

Book Reviews

Book Review by Dr. Kathy L. Adams, Wright State University

Hasci, T. A. (2002). *Children as Pawns: The Politics of Educational Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Children as Pawns has a very provocative title but leaves the reader disappointed in the lack of information on how children are actually being treated as pawns. On the other hand, it has an outstanding and concise historical review of evaluation research and the policy behind the five main topics discussed in the book.

In the introductory chapter, Hasci discusses the history of evaluation and evaluation methods. He makes the point that many times those performing the research are poorly funded, poorly trained, do not know the right questions to ask, and make errors in methodology choices.

In the first chapter, the author discusses the debate over Head Start. He points out that the findings are mixed due to research mistakes from poorly performed research. He writes that there has been some agreed upon benefits of Head Start, including better health for the participants and increased parent involvement in education. He also reported that later findings have found that participants are less likely to need special education services, less likely to be retained, and less likely to drop out of school by participating in the Head Start Program. Hasci's criticisms of Head Start are that only one-fourth of eligible students receive Head Start services, few follow-up services are provided through the program, programs experience high staff turnover, and that program evaluations of Head Start still rely on standardized test scores.

Bilingual education is discussed in the second chapter. The author writes about the different methods of teaching language-minority (LM) children and the different sides to bilingual education issues. The chapter presents an excellent history of bilingual education, bilingual education controversy and legislative action for bilingual education. Hasci writes about the debate of how to teach language-minority children and states that educators have done a poor job of teaching LM children, whether through their native languages, English, or a combination. Hasci postulates that bilingual program success is dependent on the quality of the programs in which students participate.

Chapter three discusses class size. Does class size matter? A Hasci point out that it is important to define what is meant by class size. For example, some districts use the entire staff in a school when calculating the student-teacher ratio, including librarians, counselors, and teacher assistants. Only classroom teachers and students should be counted in the calculations of class size. Hasci

discusses how class size legislation affected schools in California. The small class size mandate for the early grades in California created problems in finding qualified teachers and adequate space to house the newly created classrooms. In addition, as class sizes were reduced and the need for teachers increased, urban teachers left the city to teach in the suburbs, leaving urban schools with an increase in the number of uncertified teachers. The debate over social promotion is the focus of chapter four. Hasci writes that social promotion, what he calls a very entrenched system, keeps all students of the same age together, is cost effective, maintains students self esteem, and since more minority students are retained, may promote more equality. The "cons" against social promotion are that it "dumbs down" the curriculum, gives students no incentive to work hard, and produces graduates with no skills. Hasci argues that it is inappropriate to just use test scores to make retention decisions.

Hasci reminds the reader of the reliance on property taxes for the funding of schools in chapter five. The chapter focuses mainly on New Jersey legislation, with some information on Ohio and other states. He covers information on how Kentucky overhauled all of its schools. Hasci does not really discuss how extra funding helps schools or how the money should be spent. He writes that with all the debate about funding no one has pointed out that there is an even greater inequity in schools between states.

Hasci provides recommendations for solving the problems discussed in his book: program evaluation, Head Start, bilingual education, class size reduction, and social promotion. Hasci states that Head Start should be funded for all eligible children, that program and teacher quality is important, that small class sizes should be provided for disadvantaged children, that there is no simple solution to social promotion, and that program evaluation should include more than standardized tests.

This book is a must read for those interested in the debate about program evaluation, Head Start, bilingual education, class size, and social promotion. Hasci attempts to provide the reader with best practices for educating children.

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Book Review by Grant Hambricht, Wright State University

Brock, B. L. & Grady, M. L. (2000). *Rekindling the Flame: Principals Combating Teacher Burnout*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Burnout affects teachers, administrators, and students. Unfortunately, there is a general lack of understanding about its causes. According to Brock and Grady, burnout has nothing to do with a teacher's lack of ability or desire to be a good teacher. Most teachers experiencing burnout were those most dedicated and enthusiastic when they started teaching. The book provides the origin of burnout, symptoms, and organizational preventative measures.

When the Flame Flickers

"Passionate and dedicated teachers are most at risk for burnout." (p. 3). Burnout tends to creep up on its victims, eventually affecting job performance, and negatively impacting their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual lives. A prevalence profile depicted teachers between the ages of 33 and 45 who have between 7 and 12 years of experience are most apt to succumb to burnout.

Flame Extinguishers: Sources of Burnout

Within the intersection of personal, societal, professional, and organizational arenas lay factors contributing to teacher burnout. Traditionally, burnout was viewed as a personality disorder; however, the authors highlight organizational and leadership issues as the primary culprits. Teacher personality traits are also contributing factors.

Smoldering Embers: The Cost of Burnout

Both the afflicted individuals and the organizations in which they work pay the price of teacher burnout. An individual's physical, mental, and emotional health suffers, as well as having a potentially negative impact on their personal, social and spiritual lives. The costs to the organization include inferior work output, absenteeism, higher medical benefits, and the residual effects impact the school's climate.

Igniting the Flames: Revitalization Strategies

Brock & Grady contend that overcoming burnout is possible. Principals can directly address the causes of burnout and should assist teachers in determining their individual recovery processes. Principals heeding to the early symptoms of burnout (i.e., changes in staff behavior, attitude, and attendance) can thwart burnout from spreading throughout the staff. Burnout teachers often feel out of control and are in need of assistance from colleagues or administrators.



Guardian of the Flame: The Principal's Role

Using Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory as a framework, the authors assert that principals can assist teachers in satisfying motivational (i.e., recognition, advancement, achievement) and hygiene (i.e., policy, supervision, salary, interpersonal relationships) needs. Motivational needs are supported through appropriate teacher placement, professional development opportunities, and sufficient time and resources for achieving success. Hygiene needs are promoted through consistent development and follow-through of policies and procedures, as well as conducting ongoing supervision. Meeting the motivational-hygiene needs of teachers encourages a healthy environment for teachers and their students.

Tending the Flames: Supervision

The principal's supervisory role directly impacts teachers' professional performance. Several factors make for effective supervision. First, teachers should be made aware of the type of supervision to expect, the intended processes and procedures, and a projected timetable. Second, hiring practices should carefully match the talents and skills of individuals with the needs of the school and students. Third, supervisory programs need to address teachers' developmental levels, needs, aptitudes, and learning styles throughout their professional teaching careers.

Fuel for the Flame: Staff Development as Prevention

Burnout is the antithesis of professional growth and development. Principals who assist teachers toward developing their craft seriously reduce the potential for burned out faculty. This assistance should be individualized in recognition of the varying maturity, career stages, educational backgrounds, and developmental levels of the teaching staff.

Stoking the Fire: Improving the Workplace

Battling burnout is a conscious administrative effort best performed proactively. Farsighted administrators create environments with satisfied teachers involved in their professional pursuits. An organized and functional environment minimizes teacher stress and provides for contingencies when inevitable organizational conflicts arise. Outward appearances may portray a smoothly running organization; however, a savvy administrator must be aware that such a facade may be masking underlying problems.

Reviewer's Comments

Brock & Grady effectively thread a "fire" metaphor throughout their text's headings, highlighting the causes and characteristics of the debilitating syndrome called burnout. The recurring theme that burnout is not an individual character flaw,

but rather a symptom of several dysfunctional organization factors impacting teacher effectiveness is a crucial message for today's school leaders. Proactive administrative measures can stave off many stresses leading to burnout. Awareness of these critical elements by school administrators and teachers make reading this text essential.

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Book Review by Dr. Juan Lira, Texas A&M International University

Allington, R. L. (2001). *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-based Programs*. New York, NY: Longman Publishing.

As I read this book, I thought about key questions that schools should consider for addressing the literacy needs of all students, but especially those who are lagging behind their peers. Among these questions are: Is it important for students to read every day? What role do books play in students' literacy development? How does reading fluency influence students' literacy development? What can educators do to develop students capable of thinking deeply and critically about what they read? And finally, what can schools do to ensure that each student is actively engaged in reading developmentally appropriate and meaningful books every day?

After explaining the relevance of numerous research studies, the convergence of evidence cited by Allington clearly indicates that there is positive correlation between the volume of reading that students do and their reading achievement. There are distinct differences in reading achievement between students who read a lot and those who read very little. This demonstrates the impact of the time that students spend academically engaged in reading developmentally appropriate and interesting material. To facilitate this engagement, Allington urges educators to examine their instructional practices so that the amount of time they spend explaining to students a particular reading strategy does not outweigh the amount of time students have to read and apply the strategy. Teachers also need to maintain uninterrupted blocks of reading time for students to delve deeply into the meaning of book content.

While focusing on the role books can play in the literacy development of students, Allington urges educators to examine the reading difficulty of books assigned to students. He urges teachers to carefully monitor students' reading performance

to help insure that all students are matched with books that "fit" them. To help educators make appropriate decisions regarding the books that "fit" their students, Allington wisely describes different options. Among these are for teachers to listen to students read from different books and to pay close attention to fluency. If a student seems to be reading in phrases with proper intonation, the book is likely a "good" fit. Students reading mostly in phrases, but with intermittent intonation, are likely to be matched with a book that is "fair". To effectively read the book, a student will likely need some guidance and support from the teacher. However, if a student is reading mostly word-by-word, then the book is considered to be a "poor" match. In this instance, it would be advisable to help the student make another choice.

To help deepen students' understanding and appreciation of texts, Allington sets forth three powerful ideas. First, it is important to help students find a sense of personal connection with the text. Next, students should be able to explore connections between their current text and others. Finally, students should relate their world knowledge to what they read. These three suggestions allow readers to interact with and respond to texts in efferent and aesthetic ways. Guiding students to recall key information read can help them summarize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas gained from the text. Doing so helps them establish different connections with the texts they read.

Through a well crafted, clear and concisely written manuscript, Allington has managed to convey the importance of providing all students, but especially struggling readers, with extensive opportunities to read, enjoy, and share their interpretations of developmentally appropriate and relevant books. This statement is underscored by the convergence of evidence which he presents to illustrate the power that successful and daily reading experiences can have on the reading achievement of all students, but especially struggling readers.

The significant attention given to different means and reasons for honing teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills on a continuing basis is vital for insuring that all students, but especially struggling readers, are properly guided to become fluent and strategic readers, who not only can read, but who also choose to read on a regular basis. I consider this text to be a valuable addition to the resources that educators can use to help enhance the quality of literacy instruction provided to all students, but especially struggling readers.

Dr. Juan R. Lira is currently a Texas A&M University System Regents professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M International University. His 33 years in education include public school, community college, and university teaching.