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The Threads of Reading: Strategies of Literacy Development, by Karen Tankersley

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ing this conclusion is a logical step, it is not clear that the evidence presented justifies the outcome. The author does a precise job of presenting a study that has some implications to the way the American school system meets the needs of English language learners. Both administrators and early childhood teachers would benefit from reading this book.

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THE THREADS OF READING: STRATEGIES OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

KAREN TANKERSLEY
ASSOCIATION FOR CURRICULUM
AND SUPERVISION DEVELOPMENT, 2003
\$25.99, 184 pages

Reviewed by Ted Wallach

In *The Threads of Reading: Strategies of Literacy Development*, Karen Tankersley uses the image of a tapestry to describe the components of reading, defining the individual components as six threads: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and higher-order thinking. The book begins each section with a detailed description of each thread of literacy development, using recent research throughout the text to support the techniques and ideas that are presented for each thread. Each section of the book offers numerous activities that, as the author states, have “been gathered from actual classroom practice” (Tankersley, 2003, p. 3). The activities are designed to add variety to and strengthen the classroom teaching of the six threads.

The activities cover a wide range of ability levels. Some activities are designed for early learners of reading and writing, while others are planned for higher skill students who are beyond the fourth or fifth grades. While there are activities designed for the lower grade classrooms, the book pro-

vides no distinction in the description of the activities. The activities could have been organized according to difficulty level, grade level, or age appropriateness. Without those distinctions, it is difficult for the reader to find information applicable to his or her own classroom situation.

The activities provided are creative. One criticism is that some involve student competition. Word Baseball, Identifying Words, Jeopardy, Definition Game, and Bluff along with others are competitive games that score points and declare winners. These activities may do more damage than good for a student who is struggling with reading concepts. Motivation may suffer if a student feels unsuccessful in a competitive environment.

While *Threads of Reading* has numerous teaching activities, helpful hints, techniques, and ideas, all designed to increase capacities in one of the six threads, resources that may help the teacher implement some activities are missing. The book does not contain blackline masters, pictures, illustrations, or examples of student work. These items would help readers, especially teachers, to understand the activities and to know the intended outcome of each.

The text is poorly organized and lacks structure. The author's ideas are often poorly sequenced. The activities are not always easy to understand because they do not provide sufficient explanation or example, as found in a vocabulary activity called Show and Tell. This activity states, "Students can draw pictures, find pictures, or bring in relevant items to instruct their peers in important vocabulary concepts or new terms they have learned" (Tankersley, 2003, p. 64). Without a clear example of this activity, a teacher has little knowledge of how to apply this to the classroom and a student has even less knowledge about how to complete the task.

The author also misrepresents the research practices of Fountas and Pinnell (1996). Tankersley describes a technique called guided reading as an approach where a teacher reads a segment of a book aloud and the student rereads the same selection four or five times silently before repeating it back to the teacher. The Fountas and Pinnell definition of guided reading is not based in this practice. From what this reviewer could find, there is no evidence of Tankersley's guided reading practice in Fountas and Pinnell's *Guided Reading* (1996). Fountas and Pinnell write that "the teacher would rarely read the book to the children first: the goal is for them to read it themselves" (p. 8). Four of Tankersley's strategies have the teacher reading the material first to the student, and the student repeating what they had just heard. In addition to guided reading, these techniques include read along, echo reading, and rehearsal reading.

Another key function of teaching and lesson development that is absent from this book is assessment. The author does mention a reading fluency assessment:

A quick and easy way to determine whether students are reading material at the appropriate level is to have them read several sentences or paragraphs in a couple of minutes. If the student makes five or more reading mistakes...the material is too difficult. (Tankersley, 2003, p. 78)

The author also includes how to test the fluency rate of older students and how to determine a student's reading rate. The author writes that students can create a graph to track their progress. The word assessment, however, does not make it into the index. With the present focus on standards and accountability, it is surprising that this book on reading instruction is conspicuously missing information on assessment.

Threads of Reading attempts to cover too much material in a compact and brief book. As a reading instructor, this reviewer did find the description of each thread helpful and relevant to skills necessary for reading development. Tankersley could have written a book for each individual thread of reading that she discusses. The wide range of activity levels, ranging from the most basic activities for students in Pre-K or kindergarten to advanced lessons designed for middle school and high school thinkers, highlights a compound problem. This book is designed for every level of teacher, yet the focus is so broad that only parts are applicable to certain levels. A better book would have been structured to a certain grade or age level, rather than attempting to reach all levels.

REFERENCES

- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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