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Professional Materials Review

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Professional Materials Review

Infotext: Reading and Learning. Written by Karen Feathers. Pippin Publishing Ltd., 380 Esna Park Drive, Markham Ontario, L3R 1H5. ISBN: 0-88751-056-6. 1993. 143 pp.

*Reviewed by Janet Dynak
Western Michigan University*

Infotext: Reading and Learning is written as an alternative to the typical content area reading text which gives the reader an array of instructional strategies to assist students when reading informational text. The author presents this book from the perspective that teachers should not generate or control the instructional activities that promote the successful reading of infotext. Instead, teachers need to provide experiences for students to take control of their own informational reading.

The theoretical framework for this student-centered approach to content area reading is based on the constructivist view of how learning takes place. The importance of prior knowledge and its connection to obtaining new knowledge is woven throughout the text. Each suggested activity is presented as a way to help students monitor their own learning. The author views reading as an interactive process where readers have the right to interpret texts. Readers also need to be given the opportunity to evaluate their interpretations.

The chapters focus on topics which are common in many content reading textbooks. The chapters include the purpose of teaching content reading, evaluating students and

texts, organizing information, understanding vocabulary, and the importance of reflective writing. They are written in a user-friendly style for the reader who is unfamiliar with the field of content reading. Often the author cites current research as a basis for the ideas presented. The specific activities suggested for the various topics are discussed with sufficient detail, but explicit examples to illustrate how the activity could be used in various subject areas are scarce. The steps to develop a DRTA (Directed Reading-Thinking Activity) when reading expository text are described well, but I question a person's ability to design one from the material provided. There are no samples. In the section on text assessment, the quantitative and qualitative measures to be considered when evaluating textbooks are explained, but the author does not include any of the checklists that have been developed in recent years. Thus, the information on text assessment is not easy to apply. When using this text, teacher educators might need to supplement with more examples of the strategies presented. The lack of examples is problematic for both inservice and preservice groups.

Infotext: Reading and Learning reflects the author's belief that reading and learning are not separate activities. The importance of meaningful activities where students take ownership of their reading learning is stressed throughout the book. A strong case for the need to view content reading from the perspective of the reader is successfully presented.

This review of professional materials is the second in a series of titles from the Pippin Teacher's Library, published by Pippin Publishing Limited. Future titles will include Oral Language in Today's Classroom and Whole Language: Practical Ideas.

Kathryn Kinnucan-Welsch, Reviews Editor