

Neuman, S.B., & D.K. Dickinson, eds. 2011. *Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 3*. New York: Guilford. 467 pp. ISBN 9781609180270. \$65.00.

Why are so few literacy interventions really effective? This highly readable text conveys cutting-edge thinking about the issues, theory, and research on emergent literacy and the implications for practice inside and outside the classroom. Focusing on the period between birth and the formal teaching of reading, authors describe all aspects of early language and literacy learning, including topics like promising avenues for assessment, parent-child interactions, and supporting English language learners and children with language and reading challenges. This third volume reviews large longitudinal studies and gives particular attention to phonological awareness, self-regulation, and issues associated with delivering effective interventions. For example, one chapter introduces six principles of word learning in infancy and demonstrates how teachers can use this information to enhance vocabulary development in pre-K through third grade classrooms.

Experts discuss research that both questions and reaffirms past trends and reveals interesting new insights on advancing young children's oral and written language skills. In a section that addresses the application of emerging research to professional development, authors show how new evidence calls for rethinking the way professional development can strengthen literacy practices. Contributors highlight new research priorities and discuss possibilities and policies that promote improved literacy programs for young children.

Stacey, S. 2011. *The Unscripted Classroom: Emergent Curriculum in Action*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf. 192 pp. ISBN 9781605540368. \$29.95.

Using examples from infant/toddler and preschool classrooms in the United States and Canada, Stacey shows how teachers develop curriculum that begins with children's interests. She describes the way curriculum moves through a three-stage cycle as teachers document children's actions and conversations, reflect with colleagues about what is happening, and respond in ways that support children's ideas and questions. Lively vignettes of teacher-child interactions demonstrate the ways teachers make decisions about the curriculum plan as the curriculum evolves.

The text covers practical elements, such as how teachers plan a flexible schedule that allows children to continue their learning in long-term projects that capture their interest and how administrators can organize staff schedules to permit teachers to meet frequently enough to collaborate on the curriculum. The author addresses the misunderstandings and challenges of engaging in this complex way of planning curriculum, like ways to respond spontaneously to children's ideas while also remaining accountable to parents, administrators, and professional standards.

The book includes a journal by a teacher who records her confusion and successes as she participates in an emergent curriculum classroom for the first time. Her perspective is especially pertinent for teachers who are new to emergent curriculum; it is a lesson in professional development. This is a good choice for introducing emergent curriculum to teachers and prospective teachers.

Garcia, E.E., & E.C. Frede, eds. 2010. *Young English Language Learners: Current Research and Emerging Directions for Practice and Policy*. New York: Teachers College Press. 214 pp. ISBN 9780807751114. \$32.95.

The greatest proportion of the fast-growing population of English language learners (ELLs) are under the age of 5; yet the research on this age group has largely been conducted on native English speakers. This text draws on existing research to advance the knowledge base for educators serving young English language learners by summarizing what is known and suggesting directions for future research. Chapters address who these children are culturally and linguistically. They review findings that help readers understand the state of education for ELLs and its prospects. This comprehensive volume has important implications for preschool education and future ELL research.

Experts provide a scientifically based picture of dual language learning and second language acquisition in the preschool years and a descriptive analysis of the math and reading achievement patterns of English language learners in elementary school. Topics range from research that demonstrates the links between linguistic and cognitive processes to discussions of the best practices for teaching and assessing young children, based on new research. Authors review the characteristics and preparation of the early childhood workforce serving English language learners and report on the limited body of research for improving higher education and professional development.

Meier, D.R. 2011. *Teaching Children to Write: Constructing Meaning and Mastering Mechanics*. New York: Teachers College Press. 176 pp. ISBN 9780807752388. \$27.95.

A first-grader tells readers that "writing is really hard, because when you are done, you are just at the beginning. You have to edit . . ." As most teachers of kindergarten through fourth grade will attest, helping 5- to 9-year-old children learn to write well is a complex and challenging task. Meier provides ideas and strategies for supporting children as they go through the different phases of the writing process—from planning and getting started through the art of composing first drafts, editing, and revising. The text is based on the premise that writing development is both external and internal, as children learn to use their ideas, feelings, and images to create meaning. Meier's discussion of the essential components of writing helps teachers see the writing process from the child's perspective.

This book focuses on helping children integrate the mechanics of written language (grammar, spelling, and such) with the content or meaning. Meier features the philosophies and writing strategies of seven experienced teachers at the K-4 levels who use excerpts from their students' writing to illustrate their ideas.

The first chapter highlights the work of theorists and practitioners about early writing, providing a chronological summary of the thinking of the past 40 years about how and why children learn to write. Meier draws from this impressive collection of big ideas throughout the book to demonstrate the way they shape current practices.

Meier offers a unique look at a critical subject in teaching and professional development. It deepens our understanding of the process and opens up new possibilities for helping children become writers.

Titles are selected from the many new books received by NAEYC. Educator **Gail Perry** writes the brief annotations. The books are available from the publishers listed, your local bookstore, or online retailers.

New Books is available in an online archive at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.