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Professional Materials Review

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Professional Materials Review

Whole Language: Practical Ideas. Written by Mayling Chow, Lee Dobson, Marietta Hurst, and Joy Nucich. Pippin Publishing Limited, 150 Telson Road, Markham Ontario L3R1E5. ISBN: 0-88751-032-9. Paperbound. 108 pp. 1991.

While it is the policy of *Reading Horizons* to only review the most current materials, the professional resource reviewed below is one title from the Pippin Publishing series we have featured in recent issues.

Jennifer Rae Stell
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Professionals in education are aware of the current need for the evaluation of teaching practices. In the area of literacy, it is clear from research that it is not enough to teach reading and writing skills to students. Today's world demands literate people who can think and solve problems independently. *Whole Language: Practical Ideas* is a well-organized, easy to read book about strategies for literacy instruction that can help students become more responsible for their own learning. The ideas presented throughout the book are research-based yet easily applicable to classroom situations.

The book is divided into sections covering shared reading, independent writing, independent reading, shared writing, and evaluation. Each section begins with a brief description of the component and its purpose in the curriculum. This is followed by well-explained strategies and ideas for use in each curricular area. It is not written as a cookbook of

activities. Its focus is on a few specific ideas to further children's understanding and knowledge of each subject.

Influenced by stimulating research in literacy, encouraged by administration, and dissatisfied with their students' progress, these authors gradually evolved in their thinking and practicing of literacy development. They show the importance of integrating reading and writing as one component is always influencing another and as learning is integrated across the curriculum. Before the authors began their new approach to teaching they determined some principles upon which they structured their learning environments. These principles are clearly outlined in the text and are closely aligned with the practical ideas suggested.

There are good illustrations of actual children's writing, showing examples of each stage in written development from prephonemic through conventional writing. There are examples from the students of letters, messages, advertisements, and articles. Graphs and charts demonstrating how the teacher can keep records of students' progress are also included. Particularly useful is a long example of a reading miscue inventory. The authors demonstrate specifically how they mark and evaluate miscues. It is a useful reminder for those already familiar with such inventories and an understandable example for those who are not.

Throughout the book the authors discuss the responsibilities for creating a good learning environment. These responsibilities are shared by both teachers and students, and should be followed for optimum learning to occur. By shifting focus the teacher can help students take more responsibility for their own education as independent learners.