

Kagan, S.L., & K. Kauerz, eds. 2012. *Early Childhood Systems: Transforming Early Learning*. New York: Teachers College Press. 324 pp. ISBN 978-0-8077-5296-8. \$31.95.

This book is designed to stimulate new thinking and new actions about the policies, organization, management, and functioning of the systems that address the needs of young children and their families. Coherent, coordinated early childhood systems are urgently needed and the stakes are high. But getting there is a daunting process. In this edited volume, leading authorities debate critical questions and define the challenges, beginning with the lack of agreement about the meaning of an early childhood system and the results we want from the field's system-building efforts. The contributors present wide-ranging perspectives on the components and basic elements needed to support early childhood systems. They identify promising initiatives across the country and offer strategies for guiding and evaluating the effectiveness of systems. The authors discuss topics such as governance, accountability, professional development, early learning standards, and financing the transformation from a collection of programs and services to a high-functioning early childhood system.

This comprehensive volume lays out accomplishments, problems to address, and a vision for the future. It serves as an invaluable resource and foundation for moving forward with the complex task of creating integrated early childhood systems.

Puerling, B. 2012. *Teaching in the Digital Age: Smart Tools for Age 3 to Grade 3*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf. 244 pp. ISBN 978-1-60554-118-1. \$39.95.

A creative teacher demonstrates the far-reaching potential of technology for enriching the learning of young children, when used wisely. This book offers a wealth of innovative ideas for integrating a wide range of technologies and interactive media into early childhood settings to promote children's passion for inquiring, thinking critically, collaborating, and communicating—both inside and outside the classroom.

Puerling helps teachers and children become active users of technology as opposed to passive viewers of entertainment. Technology functions as a tool embedded in the interactions between teachers and children to enrich, extend, and serve as a springboard for learning experiences. For example, technology enables children to see and visit with a child's relatives in another country, deepening their understanding and respect for differences. Videotaped block constructions, along with the children's explanations recorded on a smart pen for instant computer transcripts, helps children with varying skills contribute to a document panel or share their work at a parent meeting. Children collaborate to publish a class songbook with audio, images, and their commentary. Later they use a video program to create posters that advertise the release of their work on the web for parents and classmates.

Easy-to-follow explanations and the accessible format help teachers select and use a wide array of equipment and software, such as document cameras, webcams, publication and presentation tools, multitouch mobile devices, and online video clips. Digital novices and veterans alike will be inspired by this informative and engaging book.

File, N., J.J. Mueller, & D.B. Wisneski, eds. 2012. *Curriculum in Early Childhood Education: Re-examined, Rediscovered, Renewed*. New York: Routledge. 213 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-88111-1. \$39.95.

Noted leaders in the field present a thoughtful examination of the trends, issues, and features of early childhood curriculum. The book's purpose is to provoke thinking and debate about relationships between the theories and ideas that shape early childhood curriculum and curricular practices, educational goals, and values.

Chapters address topics such as the historical and larger social context in which early childhood curriculum has evolved and analyses of HighScope, Creative Curriculum, Project Approach, Reggio Emilia, Te Whāriki, and three infant/toddler curricula. The authors explore the role of developmental theory in curriculum content and instruction, and define the features of critical theories such as postmodern and poststructural and their contribution to contemporary early childhood practice. They discuss the assumptions of early childhood precepts, such as play and developmentally appropriate practice, and propose expanding the meanings and implications for curriculum development.

This book sets the stage for a much-needed dialogue in early childhood college courses and in communities of practice to help educators realize the potential of curriculum for contributing to a more meaningful and empowering education.

Falk, B., & M. Blumenreich. 2012. *Teaching Matters: Stories from Inside City Schools*. New York: The New Press. 196 pp. ISBN 978-1-59558-490-8. \$19.95.

Two teacher educators share compelling accounts of teachers who used an inquiry process to tackle pressing problems in their classrooms and schools, improve their teaching, and enhance children's learning. The authors draw from teacher research by their graduate students—15 teachers in urban elementary schools and early childhood centers in economically depressed communities. The teachers each selected a question or problem they were facing in their school, collected and analyzed data over a period of a year, and used what they learned to address the problem.

These personally meaningful stories reveal how the graduate students coped with obstacles along the way and developed new insights and teaching strategies. Examples include forging deep connections with immigrant children and families, addressing sensitive issues like gender bias and homophobia, providing individualized teaching to meet the unique and special needs of children in large classes, and generating strategies to bridge the competing demands of school requirements and the active, play-based ways through which kindergarten children learn.

The authors show how the process of inquiry into one's own practice is a powerful professional learning tool for students in undergraduate and graduate programs and in-service training in schools.

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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.

Kovach, B.A., & S. Patrick. 2012. *Being with Infants and Toddlers: A Curriculum that Works for Caregivers*. Tulsa, OK: LBK Publishing. 128 pp. ISBN 978-0-615-63516-3. \$24.95.

Based on the philosophies of Emmi Pikler and Magda Gerber, this charming book shows how to provide responsive and respectful care for infants and toddlers in group settings. The authors give practical recommendations to help teachers set up the environment and handle the physical routines of daily life with babies and toddlers—eating, sleeping, diapering, and play. But the focus during these activities (and of this book) is always the relationship between teachers and children. These teacher-child interactions throughout the day constitute the real curriculum. Authors show how to create reciprocal relationships of mutual trust in which children are included in the caregiving process and respected as individuals.

The philosophy of this approach is communicated through simple and graphic examples—hands pick up a baby, wash, dress, and feed him, helping the baby form the first relationship outside the family. The authors advise “When approaching an infant, be sure to slowly show him your hands prior to picking him up. . . . An infant needs time to process what is going to happen. . . . Show him you respect his need for this time. . . . Hands convey peace and gentleness or roughness” (21). Captivating photographs capture the spirit of the interactions between children and teachers and help communicate the meaning of the text. This is a book for all those concerned about excellent group care for infants and toddlers.

Fiore, L.B. 2012. *Assessment of Young Children: A Collaborative Approach*. New York: Routledge. 200 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-88812-7. \$28.95.

The underlying premise of this book is that good assessment is deeply rooted in good practice and the teacher’s goals for children and families. Fiore believes that assessment should be a part of every day, embedded in teaching, changing what we know about the children as they grow and learn, and in turn, informing the curriculum. Case studies and classroom examples help illustrate a variety of informal and formal assessment methods and opportunities for integrating assessment into children’s ongoing activities. For example, documentation of a preschool inquiry project with photos, observations, children’s work, and transcripts of small group discussions provides evidence of language, social, and cognitive skills. A primary teacher’s KWHL chart (what I *know*, what I *want* to know, *how* I will find the information, and what I *learned*) used systematically to facilitate children’s idea generation during a writer’s workshop can be an assessment tool.

The author shows how assessment is a collaborative process among teachers, children, families, and the physical and social environments. The text includes discussion of underlying theories and issues driving assessment, such as accountability and elementary school progress reports. This book offers an interesting and broad look at assessment and makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the topic.

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I certify that all information furnished is true and complete: (signed) Edwin Malstrom, Director of Creative Services, 10/15/2012

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