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REVIEWS: Professional Materials

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REVIEWS

Professional Materials

The Child's Developing Sense of Theme: Responses to Literature. Written by Susan S. Lehr. Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York NY 10027. ISBN: 3105-6. 216 pp. 1991. Paper, US\$17.95.

Reviewed by Christine Drikakis, M.A.C.C.C.
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In his theory of child development, Piaget asserted that children did not engage in a sophisticated process of critical reasoning until age seven or eight. Lehr's captivating studies of pre-school, kindergarten, second and fourth grade children challenge assumptions about what children can and cannot do, and how children think. In these studies, young children were asked open-ended questions in response to well-written children's literature and asked what they knew, thought, supposed, liked and learned. Through the use of narrative, they demonstrated a wonderful sense of theme that was consistent with the text. This interactive process suggests the importance of listening to what children say without judging it right or wrong, and reminds us that children and adults process information differently. Knowing this will allow educators to listen and perhaps understand the child's construction of meaning, no longer looking for an adult answer or adult point of view.

Lehr combines theoretical perspectives on child development, children's literature and literacy with practical suggestions for exploration of literature through the use of response journals, decision trees, brainstorming and writing new visions of familiar stories. She challenges educators to stretch their own sense of theme to see themselves as learners so that children will grow in return.

Teacher Effectiveness and Reading Instruction. Written by Richard D. Robinson. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. 2805 East 10th St., Bloomington IN 47408. ISBN: 0-927516-25-X. 100 pp. 1991. Paper, US\$12.95.

Reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson
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Each of the seven chapters in Richard D. Robinson's short text is rich with anecdotal observations illustrating what is known about exemplary teaching practices. A regular feature of each chapter is the presentation of research findings on teacher behaviors which have been shown to be effective; later these are to be reviewed by readers as they consider instances of typical educational practices which violate the principles of good teaching. Reflective analysis is fostered by personalized questions and a series of self-evaluation checklists on a wide range of topics, such as classroom reading practices, library experiences, and response to diverse students.

Reading instruction is treated as an integral part of the school program, with successful instruction dependent upon multifaceted teaching skills. Chapters focus on such topics as classroom management, the establishment of environments which promote reading, learners with special needs, and the development of relationships between school and home. An array of apt quotations enrich the text, and provide a background for the cover. The book concludes with an annotated bibliography of recent reports of research on teacher effectiveness which are available from the ERIC database. Fact-packed, well-organized, current, and eminently readable, Robinson's book would be an excellent choice for a supplementary text in preservice and graduate reading courses.

Readers with a special interest in the topic of teacher effectiveness should note that the themed issue for June 1993 will be devoted to the topic of *Exemplary Teaching and Exemplary Teachers*. Prospective contributors will find a call for manuscripts on page 86 of this issue.