verbiage of the author? Could it be that it really is just difficult, taught improperly, or just a sign of kids' laziness? In any event, whatever the cause, Wormeli provides fifty strategies for teaching this beast as opposed to fifty ways to leave your lover (that old joke). Right there, this book is worth its price, because, in this day of cut and paste, drastic measures need to be taken. In the latest presidential elections, we see commentators take statements out of context all the time. Perhaps we should recommend this one for every reporter: what is the big idea here and how can I make it my own? The ideas given are in a 2- to 3-page explanation with examples, so they are easily sampled and analyzed for

worth and even for testing out on a crowd of researchers. (ASCD, 2005. 221 pp. \$29.95. 978-1-4166-0019-0.)

Bottom line: Can't miss on this one.

COMMUNITIES THAT LEARN, LEAD, AND LAST: BUILDING AND SUSTAINING EDUCATIONAL EXPERTISE

Giselle O. Martin-Kniep

We have reviewed a number of books on professional learning communities simply because they hold the best promise of change within a school and, if teacher-librarians are involved, an opportunity to include the library directly into a serious conversation. We have particularly recommended the works of the DuFours (*Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*, (PLC) Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree, 2002; 978-1-879639-89-8) as the most practical guides to PLCs as they are known, but this work by Martin-Kniep is particularly attractive because it provides not only practical advice for creating and sustaining PLCs, but also rubrics that help groups reflect on their goals, their organization, their progress, and the results. These rubrics or reflection pieces are spread throughout the text and then are collected in the appendix for easy use. The author has a great deal of experience as president of Communities for Learning, a non-profit located in New York. The writing is clear, sensible, and with enough practical suggestions that this is a must read. For folks who have experimented with and failed at PLCs, we still recommend this as a good read. What is the mechanism in your school to engage in serious conversation about teaching and learning? Whatever that mechanism, this book would provide guidance on reflection on the organization and strategies for success. Sometimes popular ideas like PLCs are tried and fail for various reasons, but the lack of conversation is no solution to anything. (Jossey-Bass, 2007. 240 pp. \$29.00. 978-0-7879-8513-4.)

Bottom line: a must purchase and a good read.

WEB 2.0: NEW TOOLS, NEW SCHOOLS

Gwen Solomon and Lynne Schrum

There are a number of books on the market

celebrating the possibilities and opportunities that Web 2.0 technology might provide to schools. This one is as good as any on the market. The authors know what they are talking about and their audience is both administrators and tech directors, although we are recommending that teacher-librarians would benefit greatly since so many are utilizing this technology. It is always good with a topic like this to compare one's own expertise with that of the authors to see if they have thought of angles you haven't. While the material is dated the instant it is in print, there are enough current applications present to bring more possibilities to teaching and learning than one can barely manage. We appreciated the various theoretical stances and reviews of the current ideas of the place technology should take in schooling. Of course, we are concerned that online databases and libraries are ignored. However teacher-librarian leaders go on reminding everyone of the great uses we know to make and our willingness to benefit from other ideas no matter where they emerge. (ISTE, 2007. 270 pp. \$34.95. 978-1-56484-234-3.)

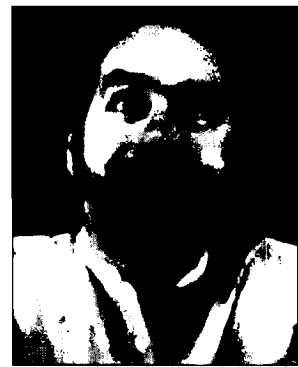
Bottom line: Recommended both for the novice and the moderately advanced professional looking for new ideas to fill gaps in understanding.

DEEPER LEARNING: 7 POWERFUL STRATEGIES FOR IN-DEPTH AND LONGER-LASTING LEARNING

Eric Jensen and LeAnn Nickelsen

Every great teacher and teacher-librarian has a bag of tricks in their head that usually work or that can be modified in a moment's notice to adapt to learners of various types and in various situations. At first glance, our authors are headed directly there and are right on target. They present a model that pushes students toward more than surface learning. First, they suggest teachers begin with the standards statements, then build knowledge of the group they are working with, developing positive student engagement strategies, activating their prior knowledge, and then providing a plethora of strategies for activating and thinking about what they are learning—finally ending in evaluation. Most ideas are for engaging students in text and we liked

BOOKMARKIT



JOHN
PETERS

PICTURE BOOKS

NATURE: THIS PLACE IS WET!

I'm the biggest thing in the ocean!

Kevin Sherry. Dial, 2007. \$16.99. 978-0-8037-3192-9. Grades K-2. Not even being swallowed by a huge whale keeps an irrepressible squid down for long in this big, bright, exuberant picture book.

Little shark. Anne Rockwell. Ill. Megan Halsey. Walker, 2005. \$15.95. 978-0-525-47575-0. Grades 1-3. Combining uncluttered marine scenes with simply presented information, this profile follows a blue shark from birth to maturity.

Ocean seasons. Ron Hirschi. Ill. Kristen Carlson. Sylvan Dell Publishing, 2007. \$15.95. 978-0-8027-8955-6. Grades 1-3. The ocean too has its seasons, as Hirschi shows by taking readers through an annual cycle along the northern Pacific coast.

Octopus oyster hermit crab snail: A poem of the sea. Sara Anderson. Handprint Books, 2005. \$16.95. 978-1-59354-079-1. Grades 1-3. Richly colored art and rhythmic verse takes readers on an exhilarating ride from reef to deepest sea, and back up to the beach—with stops to observe some of the wildlife along the way.

Sea horse: The shyest fish in the sea.

Chris Butterworth. Ill. John Lawrence. Candlewick, 2006. \$16.99. 978-0-7636-2989-2. Grades 2-3. Using two type sizes for different levels of detail, Butterworth presents basic facts about these unusual fish, including how a newborn leaves her father's pouch to face life on a coral reef.

Turtle tide: The ways of sea turtles.

Stephen R. Swinburne. Ill. Bruce Hiscock. Boyds Mills, 2005. \$15.95. 978-1-59078-081-7. Grades 2-4. One hatchling loggerhead turtle beats long odds to survive its first few days of life in this dangerous world.



SARA
CATHERINE
HOWARD

YA NONFICTION

AROUND THE WORLD

Genius of China: 3,000 years of science, discovery and invention (Rev. ed.) Robert Temple. Inner Traditions, 2007. \$19.77. 978-1-59477-217-7. Grades 9-12.

Divided into eleven parts, this beautifully illustrated work describes a broad spectrum of inventions from China. World history study will benefit from the in-depth treatment as well as the extensive back matter including maps, timelines, and index.

In the land of the jaguar: South America and its people. Gena K. Gorrell. Tundra Books, 2007. \$19.97. 978-0-88776-756-2. Grades 7-12. Described as a "sampler" of information, discover the broad spectrum that covers history, heroes, and more with chapters arranged by country. Contains colorful illustrations, source notes, bibliography, and a detailed index making this perfect for school projects.

South Africa (Countries in the News). Michael Gallagher. Black Rabbit Books, 2008. \$18.95. 978-1-59920-020-0. Grades 6-10. This useful series covers eight countries: South Africa, Afghanistan, China, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, that are in the forefront of many news stories. In addition to an over view of the history of South Africa, there are boxed facts and questions for the reader to consider, for example, "is life behind (security) walls a help or hindrance in the fight against crime?" A timeline, additional basic facts, glossary, Web sites, and an index ends the book.

Teens in Turkey (Global Connections). Alexandra Lilly. Compass Point, 2008. \$25.28. 978-0-7565-3414-1. Grades 6-10. With a new point of view for country books, readers explore locations around the world through the eyes of native teens. The book includes a "Looking Ahead" chapter, an historical timeline, glossary, source notes, bibliography, and an index that provides broad support for reference.

the many worksheets that force the learner to interpret and think about what they are reading and doing. However, these authors need a good teacher-librarian who would introduce them to the world of information and technology adding strategies not only for various information types but also information literacy. The result would be finding activities that are a culmination of what they know and how they learned it. So, if you need text-based engagement strategies, this is a book to purchase and study. However, for a collaborative tool that pushes kids into the real world of the Internet, film, and web 2.0, I am looking for something much deeper. (Corwin Press, 2008. 312 pp. \$40.95. 978-1-4129-5203-3.)

Bottom line: Not recommended.

TEAMWORK: SETTING THE STANDARD FOR COLLABORATIVE TEACHING, GRADES 5-9

Monique D. Wild, Amanda S Mayeaux, and Kathryn P. Edmonds

What does collaboration really look like, feel like, and how does it really work? Three middle school teachers, who as a team won the Disney Teacher of the Year Award, describe the formation of a dynamic teaching team that is able to make a major difference in their school. How does a team get beyond the business of the day, the barriers, and the mundane, to really work together on the improvement of teaching and learning? This book is worth the read to ascertain how this particular team succeeds and their recommendations for the rest of us. No longer in the school together, I wondered how much involvement other specialists had in their success, because they really do not mention the impact of either the library or the teacher-librarian. Checking with their teacher-librarian, I find there is a bit of collaboration going on. One wishes there were more—more opportunities for all the specialists in the school to realize that even the best teacher teams can improve with the ideas from others. (Stenhouse, 2008. 176 pp. \$18.00. 978-1-57110-711-4.)

Bottom line: This book is worth reading because so many strategies discussed will work elsewhere with local adaptations. **Highly recommended.**

A GUIDE TO CO-TEACHING: PRACTICAL TIPS FOR FACILITATING STUDENT LEARNING, 2ND ED.

Richard A. Villa, Jacqueline S. Thousand, and Ann I. Nevin

If you can get on Richard Villa's calendar, you can probably get on anyone's. This popular speaker with his two coauthors come from the field of special education, but they introduce the concept of co-teaching to the wider audience of teachers in this book. In their definition of co-teaching (that is the teacher-librarian's code for collaboration), the authors say: "Co-teaching can be likened to a marriage. Partners must establish trust, develop and work on communication, share the chores, celebrate, work together creatively to overcome the inevitable challenges and problems, and anticipate conflict and handle it in a constructive way." They cite the benefits as follows:

- Two heads are better than one
- Opportunities to use research-based interventions
- Increased capacity to problem-solve and learn individually
- Empowerment of co-teaching partners
- Increased teacher-to-student ratio, leading to better teaching and learning conditions
- A greater sense of community in the classroom (and we would add, in the school)
- Co-teachers report professional growth, professional support, and enhanced motivation
- Increased job satisfaction

They back up their claims with a few research studies reported in several special education research journals. As with the teacher-librarian literature, they see there are various levels of co-teaching from cooperation through actual co-teaching where both partners are on the stage together. Thus we have specialists who are working with teachers who have special education students integrated into their classroom and they are trying to figure out how a specialist and a teacher can make a difference larger than they could make separately. That is why this book is essential reading for teacher-librarians. How do

others propose getting into the classroom? What are their techniques? How do they actually make a difference? Here is a work to compare their techniques with the teacher-librarian's set of strategies developed over the years. No, we are not in this picture, but we could be. It is a challenge all specialists face. Perhaps the most effective approach is to gang up together and do a frontal assault on the fortress. (Corwin Press, 2008. 213 pp. \$75.95. 978-1-4129-6058-8.)

Bottom line: Highly recommended.

LAO FOLKTALES

Wajuppa Tossa with
Kongdeuane Nettavong and
Margaret Read MacDonald

We continue to review this important series of books because they bring collections of tales and stories from a wide variety of cultures throughout the world that are not usually on the radar screen of many collection development librarians. The prominent storyteller, Margaret Read MacDonald, has assembled this collection from two authentic Lao scholars and turned them into tales that can be used with children, teens, and adults who want to hear authentic stories and look into the culture. (Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 209 pp. \$40.00. 978-1-59158-345-5.)

Bottom line: Worth using for comparative folktale lessons and where a Laotian population is in your school or community.

INSTRUCTION FOR ALL STUDENTS; 2ND ED.

Paula Rutherford

Need a bluffer's bible? Need a one-page summary of several hundred major educational ideas and strategies? Well, here is your source. The author summarizes the central ideas and provides one or more publications to pursue the idea further. Is the coverage sufficient to understand and immediately practice? No. But it does offer a central kernel of an idea. The ideas are grouped in sections: In the news and influencing our thinking: lesson & unit design, presentation modes, active learning, assignments, assessment, differentiation, thinking skills, the learning environment, and collaboration. The one-page ideas include 21st-century skills, self-assessment,

graphic organizers, task analysis, job-embedded learning, technology integration, and a host of other ideas. So, why acquire this book? Simply, so you can define a topic in educational jargon and pursue it. One can't become well acquainted here, but it is a start. The book comes with a CD of the pages that can be used as handouts. So, if you want to cram for a professional learning community discussion, here is a brief summary. Of course, to use the one page as "all I know about a concept" is not very wise, but at least it provides a beginning for further investigation. And, that is why we think you will find some interesting quick reading here. (Just Ask Publications, 2008, 320 pp. \$34.95. 978-0-9777796-8-0.)

Bottom line: Recommended.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION WITH TECHNOLOGY IN K-5 CLASSROOMS

Grace E. Smith and Stephanie Throne

Technology specialists who are really into instructional computing rather than systems and networks often build a major repertoire of the features of various software packages and applications that will actually boost teaching and learning. These folks have the ability to store an encyclopedia of ideas in their heads and when an instructional problem arises, they have about ten different ways to boost teaching and learning through technology. Our authors, using this creativity direct their attention to differentiation. They create ways to deal with different readiness of students, adjusting by learning profile, differences in content, and types of products, by teaching subject area, techniques to assess learning, and various ways to manage the classroom. This is a dense book with many, many ideas but also good tabular information that helps the reader make sense of those ideas. Teacher-librarians need a wide repertoire of these ideas since they need to master as many technologies as any specialist in the school. (ISTE, 2008. 248 pp. \$37.95. 978-1-56484-233-6.)

Bottom line: We would call this one required reading from which a larger repertoire of effective strategies can be built. Important.

BOOKMARKIT



JOE SUTLIFF
SANDERS

GRAPHIC NOVELS

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Super spy. Matt Kindt. Top Shelf Productions, 2007. \$19.95. 978-1-891830-96-9. Grades 10 and up. Through short stories that skip back and forth between the time of the Nazis and its aftermath, *Super Spy* slowly, allusively tells a story of marred beauty, betrayal, and rare love.

This work is extraordinary, balancing its challenging, fractured narrative with a plot that grabs both the half of the heart that wants action and the half of the heart that wants people to love each other despite their loneliness. Its cast is broad and varied, and readers find themselves trying to unmask the real super spy, the wounded and brilliant manipulator shrouded behind the rest.

Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. Darwyn Cooke, J. Bone, and Dave Stewart. DC Comics, 2007. \$24.99. 978-1-4012-1461-6. Grades 7 and up. Denny Colt promised to call the cops before anything serious happened, but the cops were slow, and Denny wanted to be a hero. Now the world thinks him dead, and Denny uses his wits and fists to haunt the underworld as the man known as *The Spirit*.

Will Eisner wrote *The Spirit* for decades, turning it into the premier venue for visual experimentation in masked men comics. With Eisner's passing, DC has resurrected the character using the talents of a writer who has made a name for himself as someone who can see familiar characters from a fresh angle. The result is a skillfully crafted, funny, surprising, and compelling story that grabs new readers even as it treats the old material like a trusted friend.

BOOKMARKIT



LIZETTE HANNEGAN
& SHARON GROVER

THE POWER OF MEDIA SPECIALISTS TO RAISE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND STRENGTHEN AT-RISK YOUTH

Jami Biles Jones and Alana M. Zambone
Two fresh new voices from East Carolina University, one with a library voice and the other with a view from special education, combine to create an expectation for reforming library media programs. They center their vision based on the needs of at-risk kids, an alarming problem in this country and getting worse under NCLB. However, they embrace the visions of NCLB and feel that we can as teacher-librarians reach those who may or may not be reached in the classroom. To do this, they propose that a healthy set of dispositions or attitudes on the part of the teacher-librarian is a critical element. Attitudes move from caring too much about the warehouse to caring for the young people who can benefit from its services and environment. We have observed that many teacher-librarians that are discouraged with not getting into a close collaborative relationship with the faculty often turn their attention and focus to building the best relationships they can with their clients, the students. They reason that if the library is an engaging place with meaningful inclusion activities, then the at-risk group will begin to respond and as they do so, we have a chance to make a difference in their education. We could not agree more that library media programs are only successful if the teacher-librarian has the skills and disposition to connect to learners. It would be a major step forward if, in a lunchroom test of attitudes about the library, young people around the table would report that the library is a relevant and engaging place. What a triumph that would be. However, as good as these authors' arguments are, there is a major element missing, we believe, and that is the world of technology that engaged students into a social network that attracts their attention and seems like the real world to so many. We think these authors have a good first step idea, but it is not strong enough to engage many of the youth who currently consider school and libraries as irrelevant and boring. In any event, we

think this thin book/long essay deserves some attention. They target district library supervisors and those who train teachers. We think the rank and file teacher-librarians should engage in this important, if not complete discussion of changing library programs into something regarded as essential. (Linworth, 2008. 105 pp. \$39.95. 978-1-58683-229-2.)

Bottom line: Recommended as a discussion piece.

STOP THE COPYING WITH WILD AND WACKY RESEARCH PROJECTS

Nancy Polette

Nancy, the clever, provides a plethora of quickie projects kids can do in the library during their library time that are just a half-step up from the typical cut and paste worksheet. However, we would recommend that for the short time periods kids have in the library if scheduled there, it is better to engage them in reading and build those avid and capable readers than to do low-level information activities disconnected from the curriculum. In other words, try to compensate for the boredom of the reading skill/drill/kill program to build interest and a life-long fascination with books. (Teacher Ideas Press, 2008. 167 pp. \$35.00. 978-1-59158-696-8.)

Bottom line: So, this is not a book to pass by. Check out Polette's other books connected to reading to discover the fun stuff she does so well.



AUDIOBOOKS

SECONDARY

Key: C=cd, c=cassette, p=paperback, h=hardcover

Bloody Jack: Being an account of the curious adventures of Mary 'Jacky' Faber, ship's boy. L.A. Meyer. Read by Katherine Kellgren. Listen & Live Audio, 2007. \$29.95. C: 978-1-59316-094-4. Grades 8-12. Tired of subsisting on the grimy streets of London, young Mary transforms herself into a cabin boy aboard the HMS *Dolphin*. Her exploits are thrilling and terrifying, including bloody battles with pirates and the unwanted attentions of a shipmate. Kellgren's narration brings additional authenticity to a tale containing rich details of 18th century British life.

The rules of survival. Nancy Werlin. Read by Daniel Passer. Listening Library, 2007. \$38.00. C: 978-0-7393-5115-4. Grades 8-12. As he gets ready to leave for college, Matthew attempts to make sense of life with a psychotic mother by writing it all down in a letter to his youngest sister. A heartbreaking tale of three young people trying to stay safe is read with just the right amount of stoic detachment in a story that seems ripped from today's headlines.

Treasure Island. Robert Louis Stevenson. Read by Alfred Molina. Listening Library, 2007. \$55.00. C: 978-0-7393-5083-6. Grades 6-12. A venerable swashbuckling classic is given new life in this Odyssey Honor production. From breathless teenaged Jim and blustering foolish Squire Trelawney, to smoothly menacing Long John Silver, Molina spirits listeners away to another time and place, rife with peril and adventure. An afterword by maritime scholar David Cordingley makes this perfect for high school classroom use.