

## resources for the leader in transition

### EMPOWERING LEARNERS: GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAMS

American Association of School Librarians

Speaking of transitioning school library media programs, AASL has recently issued the companion document to its *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* document published in 2007. *Empowering Learners* replaces the 1998 *Information Power* guidelines and has been in preparation for over two years. For a half century and more, in a number of editions of guidelines, teacher-librarians have been constructing and reconstructing a role that they believe would place them at the heart of teaching and learning in the school. Such documents attempt not only to clarify but predict and outline a role that can be carried out in a decade or so into the future. This edition has some important foundational ideas that will make many professionals uncomfortable but must be faced if the profession is to survive and grow. The first is the awareness that every teacher-librarian must come to terms with the vast change in technology that must be mastered if they are going to remain relevant. We are impressed that the focus on technology is not the glitz of systems, tools, and networks, but on squarely meeting the idea that teacher-librarians must be experts in maximizing high quality teaching and excellence in learning by exploiting the capabilities and opportunities technology tools provide. The second major notion is that collaborative co-teaching with classroom teachers is the ONLY way to deliver on the promise of having an effect on/improving student achievement. No bird units please. No quick library lessons taught in isolation of the classroom. No separate curriculum of just information literacy/research skills. No more teaching the location of information to a class and then sending them back to the classroom to complete their assignments and projects. Concentrating only on the joy of reading and research skills is not the point of view here. There are larger considerations of expanded literacy; an expanded role in the full process of inquiry from the planning through the assessment. Many are likely to read this expanded role as super human. The reader comes face-to-face with the idea that daily routines are not the routines of collection organization, maintenance, and circulation. The guidelines recognize that the virtual collection now surpasses exponentially the print collection making it possible to serve teachers and learners 24/7/365. There are major worries about equity, intellectual freedom, and responsible use of information. The guidelines focus on the leadership skills necessary to move from outside the circle of teaching and learning that is so common, to the skills needed to pierce through the locked door of the classroom. We applaud the writing team for solidifying the centralized role of literacy, inquiry, and

technology. We would have liked to see more radical thinking and an urgency to pursue change, but we think these guidelines stated the obvious message that this profession, if it is to survive, must aim for a central target and then let nothing get in the way of hitting the bull's eye of excellence. Read and re-read this document over the summer. Think about its relationship to other major documents such as the ISTE NETS, Route 21, International Reading Association's (IRA) positions on expanded literacy, and 21st Century learning skills. The vision is there and if we do not meet it, others will take our place. That may seem a threat, yet it is the most fabulous opportunity this profession has had. As professor Vi Harada said in her recent book, "It is a journey worth leading." (ALA, 2009, 65 pp. \$39.95. 978-0-8389-8519-9.)

**Bottom line:** Buy two copies; read and study one; have your principal read the other; and, sit down for a heart-to-heart talk.

### NINE THOUSAND STRAWS: TEACHING THINKING THROUGH OPEN-INQUIRY LEARNING

Jean Sausele Knott

At the last ASCD national conference, I ran across the following concurrent session title: Teaching Thinking to Children Through Open-inquiry Learning. Interested, I attended the session and discovered the author had written an amazing book that I had neglected to review in 2008. My advice is to acquire a copy of this amazing book and read the first few chapters and sample the seemingly hundreds of

ideas for hands-on learning that stimulate higher-level thinking. For years and years, it seems, crafts in schools were thought of as restful, recreational, and take-a-break from learning activities. We have, in other reviews, made fun of the "crayola curriculum" that results in all the cutesy take-home projects that are fun for the moment but really meaningless in terms of major learning goals. Dr. Knodt set up in a public school an inquiry lab based on the principles of habits of mind, inquiry, and thinking. This book is an account of that experience but is also a recipe for using the think, think, think idea in any elementary school. More important as we have developed our own ideas of the transformation of the library media center into the learning commons of the school, we instantly recognize that the active learning here, the creativity, the inquiry, and the thinking fit perfectly in the type of learning commons that is central to the school. We have envisioned the learning commons as a place where all the specialists of the school work together to knock down the classroom door and team with classroom teachers to achieve the goals that have been heaped upon that classroom teacher. After reading the first several chapters of this book, imagine Knodt and her teacher-librarian joining together, not to have two separate spaces, but a single space in the school where inquiry is explored—not just in a sea of information, but in hands-on projects and challenges that foster habits of minds. Knodt has an art background and a brilliant mind. Her program reaches the individual child in the lab, spreads like a pandemic into the classroom, the library (learning commons), out to the parents and homes, and into the community. It is a virus we could all dream about contracting. There are enough ideas here that would keep you busy integrating into those learning commons great learning experiences for a year. (Teacher Ideas Press, 2008. 324 pp. \$30.00. 978-1-59158-640-1.)

**Bottom line:** Amazing ideas, creative strategies, and practical tips make this book a candidate for the best professional book list of the year. Get it; read it; try its ideas. And, watch for a forthcoming article by its author in a future issue of *Teacher Librarian*.

### **SAFE PRACTICES FOR LIFE ONLINE: A GUIDE FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL**

**Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe**

Teacher-librarians are often worried about accessibility of web sites and Web 2.0 tools for students. However, opportunities to interact online during the school day are increasing in spite of many horror stories and tech directors who just say no. As access opens up, the opportunities to teach young people how to create their own information spaces, manage those information spaces, and manage themselves in those information spaces increase. Fodeman, a tech director and Monroe, a clinical social worker, team up to create over one hundred quick exercises to do with teens to help them manage themselves in the wonderful yet unpredictable world of the Internet. They cover a wide spectrum of topics including screen names and passwords, identity theft, cyberbullying, instant messaging, social networking, media literacy, phishing, giving out personal information, and safety at home. What we like about this book is that a several-page introduction about the problem is provided for the adult reader. It is good to read these essays because we may not, as adults, be aware of the problem and it helps us communicate to the students, some of whom are more tech savvy than we are. These essays are followed up by a number of quick exercises that can be done quickly with kids. These exercises can be integrated into assignments and explorations when they fit and when they might be remembered by the students. We would have liked to see a teacher-librarian on this writing team to cover some concerns that we have, but, bottom line, this is a book to own and use. Its emphasis is on asking probing questions of the teens and participating with them in the construction of safe practices rather than telling them what not to do. (ISTE, 2009. 241 pp. \$29.95. 978-1-56484-248-0.)

**Bottom line:** A must purchase.

### **THE EDUCATION WEEK GUIDE TO K-12 TERMINOLOGY**

**Mary-Ellen Phelps Deily**

You probably already have a dictionary of educational jargon on your shelves but probably not one quite as recent as this

thin handy volume. While I found this dictionary missing a number of terms I was interested in (for example, information literacy), I have found and enjoyed reading the author's perspective of what various terms mean in her survey of the literature. For example, librarians talk about collaboration and define that in many ways. I have adopted the term co-teaching to signify the highest level of collaboration between classroom teacher and teacher-librarian. According to Phelps Deily, that term comes from special education and means the joint teaching by two adults for a learning activity or unit of instruction. So, I recommend this inexpensive dictionary and I keep it close by not because it is complete but because of its currency. The coverage of terms, legislation, and trendy ideas helps teacher-librarians speak the language of education. (Jossey-Bass, 2009. 133 pp. \$14.95. 978-0-470-40668-7.)

**Bottom line:** Recommended.

### **THE INSIDE SCOOP: A GUIDE TO NONFICTION INVESTIGATIVE WRITING AND EXPOSÉS**

**Sarah Stutz Cords**

There is an entire genre of investigative reporting that comes in a variety of flavors including the exposé, immersion journalism, character profiles, political reporting, and business reporting as the broad general categories with many sub-flavors under each type. These are the types of books we hear covered on television news shows when they are promoting the latest books of many celebrities. For older teens—those budding activists—here is their fodder for those power lunch book clubs with a few faculty readers mixed in. Among the several hundred fully annotated titles complete with the various indexes, there is certain to be something to please the sophisticated reader. And why not? How much of this stuff is just wild ideas and speculation? *The Inside Scoop* features several reads that are sure to promote argument, debate, and maybe stimulate some powerful writing across the blogs and Internet by that group of students ready and willing to go national and global. They deserve our attention too! (Libraries Unlimited, 2009. 449 pp. \$52.00. 978-1-59158-650-0.)

**Bottom line:** Recommended.

KATHLEEN  
ODEAN

## POPULAR SERIES FICTION FOR K-6 READERS: A READING AND SELECTION GUIDE

Rebecca L. Thomas and Catherine Barr  
You have got to be kidding! Over 1,000 pages listing series books for children? This book provides the evidence for what publishers obviously know about series books. Kids love them. And, if you are a teacher-librarian worth your salt, of course you are going to have complete sets of all of them...well, that is what they expect and you know it. Isn't it easy to track down this stuff on the Internet? Publishers catalogs? Folksonomies? Well, convenience in a five-pound book does seem attractive. We think however, teacher-librarians horde such a work rather than put it on a dictionary stand for kids—we mean, series aficionados to use. So, with its annotations of the series as a whole and the ordered listing by number and year, and all the indexing, it is more about, a never up-to-date list to stock, promote, and most important, buy from. Can you just see those begging eyes wanting the next one just like the one they just finished? Give in. There are worse things than the series-addicted life. (Libraries Unlimited, 2009. 1002 pp. \$65.00. 978-1-59158-659-3.)  
Bottom line: Recommended.

## START-TO-FINISH YA PROGRAMS: HIP-HOP SYMPOSIUMS, SUMMER READING PROGRAMS, VIRTUAL TOURS, POETRY SLAMS, TEEN ADVISORY BOARDS, TERM PAPER CLINICS, AND MORE!

Ella W. Jones

Wow! What a title. Here are a group of program ideas for teens, mostly for the public library but also for schools serving teens where you want to get going some activities that attract those teens. Here is how I would suggest you use this book. Cut it up into the various chapters and pass the chapters around to a teen advisory group during a planning meeting. It is good for an idea starter, albeit an expensive one, in order to stimulate ideas for library programs that would attract a crowd. Yes, there is a poetry slam here. Performance programs by the teens themselves in a

kindlier venue than American Idol will be appropriate, particularly if you can archive some of this stuff. Yes, the teen school library/learning commons plus the virtual learning commons needs to be a place of performance, fun, and involvement. I cannot forget the school board member I met in a high school library one time who refused to come to the fourth annual poetry slam the next day where students would read their own poetry. She said, "I refuse to be in tears for a whole day for the fourth time as the kids bare their souls!" Perhaps the school learning commons should gain such a reputation. Perhaps it does not have to be just a place to escape from a class or the place to neck in the stacks, or...about anything else disruptive one can think about. The accompanying CD has lots of posters, forms, and brochures that duplicate the ideas in the book. Your students can create better ones than these, but they give the idea. (Neal-Schuman, 2009. 216 pp. with CD. \$75.00. 978-1-55570-601-2.)

Bottom line: So, here is one idea source with some traditional and some unique ideas. Just get started.

## ENGAGING ADOLESCENTS IN READING

John T. Guthrie, Ed.

Guthrie pulls together interesting information about understanding what motivates an adolescent to read and how knowing this can help develop key programming in reading. Issues are covered from the point of view of educational psychology. The premise of this book is that once the facets of why YA's read are understood, perhaps there is greater knowledge about how to best approach the issue of adolescent reading. Scientific in its approach, this book gives strategies that are both practical and doable. It offers templates for use in developing a program. (Corwin Press, 2008. 185 pp. \$34.00. 978-1-4129-5335-1.)

Bottom line: This type of information allows one to look at reading using a more holistic lens and is a fertile resource for developing reading in schools. Tls can learn many tips and tactics from this title. Recommended.—Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux

## > YA FICTION

### FEELING DIFFERENT

**Marcelo in the real world** Francisco X. Stork. Scholastic, 2009. \$17.99. 978-0-545-05474-4. Grades 8 and up. Marcelo doesn't want to spend the summer working at his father's law office but he's given no choice. His father thinks a dose of the "real world" would benefit the seventeen-year-old, who is at the high functioning end of the autism spectrum. In his new environment, Marcelo changes in unexpected ways in this entertaining, thought-provoking novel.

**North of beautiful** Justina Chen Headley. Little, Brown, 2009. \$16.99. 978-0-316-02505-8. Grades 8 and up. While a large port wine stain on her face keeps Terra from feeling beautiful, her father's constant harsh comments keep her from feeling confident or happy. Meeting Jacob, who sees beyond the surface, sparks new emotions in Terra that become stronger when she and her overweight, unhappy mother travel to China with Jacob and his dynamic mom.

**Owning it : Stories about teens with disabilities** Donald R. Gallo, Candelewick, 2008. \$17.99. 978-0-7636-3255-7. Grades 7-10. Chris Crutcher, Alex Flinn, David Lubar, Ron Koertge, and other top young adult writers explore how teens deal with different disabilities in this welcome short story collection. Whether the protagonist is a paraplegic contemplating romance or a boy with Tourette Syndrome asking just to be treated like everyone else, the stories reflect aspects of feeling different than fellow teens.

**Wintergirls** Laurie Halse Anderson. Viking, 2009. \$17.99. 978-0-670-01110-0. Grades 8 and up. Eighteen-year-old Lia details her anorexia in an almost stream-of-consciousness narrative that takes readers deep inside her. The death of her former best friend, the result of bulimia, intensifies Lia's unhappiness. Her involved, imperfect family struggles clumsily to help, but does Lia want to be cured? A complex, mesmerizing exploration.

## LESSON DESIGN FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION, GRADES 4-9

Kathy Tuchman Glass

Few authors of books on differentiated instruction address the need for various strategies to teach students with various learning styles and also the need for a wide spectrum of materials that will provide the diversity needed for various student needs. Glass gets it. She provides not only a structure for thinking about differentiation and how the classroom teacher can build a repertoire and method of teaching diverse learners, but incorporates a wide variety of materials and projects in the menu of the classroom. She is also one of the few that recognizes that a teacher-librarian might have a role, albeit a limited one. She recommends that the teacher ask the librarian to gather materials and is also someone who can assist students in searching the Internet. Perhaps one could use this resource as a stimulus to the world of media and then grab a larger role of co-teaching so that the differentiation coached by two adults would really stimulate every learner as they push toward excellence. Thus, if differentiation is of interest in your school and teachers begin to see that it does not work in an information-poor, media-poor, and Internet-deprived environment, then the teacher-librarian moves in with the rich resources along with learning skills, information literacy, and technology know-how to boost student engagement, involve every learner at their level, and bring the entire group toward much higher levels of understanding and skill. We have yet to find a differentiation book that reaches out to co-teach with the various specialists such as teacher-librarians and teacher technologists, but this one is a step in the right direction. (Corwin Press, 2009. 194 pp. \$75.95. 978-1-4129-5982-7.)

Bottom line: Highly recommended.

## MIXED HERITAGE IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Nancy Thalia Reynolds

Many children are now part of the mixed racial generation. Tiger Woods and President Obama may or may not identify with one culture or the other but can often identify with both or just consider themselves Americans. Are these children and young

people appearing in YA literature? At first, I thought that Reynolds would provide an annotated list of books for collection development. Not so. Reynolds writes a critical work that looks at a number of issues in the mixed heritage culture and then discusses in essay form these issues giving various examples of actual YA books both fiction and non-fiction. So, the book is valuable in a discussion of the issues or doing research on this topic in the literature. Books discussed are listed at the end of each chapter so in some sense, one can get an idea of the range of titles now beginning to appear in collections. Thus, if you are having a round-table discussion on this topic or researching for a paper or talk, this is a valuable work. (Scarecrow, 2009. 243 pp. \$37.80. 978-0-8108-5969-2.)

Bottom line: Recommended.

## INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Joseph B. Miller

Did you take an in-depth course in computers and technology while in library school? I did, back in the days of the punched cards! One does not need to be very old to admit familiarity with that era. But times have changed and Miller's book, written as a textbook for a technology course, is a current example of just what all librarians, including teacher-librarians, need to understand about the digital and virtual world. Check your knowledge against the topics of the table of contents to judge whether you need this book: Introduction (covers the history of computers and the Internet you have probably lived through), Networks (how they work whether wired or wireless), Internet Technologies TCP/IP, Internet Protocols (from email to http), Internet Computers and Security, Web Design, Graphic Printer, Web Publishing with HTML and XML, Styles in HTML, Web Programming, XML Printer, Internet Content, Information Retrieval, Internet Search, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. Well, how did you do? Such a book and a course in the topic poses a good question for all of us: How much do we really need to know and understand about the technical workings of the Internet and must we know HTML to be able to construct information spaces and assist patrons in searching and construction? Having given assignments

to graduate students to construct virtual learning commons using the various simple construction tools such as Google Sites, those who succeed the best are those who do have HTML background, but the tools keep getting better so that one begins to believe that to operate a refrigerator, you don't need a degree in engineering or manufacturing. Do you have to be a cataloger to use the OPAC effectively? Well, it does help, but it is becoming more and more optional. So, if you have the inclination to dig in deeper and have a week to attack the book, one chapter at a time, this is one choice among so many books on the market. (Libraries Unlimited, 2009. 387 pp. \$70.00. 978-1-59158-626-5.)

Bottom line: The advantage here is that Miller also speaks library in addition to computers. However, get it quick and read it while most of it is still current as it will date.

## FOCUSED INSTRUCTION: AN INNOVATIVE TEACHING MODEL FOR ALL LEARNERS

Gwen Doty

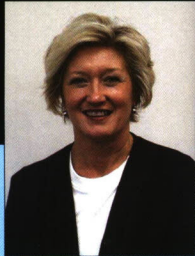
The author claims that his technique of teaching is innovative so it naturally draws our curiosity. And then we meet the real technique. First, divide your class into the eagles, the robins, and the buzzards...oh my. Surely the buzzards will know who they are and meet buzzard expectations. The second fatal flaw is that the goals for each group are at different levels so that the ideas of differentiation taught by such authors as Carol Ann Tomlinson are negated. And, of course, there is no push beyond the state standards toward excellence so our eagle group quickly meets the expectations but never get pushed off the cliff to test their wings. (Solution Press, 2008. 158 pp. \$27.95. 978-1-934009-28-4.)

Bottom line: Forget this one.

## SERVING URBAN TEENS

Paula Brehm-Heeger

Brehm-Heeger begins from the viewpoint that all teens deserve equal access to library services and makes this very apparent in her introduction. This book is a manual of strategies to use when developing possibilities that lead to this equity of access. Not just for school libraries, nor just for public



**RACHELLE  
LASKY BILZ**

## > ADULT BOOKS FOR OLDER TEENS

### KABUL

**The bookseller of Kabul.** Asne Seierstad. Back Bay Books, 2004. \$12.99. 978-0-316-15941-8. In 2001 Seierstad befriends Sultan Khan, a bookseller who accepts her request that she move in with his family. Seierstad writes about life in Kabul: the daily rituals, the separate lives of men and women, weddings, wearing a burka, and much more. The reader is transported to Afghanistan in this revelatory, insightful book.

**Kabul beauty school.** Deborah Rodriguez. Random House, 2007. \$14.95. 978-0-812-97673-1. Part of a relief team for the Care for All Foundation, Rodriguez stays in Kabul to run a cosmetology school. Privy to the gossip and camaraderie of the beauty salon, Rodriguez imparts immediacy to her story, enabling readers to feel part of these people's lives.

**The kite runner.** Khaled Hosseini. Riverhead Books, 2004. \$14.00. 978-1-594-48000-3. Set against Afghanistan's history of the past thirty years, this novel tells the tale of Amir, the son of a wealthy man, and Hassan, the son of his servant. Narrated by Amir, this powerful story examines the friendship's meaning, the terrible consequences of mistakes, and the interconnectedness of human lives.

**A thousand splendid suns.** Khaled Hosseini. Riverhead Books, 2007. \$25.95. 978-1-594-48950-1. Hosseini again spins a splendid story, this one about women. Mariam, the illegitimate daughter of a rich man, grows up in poverty; Laila, the daughter of educators, grows up middle class. In the midst of war-torn Kabul, their lives cross with poignant, tragic results. This affecting novel vividly reveals women's often heart-breaking lives in Kabul.

libraries, many of the ideas given here are well known but she adds a unique spin to how to best accomplish relevant and significant teen involvement in the library. (Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 228 pp. \$40.00. 978-1-58158-377-6.)

**Bottom line:** Keep this around as you think about creative strategies to involve urban teens in your library. Recommended.

—Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux

### UNCOVERING STUDENT IDEAS IN SCIENCE, VOLUME 4: 25 NEW FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PROBES

Page Keeley and Joyce Tugel NSTA (National Science Teachers Association) publishes a wide variety of resources for science teachers that link to national and state standards. This team of authors has now published four full volumes of various activities designed to help kids and teens think scientifically. For example, one of the activities in this book provides the students with a list of common things and asks them to decide which of the items such as cookies, sugar, salt, or vitamin pills would be considered "food." The object, of course, is to get the kids to perform the definition of "food" in order to place items in or outside of the scientific definition. For the teacher-librarian, such activities are not the kind of projects that promote the student's entrance into the world of information and technology. As such, they do not promote what we would refer to as examples of collaboration although they could be part of a larger unit about food that did send the learners into a more inquiry-focused learning activity. Science teachers may request such resources to be acquired for the professional collection and of course, the teacher-librarian would respond favorably but begin the conversation about the difference between isolated classroom activities and the more active inquiry projects that push the science class into the library/learning commons for research. Realizing this and knowing that scientific thinking is a valued part of information literacy, then these types of activities play a role in larger learning activity construction. The activities in these and other of the author's works can be used from elementary through high school. (National Science Teachers Association, 2009. \$184 pp. \$27.95. 978-1-935155-01-0.)

**Bottom line:** Purchase this one with a larger goal in mind since the authors are not going to recommend the larger explorations you as teacher-librarians would like to promote.

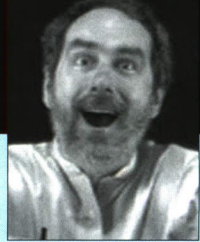
### CRITICAL APPROACHES TO YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Kathy Latrobe and Judy Drury  
It is fun to hold informal book club discussions with young adults about the literature they are enjoying and let them lead the discussion wherever they want to take it. However, Latrobe and Drury take us to a different level where we are challenging young adults on a much higher level of metacognition and pushing them as substantive critics of what they read. The librarians of the past mostly came from language arts backgrounds, so they were steeped in literary criticism from their undergraduate years. Today we have a new crop of teacher-librarians who come from a variety of fields and for whom literary criticism is not a focal point. This volume could well be used as a text in an advanced course of young adult literature, but it is also an excellent read for teacher-librarians who want to insert in book discussions those kinds of questions that stimulate thinking while at the same time keep the popular enjoyment front and center. We will leave the dissection of literature to language arts teachers. We can push enjoyment but slyly introduce those thinking probes. The excellent chapters of this book provide a structure for probing in four key areas: the text itself, the author, context/milieu, and the readers themselves. After reading this book, you should have gained a variety of sound strategies. (Neil Schuman, 2009. 310 pp. \$59.95. 978-1-55570-564-0.)

**Bottom line:** Highly recommended for pushing thinking in literature just like we do in every one of the other academic disciplines teens are thinking through.

### PYRAMID RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: RTI, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES, AND HOW TO RESPOND WHEN STUDENTS DON'T LEARN

Austin G. Buffum, Mike Mattos, and Chris Weber  
Is RTI (response to intervention) being

JOHN  
PETERS

discussed in your school? This is a federal law passed a couple of years ago in the waning days of the Bush administration. It requires all schools to have an active plan for bringing every learner up to expectations. This trio of authors propose an add-on to the basic questions of intervening with learners in what they call a POI or Pyramid of Intervention. Instead of waiting until learners are in big trouble, they propose monitoring all learners for minimal, intermediate, or major intervention. Thus, you target all learners for help rather than just those in major trouble. Seems sensible. If this is being discussed, then teacher-librarians who understand the targets can help create the plan of intervention with what we do best in reading, technology, information literacy, and collaboration. But to do so, we have to understand the background of what is being discussed, the proposals for improvement, and the targets. Perhaps another perspective for us is to worry about learners who have already achieved the minimums and are now coasting and bored. Will we ever get over the striving for minimums? This book will give you the background you need for an intelligent intervention of your own. (Solution Tree, 2009. 225 pp. \$27.95. ISBN: 978-1-934009-33-8.)

**Bottom line:** Read it if it's on your school's plate and then pass it along to the policy folks in the building.

### TEACHING FOR WISDOM, INTELLIGENCE, CREATIVITY, AND SUCCESS

Dr. Robert J. Sternberg, Linda Jarvin, and Elena L. Grigorenko

This author trio believes so much in what they are thinking that they invite the reader to participate in pushing the teaching of facts and basic concepts much further toward excellence and deep understanding. They present nuggets of ideas about engaging students in the various ideas listed in the title of the book and then have a challenge for the reader or group that extends the idea into practice. Thus, this book can be used in abbreviated professional community meetings because a small group can tackle one idea: discuss it, decide how they are going to try it, and then at the next meeting report and compare success or failure. Thus, the various concepts can be

taught in any order and the overall model can become the background knowledge as progress on the various ideas is tried and then comes together. It is refreshing to read a very usable text and the ideas for pushing learners beyond factual knowledge are enticing. (Corwin Press, 2009. 171 pp. \$31.95. 978-1-4129-6453-1.)

**Bottom line:** Highly recommended.

### TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL ALIGNMENT: FROM STANDARDS TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Lisa Carter

Total instructional alignment means that state standards, the curriculum, and assessment are in sync. We as teachers know the specific expectations, we know what and how to teach at what grade level, and the various tests the students take will exactly match the expectations and what was taught. In the last survey we saw, only one or two states matched the standards with the assessment and provided guidance on what should be taught at each grade level. Frankly, it is a fractured mess. And, we now face "reform" of NCLB. Carter's book makes sense in theory if you believe that a lockstep approach with every teacher acting as a robot is the magic pill that will cure education. Admittedly, more alignment would make sense. But we have to come to terms with differentiation, diversity, and inquiry vs. behaviors strategies, and concentration on minimums vs. excellence. Thus, this book is a very understandable explanation of one part of a very complex picture. It is often interpreted in the individual school as a dictate for everyone to be teaching exactly the same thing, the same way, and at the same time; certainly an invitation for disaster. I am sure that Carter would shudder at a total lock-step curriculum. Where is creativity? Where is inquiry? Where does the digital native fit? How does the library/learning commons fit? How can the library/learning commons program work in tandem with total alignment? This book will not answer those questions. There has to be a larger picture. Perhaps Carter could address these and other realities in a second edition. (Solution Tree, 2009. 119 pp. \$21.95. 978-1-934009-01-7.)

**Bottom line:** Not recommended.

## PICTURE BOOKS <

### OFF TO CAMP

**Buster goes to Cowboy Camp.** Denise Fleming. Henry Holt, 2008. \$16.95. 978-0-805-07892-3. Grades 1-2. Buster the dog is sure that he's going to be miserable at camp—but what with the full schedule of crafts (paw printing), games (buckaroo ball), campfire howls, and other activities, it turns out to be a blast! The lively figures and saturated colors in Fleming's trademark paper paintings underscore the fun.

**A couple of boys have the best week ever.** Maria Frazee. Harcourt, 2008. \$16.00. 978-0-152-06020-6. Grades 1-2. Grandma and Grandpa plan a week at Nature Camp and all sorts of educational activities for young Earmon and James—who have very different ideas of fun. Huge differences between the relatively low-key text and what the two irrepressible boys are actually up to in the bright, hilarious cartoon illustrations add up to an unforgettable summertime romp!

**Plantzilla goes to camp.** Jerdine Nolen. Ill. David Catrow. Simon & Schuster, 2006. \$16.95. 0-689-86803-0. Grades 2-4. Also told in letters, with Catrow's wild, hilarious illustrations filling in the between-the-lines details, this summer camp episode pits nerdy Mortimer and his carnivorous, many-stalked tropical plant against a bully and other common challenges.

**Tiny goes camping.** Carl Meister. Ill. Rich Davis. Viking, 2006. \$13.99. 978-0-670-89250-1. Grades K-2. Tiny the dog isn't quite the same size as Clifford—but almost! Off on a back yard camping trip with his much smaller human buddy, he chases fireflies and has plenty of other adventures. So what if he's too big to fit in the tent? In this lighthearted beginning reader, Davis' cartoon illustrations strike just the right mix of chuckles and thrills.