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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Briggs, F. & McVeity, M. (2000)
Teaching Young Children to Protect Themselves, NSW: Allen & Unwin

There is no doubt that child sexual abuse is a confronting issue and one that needs sensitive handling when educating children 5 to 12 years old. "Teaching young children to protect themselves" is a practical safety program for primary aged children to be used by teachers and caregivers. This is a comprehensive guide for teachers interested in addressing this issue.

This book is organised into two sections. The first section comprises of seven chapters that sets out information about child sexual abuse and establishes guidelines for those implementing the program. In this section the authors draw on Australian and overseas research that presents a compelling argument that all young children should be educated in matters of personal safety. Information presented from interviews with sexual offenders is one part of the research that illustrates the necessity of implementing this program with all young children. Issues such as the importance of using a collaborative approach with parents/care-givers, strategies for teaching safety skills and integrating safety education into the wider curriculum will interest all teachers and caregivers. Further, the authors discuss the modern threat to young children's safety and demonstrate how to ensure child safety on the Internet.

One of the merits of this book for classroom teachers is the practical nature of the second section of the book. In this section there are the five ready to use small units of work, organised into themes. Each theme includes activity ideas, ready to use work sheets, songs and activity black line masters. The activities have a junior primary focus and may need extension for

the upper primary years. In keeping with the foundation idea that this program can only be implemented successfully with parent collaboration, each theme comes with a letter to parents explaining the theme the class will be working on. These letters are written thoughtfully and will be a bonus to a teacher who may find it hard to address this topic. At the end of this section is a problem solving and revision unit.

The issue of child sexual abuse is confronting and teachers may hesitate to introduce this topic, as they are concerned that children may be scared unnecessarily and made distrustful of all adults. However, the authors are persuasive that this is a topic that cannot be ignored and because this book integrates both the theory and the practice of implementing a child safety program it is a useful addition for teachers of young children.

Lennie Barblett
Edith Cowan University

Robbins, B. (2000). *Inclusive mathematics 5-11*. London: Continuum.
Price £13.99

This is a text that has been produced as part of the Special Needs in Ordinary Schools series edited by international renowned special educator Peter Mittler. While it is a British text it contains much information that is also relevant in the Australian Context. This particular book in the series focuses specifically on children with special needs learning mathematics effectively within the mainstream curriculum.

Each of the three parts to the book considers a different aspect of mathematics. The first part reviews the underlying processes involved in mathematics learning and the importance that should be attached to becoming numerate. It also provides a research based overview of traditional methods of providing alternative curricula for students

identified as being 'low attainers' or those educated in special schools. A section additionally provides information for teachers to consider when responding to diversity in addressing the mathematical learning of students in their classes.

The second part is concerned with discussing how the traditionally different curricula employed to meet the needs of students who are not achieving mathematically can be reconsidered into one inclusive curriculum suitable for all students. A strong philosophy of inclusive education permeates throughout, although this is well supported with numerous ideas for teachers on how to implement an inclusive mathematics curriculum. Much of the dialogue refers to the British educational system, such as the introduction of the numeracy strategy, the SEN policy, and the role of the SENCO in developing inclusive classrooms. Almost all of the research and discussion of projects also, not surprisingly, focuses on the UK or Europe. Heedless of this, this section still provides the international reader with a range of practical strategies that they can employ when aiming to develop a more inclusive mathematical curriculum.

The final part of the book discusses the invariably controversial issue of support. The first chapter of this section refers almost exclusively to classroom support in the UK with an emphasis on the Numeracy Project. This would be of little value in the Australian context, other than to gain an insight into some of the potential difficulties that may arise should Australian systems follow a similar route. The chapter on staff development would be useful for any educational administrators. Although again this focuses on the Numeracy Project there are a number of issues raised that would be worth considering when reviewing PD for staff in any school. This section concludes with a valuable discussion on assessing and promoting inclusive mathematical practices with a regular school.

The text follows a logical approach by considering three major issues associated with mathematics education. It is written in a fairly non-academic style that would make it appealing for both preservice and practicing teachers. Each chapter is relatively short and easy to read and concludes with one or two 'talking points' that would require the reader to become involved in action research in order to investigate the points raised. Throughout the text there is strong support for inclusive education and the discussion constantly brings the reader to consider how they can support an inclusive mathematical curriculum. The suggestions provided to assist and direct the teacher or administrator are highly relevant and practically useful.

This would make a good easy read for those wishing to consider developing an inclusive mathematical curriculum. It would also be a practical text for use as a discussion stimulator at workshops or during professional study courses. It is current and well grounded in research providing the reader with an understanding of recent changing directions in mathematical education, underscored by a strong focus on inclusive education.

Chris Forlin
Edith Cowan University.

Digital Developments in Higher Education: Theory and Practice

This is an interesting book containing a mix of the theoretical and the practical. Many chapters take a broad post-modern view of the impact of new technologies on universities and on course delivery.

The post modern slant is welcome as it provides a critique of the use of these technologies in universities. For example, Luke in an early chapter addresses many issues of power and knowledge and opens the debate in a worthwhile manner. Unfortunately the debate is often not

continued in following chapters and this gives the book quite an uneven feel. By not successfully combining the many different takes on the subject, a not very coherent synthesis of opinions has resulted.

Nonetheless there is much of value in the book. For example Bagnall's chapter dealing with ethics and the trend towards greater contingencies upon cultural contexts in universities is well written and badly needed. It is an important chapter though perhaps not strongly connected to "Digital Developments". Similarly Harvey's chapter dealing with the "rebranding" of New Zealand as a "knowledge economy...able to attract transnational corporate investment" invokes a rhetoric that would resonate strongly with most readers. She addresses the repositioning of knowledge as technologised, scientised and commodified, a by now familiar theme of the book.

Other chapters in this book of short essays deal with topics like the scope for individual access to learning and the possibilities for these technologies for personal acquisition of knowledge. Peter Roberts examines the exponential growth in academic publishing over the last century, the increasing number of academic journals and their increasing cost. He ties this to decreasing library budgets and decreasing purchases of academic books and the rise of the Internet leads him to believe that we are at a "pivotal moment in the history of scholarly publishing". He provides an interesting overview of the issues involved in publishing on the Internet including peer review and turn around time.

Probably the most relevant chapter, in a practical sense to teacher educators, is the one written by Pamela Gay where she describes in case study fashion her coming to grips with the use of technology in her teaching and her attempts to build a more inclusive and expansive classroom community. She stresses some sometimes obvious but salient points in regard to implementing technologies such as linking to pedagogy, preparation and architecture

an often neglected aspect of implementation

Latter chapters in the book examine practical aspects like the use of electronic discourses which would be of value to those teacher educators wishing to connect their classes with other more distant groups. A chapter on online learning is well written and gives a comprehensive account in case study fashion of this mode of learning.

This is a useful book for teacher educators. Required reading? No not really as there are probably better volumes around which deal in more depth with the wide-ranging issues in this volume. However its international authorship appeal enables the reader to appreciate how these technologies cut across contexts. In this fast moving scene it is a timely publication.

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