

Reviews

Changing Problem Behavior in Schools

Alex Molnar and Barbara Lindquist
Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989

—Reviewed by Thomas R. McDaniel, *Converse College, Spartanburg, South Carolina*.

Tired of fighting chronic discipline problems? Frustrated by students who will not follow rules and directions? Disappointed by the standard classroom techniques of behavior modification and assertive discipline? Here is a fresh (but not brand new) approach to changing problem behavior. But beware! The problem behavior that changes first and most will be yours.

Borrowing counseling techniques from family therapy, the authors outline principles and techniques to help educators promote positive change in a school's "ecosystem"; i.e., the "behavior of everyone in a classroom or school in which a problem occurs." This approach attempts to change or redefine the problem situation rather than to assign blame, diagnose problems, or overcome deficits.

The key to this approach may be found in the concept of "perceptions." In the tradition of Dreikurs, Purkey, Rosenthal and Jacobson, and Glasser, the authors advocate practices that help teachers and counselors change their perceptions of problem students in ways that change student perceptions as well as their behavior. They show us how to find positive alternative interpretations, motivations, and consequences in any problem while they teach us to "reframe" common behavior problems. Encouraging teachers to be educational sleuths who see "a chronic problem as a mystery to be solved," they provide an excellent blend of theory and practice illustrated by a wealth of examples. Highly recommended for all educators.

Available from Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104.

Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education

Peter McLaren
New York: Longman, Inc., 1989

—Reviewed by Ellen Elms Notar, *Towson State University, Towson, Maryland*.

Every inner-city teacher and administrator will nod incredulously at the insight that Canadian Peter McLaren offers in his recent book. McLaren delivers anecdotes of his experiences as a beginning teacher in a Toronto ghetto, revealing his own questioning and growth processes as he gained in experience. But this book is more than a series of one person's tales; it provides a sociopolitical perspective as part of a rich analysis advocating educational change.

McLaren's earlier book, *Cries from the Corridor*, presented the day-to-day struggles of teachers and students. This new book is the first text to make critical pedagogy and the new sociology of education available to beginning and practicing teachers. The author urges us to provide more than a technician's approach to teaching and advocates a rich, intellectual construct relating the world of learning to the world of living. The book is divided into four parts. Parts one and two discuss the decline of public schooling and present excerpts from *Cries from the Corridor*. Part three discusses critical pedagogy and provides an overview of some of the most influential critical educators of modern times, including Kozol, Freire, Dewey, Apple, and Giroux. The fourth part of the book devotes itself to McLaren's analyses of the reasons for student failure, problems of the black underclass, new and old myths of education, teachers and students, and the teacher as social and moral agent.

McLaren's perspective offers teachers renewed hope and a sense of the responsibility and the magnitude of

our task. This small paperback may be the most valuable addition of the year to the libraries of teachers, administrators, and professors. It is argumentative, but it is never dull.

Available from Longman, Inc., 95 Church St., White Plains, NY 10601.

The Vocation of a Teacher

Wayne C. Booth
The University of Chicago Press, 1988

—Reviewed by James Squire, *Silver Burdett & Ginn, Needham Heights, Mass.*

The publication of *The Vocation of a Teacher* is a cause for celebration. Wayne C. Booth, one of the great teachers of English of our time, indeed, a great teacher of teachers, has gathered in one volume his thoughts over the past quarter century on teachers and teaching, on the value of a humanistic education, and on the qualities that produce excellence in teaching and those that effect it negatively.

No academic scholar isolated from the school scene, Booth, now George C. Pullman Distinguished Service Professor of English at the University of Chicago, has met regularly with teachers of English at every developmental level and understands them well. His sage reflections are worth thoughtful consideration by those who seek to strengthen our society's conception of the role of the teacher. Listen, for example, to Booth's commentary on ways of improving the preparation of college teachers: "If all of our teaching assistants were asked to teach in college courses that included philosophy, history, literature, and rhetoric, in the company of experienced teachers, meeting regularly to discuss what might be done to make this teaching count, what a difference that would make, both to their future teaching and to the quality of their dissertations" (p. 89).

What an uncommon man is Wayne C. Booth. What an uncommon book he has provided for our reflection.

Available from The University of Chicago Press, 5801 S. Ellis Ave., Chicago, IL 60637.

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