The Claims of Feeling: Readings in Aesthetic Education
Malcolm Ross
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
The Falmer Press. 1989

Reviewed by Richard Sinatra, St. John's University, Jamaica, New York.

Arts-in-education specialists, teachers, and advisors will find this book interesting and serious reading. The book contains twelve chapters grouped into the general headings of history, theoretical issues, professional development, examination, and assessment, all generated at the University of Exeter, England. The issues of principle and practice in both arts education and the general curriculum experienced by British educators are similar to those faced by their American and Canadian counterparts. Editor Malcolm Ross has presented a number of new authors in the field of arts education and the general curriculum experienced by British educators are similar to those faced by their American and Canadian counterparts.

Available from Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, NH 03501.

Finding Our Own Way
Judith M. Newman
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1990


If the reader is a traveler on the road toward having a learner-directed classroom, she or he will be interested in reading what these Canadian teachers have shared. Judith Newman has collected testimonials from many of her graduate students as they try learner-directed teaching. The author views the learner-directed classroom as one where the students are more responsible for the knowledge gained. The book covers how the teacher learns by teaching and how the teacher can take risks so that school will be more meaningful for the students.

The appeal of this collection is that these teachers have not arrived at their destination but are determined that the long journey is worth the effort.

Available from Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, NH 03501.

Curriculum Assessment and Reform
Andy Hargreaves
Bristol, Pennsylvania
Open University Press


Why do schools remain unchanged despite a long history of reform efforts? Many would answer that reform of American schools could never be successful when it is top-down in design, reform by decree or exhortation. Moving away from a centralized administrative control model, many school systems in the United States have elected to institutionalize localized, school-centered, if not school-based, management and shared decision-making models.

But Andy Hargreaves reports that a decade of reform efforts in the United Kingdom based upon a "school-centered innovation" model that mirrors the current U.S. effort did not yield innovative or lasting changes. Schools remained virtually unchanged in their curriculum and instruction programs and strategies. Hargreaves' work provides an opportunity to contrast, evaluate, and adapt the British experience with the process and outcome goals of the school-based management strategies in the United States. Specifically, Hargreaves provides insight into the concerns, aspirations, and needs of the classroom teacher when the teacher is responsible for innovation within a school system that maintains external control over the curriculum, in large part through standardized testing. The British experience reinforces the concerns of many American reformers who advocate a variant of school reform that includes changes in the ethos and culture of schools.

In sum, Curriculum and Assessment Reform is required reading, and it should be accompanied by a reading of ASCD's 1990 Yearbook Changing School Culture Through Staff Development.

Available from Open University Press, 1900 Frost Road, Suite 101, Bristol, PA 19007.

Read to Write: Using Children's Literature as a Springboard for Teaching Writing
John Warren Stewig
Catonah, New York


As an elementary teacher, do you feel uncomfortable teaching writing? John Stewig gives the reader a basic
course in how to use literature to teach writing. First, he gives a brief description of how the emphasis on composition has changed over the years into the writing process we have today. Next, the reader will find a scope and sequence chart for planning the year.

Stewig continues with chapters about setting, characters, plot, figurative language, and poetry, each chapter containing literature suggestions, discussion about skills, and helpful hints about presenting literature. The aim is not to dissect literature but to let the class enjoy it.

Since elementary students view editing as copying their writing over again, the author explains the different types of editing the teacher should use. He gives various ways to change a composition, from adding descriptive words to using more conversation or dialect. The author concludes his basic course for elementary teachers with an extensive bibliography of books to use with children and professional books on the topic of using literature to teach writing.


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On Literacy and Its Teaching
Gail E. Hawisher and Anna O. Soter
Albany, New York
State University of New York Press, 1990
—Reviewed by Patricia McDaniel Dombart, Butler, Pennsylvania

The editors of On Literacy and Its Teaching have compiled a truly intriguing collection of essays which should quickly become required reading for anyone involved in English education. Their intent was to produce an anthology that addresses professional concerns as well as research and theory, along with their relation to curricula in English. Here they have accomplished this Herculean task.

The essays give a picture of where we are in the teaching of English and a kaleidoscope of how we got here. They deal with such topics as the ever-present debate over content vs. skills, a history of the teaching of English, the effect of the teacher, the impact of the National Writing Project, the role of rhetoric, the lure of computer networking, and even the teaching of English as a second or foreign language.

My favorite chapter vividly details the drama of the 1987 three-week English Coalition Conference on Maryland's Eastern Shore during which 60 English teachers from elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels discovered that the necessity of responding to the intellectual conservatism of Hirsch and Bennett impelled them to speak in a common voice concerning the preferred direction of English instruction. Their call for an 'interactive classroom' and an 'integrative, learning-centered approach' will strike a responsive chord with most English teachers.

The anthology should definitely be considered as part of the syllabus for anyone engaged in preservice or inservice instruction since it provides both perspective and fuel for discussion. This collection's vivid presentation of key issues make this stimulating reading for any English teacher. It is likely to provoke a desire to respond to the debate or to reflect upon one's own practice.


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Public Alternative Education: Options and Choice for Today's Schools
Tim Young
—Reviewed by Joe Nathan, Director, Center for School Reform, University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Tim Young's new book, Public Alternative Education, reminds me of the 1960's song "Blowing in the Wind." The song asks several questions including: "How many years can some people exist before they're allowed to be free ... How many deaths will it take till we know that too many people have died? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind, the answer is blowing in the wind."

How many explanations of alternative schools ... how many reviews of research showing some youngster who have done poorly in one kind of school do better in another ... how many examples of the great enthusiasm of alternative-school teachers will it take before most educators accept the value of providing different kinds of public schools from which students, families, and educators can select?

Tim Young's book will help us answer these questions. A public school teacher for several years, Young has worked closely with the Washington State Alternative Learning Association while a professor of education at Central Washington University. In this book he has assembled descriptions of some of the best public alternative schools in the country. He goes beyond "p.r." descriptions to analyze challenges these schools have faced and how they have changed. He lists features of successful alternative schools, including small size, concern for the whole student, supportive environment, and sense of community mission.

Young thinks alternative schools help improve student performance and, further, that they offer "partial solutions to achieving educational excellence and equity in schools and correcting social injustice in our society." He comments that they can help improve student performance and, further, that they offer "partial solutions to achieving educational excellence and equity in schools and correcting social injustice in our society."