

chalkboard

Chalkboard features textbooks, resource guides, and curriculum materials of interest to educators at the elementary and secondary levels. Recent journal articles and issues that focus on multicultural topics are also highlighted, along with news items related to the development of multicultural curricula.

Please send any news items, curriculum materials, teacher's guides, or ideas to Lyn Miller-Lachmann, 194 Lenox Ave., Albany, NY 12208. If you would like the items returned, please include a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Children's Book Press [2211 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94110; (415) 821-3080] has created a new teacher's guide for its critically acclaimed book *Quinito's Neighborhood/El Vecindario de Quinito*. The free guide, available at www.childrensbookpress.org/guides/quinito/all_about.html, includes readings and cross-curricular activities that correspond to teaching standards. The bilingual English-Spanish book explores community and careers and celebrates the diversity of the young boy's urban neighborhood.

The guide contains four sections. "What's It All About?" describes the book and provides biographical information about its author, Ina Cumpiano, and illustrator, José Ramírez. "Reading Activities" includes lessons to introduce the book to elementary school classes. "Cross-Curricular Activities" helps students make connections between the text and illustrations and content areas—language arts, social studies, visual arts, math, and science. A final section links teachers and students to other resources, including books, audiovisual materials, and web sites.

Davis, Bonnie M. *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You: Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press [2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; (800) 818-7243], 2006. 184 pp. Second edition. ISBN 1-4129-2446-4, \$65.95 (cl); 1-4129-2447-2, \$29.95 (pb).

Davis's book will help preservice and inservice teachers develop cultural competency with students of cultural backgrounds different from those of the teacher. With the country's K–12 teaching staff disproportionately white, most of the chapters and exercises focus on teaching students of color.

The book is divided into four parts that focus on building background knowledge about diverse learners, examining one's own inner world, creating a learning environment that supports diverse learners, and research-based teaching strategies. Within each part are three to six chapters that explore aspects of the topic. The chapters have a set of questions for reflection, followed by exposition of key concepts and further questions.

In the part on exploring the inner world, the white author presents her own life story, as well as that of an African-American teacher named Dorothy. Case studies are also used in

the section on creating a school culture that welcomes diverse learners; here the author presents three hypothetical districts—a stable, homogenous working-class district, a conflict-ridden urban district where the teachers are white and the students are black and Latino, and a top-ranking culturally diverse suburban district that prizes academic excellence and that has almost closed the achievement gap. While much of the book addresses attitudes and pedagogy, the book also covers literacy and language arts and the use of multicultural materials at all levels. There is a useful chapter on differentiating instruction within each classroom and examples of projects that take advantage of students' divergent skills and interests. Includes a bibliography of scholarly works and an index.

Dennis, Kirsten and Azpiri, *Sign to Learn: American Sign Language in the Early Childhood Classroom*. St. Paul, Minn.: Redleaf Press [10 Yorkton Court, St. Paul, MN 55117-1065; (651) 641-0305], 2005. 194 pp. ISBN 1-929610-69-6, \$24.95 (pb).

In recent years, some educators have advocated the teaching of American Sign Language (ASL) to all preschool children, deaf and hearing, not only to improve their ability to communicate with deaf peers, family members, and others but also to improve language and social development. This practical guide for early childhood educators begins with an introduction to ASL. The authors address deafness, changing attitudes toward ASL, the difference between ASL and signed English, and the role of the Deaf community (those who have embraced a Deaf identity and culture) in gaining acceptance for ASL. The following chapters address the advantages of teaching ASL to all children and offer an overview of an ASL curriculum at the preschool level. Such a curriculum would also raise young children's awareness of deafness and Deaf culture, and the authors urge teachers to invite deaf people to the classroom and partner with deaf schools. Finally, the book guides teachers to use signs to enhance classroom management and teaches signs to help students express emotions and engage in tasks such as cleaning up, getting in line, going to the bathroom, and waiting their turn.

The thematic lesson plans are divided into units that include feelings, family, school, food, colors, seasons, community helpers, and animals. Several popular children's songs, such as "It's Raining, It's Pouring," are included. Each unit also contains fun games and playtime activities and concludes with a list of picture books for browsing, reading aloud, or translating into ASL. *Signs to Learn* concludes with an index to ASL illustrations, a sample letter to parents to introduce the curriculum, and lists of references and additional resources.

Enlighten. Sausalito, Calif.: Enlighten Games, Inc. [4A Cazneau Ave., Sausalito, CA 94965; (415) 331-3599; www.enlightengamesinc.com], 2003. \$29.99.

Players can “take a spiritual journey around the world” in this educational game for “seekers,” ages 12 and up. Two players or teams can play; it is recommended that players do so in teams to involve more people and to spark discussion.

Game play is similar to that of the popular Trivial Pursuit in that players/teams travel around the board and answer questions about the six major religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and New Religious Movements) and three geographical/historical categories. The geographical/historical categories are Prehistoric Religions (Shamanism, Native American religions, and other indigenous religions), Classical Paganism (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Persian, and Scandinavian Gods), and Eastern Religions (Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Jainism, and Zoroaster). Some of the questions are straightforward and factual; others are more complex and can be “debated” by the other player or team. Hazards, called “life’s rough patches,” force players/teams to lose a turn and have to perform an “embodying ritual” characteristic of one of the religions (such a prostration for Buddhism or a dervish dance for Islam). Incorrect answers also lead to losing a turn.

Some may object to the trivialization of sacred ceremonies by performing them in the course of a game. The game makers assume a certain level of seriousness and maturity—a study group setting rather than college fraternity game night. For those who approach it with a serious and open-minded attitude, the game is informative and the questions balanced and nonjudgmental, making this a unique way to learn about the world’s religions, past and present.

Gallegos, Cuahtémoc. *Bilingual Law Dictionary/ Diccionario Jurídico Bilingüe*. Chicago: Merl Publications [1658 Milwaukee Ave., #242, Chicago, IL 60647; www.merl-publications.com], 2005. 432 pp. ISBN 1-886347-03-4, \$45.00 (pb).

Attorneys, their staff, and clients who speak Spanish or do business in Spanish-speaking countries will find this a comprehensive and useful resource. Rather than a simple two-way translation, this dictionary explains concepts in the target language to reduce misunderstanding when crossing borders and cultures. In many cases, these explanations are accompanied by legal reference sources for verification. In all, there are more than 5,000 main entries and 1,600 definitions and explanations.

Especially helpful are the multiple definitions that correspond to each term’s usage in different contexts or, in the case of the Spanish terms, in different countries where neither idioms nor judicial systems are similar. For instance, “negotiable instrument” (a promise to pay that can be a check, a bond, or a bill of lading) is known as “instrumento negociable” in Puerto Rico and “título de crédito” in the rest of the Spanish-speaking world. Reflecting the broad range of people needing legal work (and legal translation), terms range from varieties of drug possession charges to land titles, from international human rights law to corporate structures. Curiously, there are no terms related to living wills or health care proxies; these will have to wait for a second edition. Appendixes include a list of legal

abbreviations, translations of Latin terms, a stock exchange glossary, a glossary specifically related to tax law, and a list of reference sources.

Nuri-Robins, Kikanza; Lindsey, Randall B.; Lindsey, Delores B.; and Terrell, Raymond D. *Culturally Proficient Instruction: A Guide for People Who Teach*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press [2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; (800) 818-7243], 2006. 216 pp. Second edition. ISBN 1-4129-2430-8, \$75.95 (cl); 1-4129-2431-6, \$35.95 (pb).

First published in 2001, *Culturally Proficient Instruction: A Guide for People Who Teach* (the authors have written three other books with similar titles geared to administrators) introduced preservice and inservice teachers to Maple View, a diverse fictional community where case studies were used to introduce concepts and strategies. The new edition contains additional cases and addresses the demands for accountability contained in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Like its predecessor, the book begins with a series of workbook exercises so that readers can assess their own attitudes and experiences of cultural diversity. The authors define the six-step continuum—from cultural destructiveness (the desire to eliminate other cultures), through cultural incapacity (disempowering other cultures that one believes are inferior to one’s own), cultural blindness (“see the difference, act like you don’t”), cultural precompetence (wanting to do the right thing but lacking the knowledge and skills), and individual cultural competence, to cultural proficiency (being able to function and lead others in a variety of cultural settings). Readers are urged to identify barriers to cultural competence in order to overcome them. In addition to the case studies (drawn from business and community settings as well as schools), the book features reflection questions attached to the cases and charts and diagrams that add significantly to the exposition. Following the text is an updated list of references and an index.

Singleton, Glenn E. and Linton, Curtis. *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press [2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; (800) 818-7243], 2006. 304 pp. Foreword by Gloria Ladson-Billings. ISBN 1-4129-8876-9, \$79.95 (cl); 1-4129-8877-7, \$37.95 (pb).

Starting from the premise that our unwillingness to talk about race leads to the perpetuation of oppression, this book for new and veteran teachers and school administrators offers advice for how to initiate and continue this conversation. The authors focus on both the process of communication and its goal of improving the treatment of African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and American Indian children in schools. Singleton, who is black, and Linton, who is white, describe their own upbringing and cross-racial experiences, and they include as well the personal stories of others with whom they have worked. Among them are Ann, a biracial Japanese-American teacher in California; Supriya, an immigrant from India who has taught at the college and high school levels; and

Chris, a young white man who quietly stood by as racist peers on his football team taunted an all-black opposing team.

The authors argue that courageous conversations require passion, practice, and persistence. To increase the odds of success, they posit six necessary elements, each of which has its own chapter. These are: getting personal immediately, keeping the spotlight on race, engaging multiple racial perspectives, making sure everyone has a place at the table, defining “race,” and talking about whiteness. Each chapter contains questions for reflection and discussion; these can help get the conversation started. The final part of the book addresses how courageous conversations can be used by educational leaders to close the racial achievement gap and to achieve equity in schools. The book concludes with a list of references and an index.

Speakman, Sheree; Hassel, Brian; and Finn, Chester E., Jr., with Meagan Batdorff, Larry Maloney, Eric Osberg, and Michelle Terrell. *Charter School Funding: Inequity's Next Frontier*. Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute [1627 K St., NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 223-5452 / (888) 823-7474], 2005. 141 pp. Free.

This report, available free of charge upon request, is the result of a yearlong nationwide study on the funding of charter schools. According to the report, public charter schools (those that draw their funds from public sources—generally, but not always, the districts from where the charter students come) make do with, on average, \$1,800 less per pupil than traditional public schools. The inequities are greatest in urban areas, where charter schools receive \$2,200 less per pupil. Researchers also address the difficulty of obtaining school finance data from states regarding both district schools and charter schools. Much of the book offers profiles of individual states in terms of charter school funding; the states covered are Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota (the only state where charter schools receive more money

than district-run schools), Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin.


The authors are advocates of charter schools, who argue that these schools are being set up for failure due to inadequate funding relative to their district-school competitors. In many cases, this is because charter schools do not receive comparable state aid for facilities. Most charter schools make up some of the shortfall through private grants. The study addresses the impact of grants for disadvantaged and at-risk students. The greater numbers of these students in charter schools in Minnesota, for instance, accounts for the greater funding, while in many other states, the highest-risk students remain in district schools. Other aspects of charter school funding issues, such as savings that might be realized from using nonunion teachers and staff, are not examined.

The study, which was supported with funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation, contains several recommendations. Besides revising state charter laws to mandate more equitable funding, the authors call on states to make education finance data more accessible to educators and the public.

WriterCorps. *Jump Write in! Creative Writing Exercises for Diverse Communities, Grades 6–12*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass [989 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94103-1741; www.josseybass.com], 2005. 144 pp. Edited by Judith Tannenbaum and Valerie Chow Bush. ISBN 0-7879-7777-2, \$22.95 (pb).

WriterCorps is an organization that brings professional writers into urban schools and develops creative arts curricula to help low-income students from kindergarten to grade 12 improve their literacy and communication skills. This volume is specifically geared to teens and preteens, with themes and activities that build in complexity.

The first theme encompasses games and ice breakers to get young writers started. These build trust, allow students to introduce themselves, and familiarize them with timed writing and freewriting. The second theme is a group writing project, with activities to get students started working together. The third theme is poetry. Students use first lines as catalysts and experiment with different styles of poems. Chapter four introduces visual elements of writing, a theme explored further in the tenth chapter. Chapter five addresses imagery and figurative language, and chapter six focuses on writing around sounds—the sounds of words and writing inspired by music and the sounds objects make. Next come the building blocks of writing prose—narrative (chapter seven), point of view (chapter eight), and themes (chapter nine). The chapter on themes is the longest in the book, as students are prompted to write about their families, their communities, and the values that are important to them. No writing is complete without editing and rewriting, and the book concludes with this crucial step.

Topics are geared to the cultures and interests of diverse teens and preteens, and the exercises can be used by classes at a variety of skill levels. The book includes several lists of resources—some at the end of chapters and one at the end of the book—a list of WriterCorps sites, and an index. 

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