



Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Instructional Office Newsletter

Recommended Biographies and Memoirs

In this *Language Arts* article, Grace Enriquez, Mary Ann Cappiello, and Erika Thulin Dawes (Lesley University) and Katie Egan Cunningham (Manhattanville University) review and recommend these books (see the link below for images of the covers and more detailed information on each book):

- ✦ [Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History](#) by Vashti Harrison
 - ✦ [Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles](#) by Patricia Valdez, illustrated by Felicita Sala
 - ✦ [Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday and the Power of a Protest Song](#) by Gary Golio, illustrated by Charlotte Riley-Webb
 - ✦ [The Flying Girl: How Aida de Acosta Learned to Soar](#) by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Sara Palacios
 - ✦ [The Secret Kingdom: Nek Chand, a Changing India, and a Hidden World of Art](#) by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Claire Nivola
 - ✦ [Brave Jane Austen: Reader, Writer, Author, Rebel](#) by Lisa Pliscou, illustrated by Jen Corace
 - ✦ [Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library](#) by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Eric Velasquez
 - ✦ [Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli](#) by Kyo Maclear, illustrated by Julie Morstad
 - ✦ [Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery](#) by Sandra Neil Wallace, illustrated by Bryan Collier
 - ✦ [Midnight Teacher](#): Lilly Ann Granderson and
- (Continued on page 2)

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IMPORTANT DATES

POETRY MONTH

April 1	April Fools' Day
April 2	World Autism Awareness Day
April 15	Patriot's Day
April 19	Good Friday
April 20	Passover
April 21	Easter Sunday
April 22	Earth Day
April 24	Administrative Professionals Day
APRIL 27	DY'S 4 TH Annual DOLPHIN DASH 10AM-- 5K Road Race / Walk

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

We are trying to make central office a **fragrance-free zone** so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

One of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products.

Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person's health. We are asking that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!





(Continued from page 1)

Her Secret School by Janet Halfmann, illustrated by London Ladd

✚ *Library on Wheels: Mary Lemist Titcomb and America's First Bookmobile* by Sharlee Glenn

✚ *Silent Days, Silent Dreams* by Allen Say

✚ *The Girl Who Drew Butterflies: How Maria Merriam's Art Changed Science* by Joyce Sidman

✚ *Martin Rising: Requiem for a King* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney

✚ *Becoming Madeleine: A Biography of the Author of A Wrinkle in Time by Her Granddaughters* by Charlotte Jones Voiklis and Lena Roy

✚ *Pathfinders: The Journeys of 16 Extraordinary Black Souls* by Tonya Bolden

"Biographies and Memoir: Life Lessons and Stories in Literature for Readers in Grades K-8" by Grace Enriquez, Mary Ann Cappiello, Katie Egan Cunningham, (Vol. 96, #3, p. 191-201), <https://bit.ly/2StGFKT>;

Fountas and Pinnell Push Back on Some Schools' Use of Reading Levels

In this article in *Literacy Today*, literacy gurus Irene Fountas (Lesley University) and Gay Su Pinnell (Ohio State University) say that in the real world, people don't choose reading matter by checking the Lexile or F&P level. "They explore favorite genres and series and seek out types of stories they love to read," say Fountas and Pinnell, "— adventures, mysteries, romances, fantasies. They investigate topics that are important to them at a particular point in time, pulling together fiction and nonfiction texts that connect in deeply personal ways. Readers look into their lives and find books that speak to them."

So what is the appropriate use of readability measures in schools? Of the five types of reading in an effective elementary classroom, say Fountas and Pinnell, only one — guided reading — involves leveled texts. In the other four, students should have access to a rich variety of texts at different reading levels:

- **Independent reading** — **Student choice, low teacher involvement;**

- **Book clubs** — **Choice by student groups, some teacher involvement;**
- **Guided reading** — **Small-group work with leveled texts geared to students' levels;**
- **Shared reading** — **Less student choice, more teacher support;**
- **Interactive readalouds** — **Low student choice, high teacher support.**

In other words, say Fountas and Pinnell, outside of guided reading, "students should have access to a multitude of books that speak to them as readers and help them to build their reading identity. With any reading activity, that is the ultimate goal."

How is guided reading different? The goal of these small-group tutorials is to scaffold instruction so students make "small shifts in processing power every day," say the authors. This happens when teachers choose a text that is just beyond the level that this group of students can read independently, but not so difficult that students can't understand and aren't able to figure out difficult words. Ongoing assessment is key so the teacher knows students' strengths and needs and can choose texts with just the right level of challenge.

"A 'level' stands for hundreds — even thousands — of in-the-head strategic actions that readers need at any given time to read with accuracy, fluency, and understanding," say Fountas and Pinnell. "The demands increase as readers progress to greater text complexity and they learn new ways of problem-solving and thinking." Expert teaching is essential for guided reading to fulfill its powerful potential.

Should children's text reading levels be reported to parents? No, say Fountas and Pinnell. Parents certainly need to be told how their children are progressing and whether they need acceleration or intervention, but "levels have no place in conferences, on report cards, or in discussions with a parent... A level is a teacher's tool. It isn't a 'score,' and it certainly isn't a child's label. Families should not be worried if, within a given week, students read at several different text levels for different reasons."





"Level Books, Not Children: The Role of Text Levels in Literacy Instruction" by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell in Literacy Today, January/February 2019 (Vol. 36, #4, p. 12-13), no free e-link; the authors can be reached at fountasandpinnell@heinemann.com; ideas for working with families are at <https://www.fountasandpinnell.com/resourcelibrary/resource?id=432>.

Can the "Matthew Effect" Be Turned Around in Kindergarten?

In this article in *Exceptional Children*, Michael Coyne (University of Connecticut) and five co-authors ask whether the widening vocabulary gap between students who enter school with reading advantages and those who don't can be neutralized. Vocabulary development has been identified "as perhaps the best illustration of this powerful and self-perpetuating mechanism," say Coyne et al. Here's how it operates:

- Students who have been exposed to rich oral language develop larger vocabularies.
- They leverage the words they know to pick up and retain new knowledge in school.
- They also tend to engage in lots of independent reading.
- These successful learning experiences build confidence to seek out opportunities to read and interact in ways that use and expand their vocabularies.
- Students who enter school knowing fewer words have less "velcro" to pick up new words in the classroom and in other interactions.
- These students often have negative learning experiences and may avoid independent reading and oral language activities.
- Vocabulary growth in the primary grades happens almost entirely through incidental learning (there is very little intentional vocabulary instruction before fourth grade).



Incidental learning favors students who enter school with bigger vocabularies.

- When explicit vocabulary instruction does happen in all-class settings, the Matthew effect still operates, with vocabulary-rich students soaking up more words than their vocabulary-poor classmates.

The researchers describe this process as a reciprocal causal relationship: "individual differences in overall vocabulary knowledge cause differential efficiency in acquiring new vocabulary during learning opportunities, and this differential vocabulary learning in turn causes further individual differences in vocabulary knowledge." The bottom line: in most schools the vocabulary gap widens every year, most rapidly in kindergarten, first, and second grade.

Can this powerful process be reversed? Coyne and his colleagues designed and implemented an intervention in 284 kindergarten classes in a diverse group of 48 U.S. elementary schools. Instructors directly and explicitly taught new words in pullout groups of 3-4 kindergarten students identified as having difficulty after Tier-1 instruction. The challenge with this kind of intervention is that direct vocabulary instruction can't teach nearly as many words as students are exposed to every week. But the researchers theorized that by carefully choosing the words they taught, they could make a difference. Here were the key elements of the intervention:

- Focusing on high-utility academic vocabulary taught to the whole class in Tier 1;
- Using student-friendly definitions;
- Differentiating between examples and non-examples of the words;
- Linking words to pictures, personal experiences, and other words and concepts;
- Getting students involved in conversations with peers about the target words;
- Exposing students to new words multiple times across different, meaningful contexts;
- Using extensive teacher modeling;





- Giving students extended opportunities to interact with words to promote deep processing.

VOCABULARY

Words Are Important!

Trained teachers and paraprofessionals met with intervention students 30 minutes a day outside the classroom, four days a week over the course of 22 weeks; these students received twice the amount of vocabulary instruction as their peers.

What were the results? Intervention students made significant gains in their knowledge of the target words and comprehension of those words in passages, actually outperforming a control group of not-at-risk students in their knowledge of target words. However, the program did not have an impact on standardized measures of vocabulary knowledge, and didn't close the substantial gap among students on overall vocabulary knowledge. "Although small-group Tier-2 intervention may be enough to close learning gaps for some students," the authors conclude, "results of this study suggest that students with lower overall language abilities may need highly intensive Tier-3 intervention to accelerate broader language development... Therefore, schools and teachers will be constantly engaged in a race against the Matthew effect – continually having to make hard decisions about how to leverage time, personnel, and resources to intensify instruction and intervention."

"Racing Against the Vocabulary Gap: Matthew Effects in Early Vocabulary Instruction and Intervention" by Michael Coyne, Betsy McCoach, Sharon Ware, Christy Austin, Susan Loftus-Rattan, and Doris Baker in Exceptional Children, January 2019 (Vol. 85, #2, p. 163-179), Available for purchase at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0014402918789162>; Coyne can be reached at mike.coyne@uconn.edu.

A More Flexible Approach to Social-Emotional Learning in Schools

In this *Phi Delta Kappan* article, Rebecca Bailey, Laura Stickle, Gretchen Brion-Meisels, and Stephanie Jones (Harvard Graduate School of Education) affirm the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) – especially for students who enter school with any kind of disadvantage. But in their work with educators implementing SEL programs around the U.S., the authors have found the following challenges:

- Some SEL curriculums don't reflect students' experiences, and at times oversimplify or ignore students' real-world problems.
- Many SEL programs aren't aligned with children's stages of development, often teaching the same set of skills across the grades.
- Scripted lesson plans don't allow teachers to respond to students' concerns in real time.
- 30-minutes-a-week SEL blocks are insufficient and tend to get pre-empted by academic priorities.
- Educators seldom get enough training and support to implement SEL programs or to engage in their own social-emotional growth.

The authors' takeaway: "There is a pressing need for an approach to SEL that is more flexible and feasible to implement and adaptable to individual and place-based needs, while still achieving meaningful outcomes for children." Here are the characteristics they advocate:

- **Teach age-appropriate social-emotional skills at each level.** In the pre-school years, children develop basic emotional skills such as recognizing and communicating feelings and managing anger and sorrow. Executive function skills emerge around age 4 and develop during the early years of school. Here's a grade-by-grade sequence of appropriate SEL learning in the elementary grades:

- **Kindergarten – Stop and think power:** Learning to wait, share, take turns, and practice self-management following classroom routines.
- **Grade 1 – Focus power:** Increasing the amount of





time students can pay attention to adults' instructions, listen to peers, and concentrate on tasks and activities.

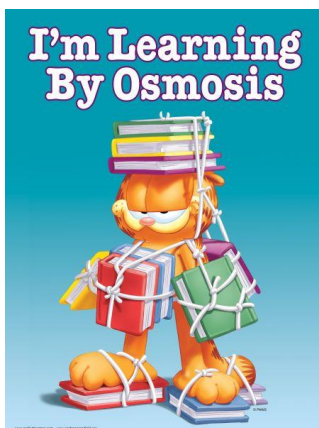
- **Grade 2 – Remember power:** Becoming more independent and carrying out multi-step tasks, following directions, and making and carrying out detailed plans.

In the next two grades, students use these foundational skills to understand the world through others' eyes and resolve conflicts:

- **Grade 3 – Empathy and perspective-taking:** Recognizing and responding to others' feelings, needs, wants, ideas, and perspectives, and caring about friendships with peers;
- **Grade 4 – Conflict resolution skills:** As relationships become more complicated, students need adult guidance on how to deal with disagreements and conflicts when they arise.

In the upper-elementary grades, students must learn to integrate multiple skills, building and maintaining positive, healthy relationships:

- **Grade 5 – Relationship skills:** At this age, students have a growing desire to connect with others, and relationships with peers and supportive adults, as well as issues in their communities, are often the most important factors in their lives.



An effective social-emotional learning curriculum should address the right skills at each level.



- **Social-emotional learning should occur in classrooms and also in hallways, cafeterias, and playgrounds.** “SEL instruction is most effective when children have frequent opportunities to practice SEL skills in various contexts,” say the authors. All staff should be trained in a set of basic, uncomplicated “active ingredients” of social-emotional learning for each grade level. “Focusing on these strategies, rather than comprehensive curricula or scripted lessons, enables teachers and staff to address challenges or opportunities as they arise. This approach can also increase consistency throughout the school community and smooth students’ transitions between classrooms and grades.”

- **SEL works best when teachers respond to students’ specific needs and experiences.** To get students truly engaged, say the authors, teachers need to be trained and empowered to use students’ experiences in school, at home, and in their communities. Educators need ideas and resources and a clear sense of what is essential and what is optional (or may be adapted). They should use teachable moments to get their students practicing SEL skills in response to everyday challenges, for example, addressing conflict effectively, managing emotions, and paying attention. Teachers using this approach found they addressed two or three situations a day in the elementary grades, one a day in middle school.

The authors report that a pilot program in a summer school produced significant gains in students’ social-emotional skills and was well received by teachers. Educators also liked having detailed strategies at their fingertips, including a pack with detailed descriptions for each strategy and general guidance on how to implement strategies over time – in other words, a mix of autonomy and structure.

“Re-Imagining Social-Emotional Learning” by Rebecca Bailey, Laura Stickle, Gretchen Brion-Meisels, and Stephanie Jones in Phi Delta Kappan, February 2019 (Vol. 100, #5, p. 53-58), <https://bit.ly/2UMmIMR>; the authors can be reached at Rebecca_bailey@gse.harvard.edu, laura_stickle@gse.harvard.edu, gretchen_brion-meisels@gse.harvard.edu, jonesst@gse.harvard.edu.





Mike Schmoker on What's Missing in Many Literacy Programs

In this article in *Education Week*, author/consultant Mike Schmoker says that popular, well-regarded commercial literacy programs “often lack a robust evidence base. That’s because they are deficient in precisely those aspects most critical to acquiring the ability to read, write, and speak well. Instead, they abound in busywork – worksheets, group activities, and multiple-choice exercises.”

He describes visiting a school district that had adopted one of these programs. He pointed out these and other deficiencies, and then heard that the program’s visiting consultants were insisting that it be followed to the letter – with *fidelity*. Schmoker got in touch with the publisher’s highest-ranking official and a prominent endorser, both of whom conceded that the critique was accurate. “To their credit,” says Schmoker, “they urged us – contrary to the company’s on-site consultants – to replace large portions of the program with those elements it lacked.”

He urges district leaders and principals to conduct an audit of their literacy programs to see if they have the essential ingredients:

- **Reading** – An intensive phonics component is key, but it must be accompanied by “abundant amounts of reading, speaking, and writing in all disciplines,” says Schmoker. “Even before students fully master phonics-based decoding, they should be reading – and listening to – large amounts of fiction and nonfiction.” Literacy experts like Timothy Shanahan and Richard Allington are emphatic that students should be reading at least an hour a day, across subject areas. “Without this,” says Schmoker, “many students never acquire the knowledge and vocabulary essential to fluency and reading comprehension.”

- **Discussion** – Starting in the early grades, there should be frequent, all-class talk about texts, including debates and seminars, accompanied by explicit instruction on speaking clearly, audibly, and with civility. “When I do demonstration lessons for teachers,” says Schmoker, “it is often apparent that

students aren’t being taught these vital communication skills.” He worries that too much time is spent in unproductive small-group conversations and pseudo-work, including excessive “cut, color, and paste activities” in the elementary grades.

- **Writing** – Almost daily, he says, students need to be writing about what they read, using skills like analysis, comparison, explaining, making arguments, and justifying interpretations. “This daily written work,” says Schmoker, “which need not always be collected and scored – should be the basis for longer, more formal papers” – and those need to be scheduled at regular intervals.

- **Text level acceleration** – Students should be reading increasing amounts of grade-level texts across subject areas, scaffolded by explicit instruction in vocabulary, background knowledge, annotating, and note-taking – with frequent checks for understanding and on-the-spot adjustment of teaching to reach all students.

“The Problem with Literacy Programs” by Mike Schmoker in Education Week, February 20, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Vd3xMf>; Schmoker can be reached at schmoker@futureone.com.

