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Reviewed work:

Balancing Reading and Language Learning: A Resource for Teaching English Language Learners, K–5. (2005). Mary Cappellini. Portland, Newark: Stenhouse Publishers. Pp.320. ISBN 1571103678. \$37.50

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Balancing Reading and Language Learning: A Resource for Teaching English Language Learners, K–5 contains numerous real teaching examples and lesson plans, and is a resourceful and practical reference book for English language teachers and curriculum planners. The author, Mary Cappellini, has worked with English language learners (ELLs) and teachers of ELLs for over 20 years. She has rich experience as an elementary teacher of English as a second language (ESL) and as a bilingual resource teacher. The book provides effective pedagogies in the teaching of reading to ELLs who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. It also provides an overview of a balanced literacy program in language and reading instruction, including read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.

Each of the book's 14 chapters begins with a short anecdote about some communication problems that ELLs may encounter as well as some guiding questions. These anecdotes and guiding questions serve as an introduction to the chapter and motivate readers to continue their reading, and guide them to reflect on the theme of each chapter. The book is user friendly. The appendices include, but are not limited to, examples of assessment record sheets, reading conference sheets, checklists of language patterns, literature response sheets, and book lists.

The book is well-organized into five parts according to the development and implementation of a balanced literacy program, namely, getting to know students, establishing a balanced literacy

program, read-alouds and shared reading, guided reading, and moving towards independence. The first part of the book, chapters 1–3, provides teachers with suggestions on how to understand the cultural backgrounds of their students. In chapter 1 Cappellini discusses the importance of setting up an environment of inclusion to educate children from different backgrounds. She argues that teachers “have to keep anxiety low, and motivation and self-esteem high” (p. 9). She suggests various methods to set up a climate of acceptance in class with the help of instructional assistants or bilingual professionals working with small groups of children. To promote a sense of community in the teaching of English structure, such as sentence patterns, adjectives, phonics, capitalization, and punctuation, Cappellini provides a sample lesson on the use of daily news, in which children share news about their lives with others. She finishes the chapter by guiding teachers on how to prepare a cumulative record for each child. In chapter 2 Cappellini discusses two different types of reading and language assessments for ELLs: formal language assessments and informal language assessments. She provides useful resources for teachers on ongoing informal assessments, such as how to set up a reading conference sheet, how to engage a child in conversation for the purpose of assessing his or her language proficiency, how to make an informal language assessment record, and how to place children into different developmental levels of English language proficiency.

A key to helping a child improve his English language proficiency regardless of his listed level is to assess the language patterns he has trouble with and teach them to him in natural ways, through mini-lessons in shared reading or language development. (p. 27)

Cappellini describes language patterns used at different developmental levels of English language proficiency based on the California English language development standards, and she provides a case study of her students as a reference for teachers. At the end of chapter 2, she raises the interesting issue of how teachers manage to teach students with different language proficiency levels in the same class. She offers suggestions and strategies to help teachers in later parts of the book. In chapter 3 Cappellini discusses how teachers can involve parents in the classroom and in the larger school curriculum. She describes how teachers can launch activities (e.g., a before-school reading club, a family literacy night, a home-school reading program, and a library night) to promote family literacy. Her home-school reading program is well-organized. Using a model of “reading to, with, and by children,” Cappellini has skillfully designed to, *with or by* bookmarks in English and Spanish for her students to use for reading at home. These bookmarks are indicators to parents of the child’s independent reading level. A *to* bookmark is designed for a book that needs to be read to a child. A *with* bookmark is designed for a book that needs to be read with a child. A *by* bookmark is designed for a book that a child can read by himself or herself.

The second part of the book, chapters 4 and 5, describes how to establish a balanced literacy program. Chapter 4 details the meaning of “reading to, with, and by children” of all language and literature levels through the important components of a balanced reading program, comprising read-alouds, guided reading, independent reading, and literature circles. Cappellini discusses the teaching skills and strategies in shared reading, which emphasize meaning-making processes in a welcoming and supportive environment. Her “reading to, with, and by children” program is very detailed. However, one weakness is that it lacks discussion of critical literacy. In my view, the reading program would be more comprehensive if the notion of critical literacy were addressed.

Chapter 5 concerns thematic planning. At the beginning of the chapter, Cappellini mentions a common phenomenon in ESL classrooms where students do not participate in class discussions. She argues that silence does not mean students do not understand or are not learning. In this chapter, she provides a sound thematic planning framework for teachers to follow. She shares her experience of involving students in selecting reading materials for thematic teaching, which can increase their reading motivation.

The third part of the book, chapters 6–8, provides reading strategies used in read-alouds and shared reading. In chapter 6 Cappellini highlights the importance of read-alouds:

Through modeling the joy of reading, we can show children how we stop and reflect, how we use language for different purposes, how we make connections to our own lives, and how we are moved by certain parts of a book. (p.98)

Cappellini provides insightful guidelines for teachers about selecting appropriate read-aloud books that can encourage all children to participate at different reading levels. In addition, she presents practical teaching strategies in read-alouds, for example, using rhyme and rhythm as a focus. In chapter 7 Cappellini discusses the important elements of an effective shared reading lesson. By outlining her own teaching experience, she demonstrates how teachers can plan and prepare a shared reading lesson for lower-grade children. In chapter 8 Cappellini models effective reading strategies with longer nonfiction texts to upper-grade children. She demonstrates how she uses a student-centered shared reading model to help ELLs comprehend new content in the texts when they are learning vocabulary.

The fourth part of the book, chapters 9–12, suggests teaching techniques for guided reading. Chapter 9 discusses how teachers can use guided reading to help ELLs develop their confidence. Cappellini provides examples of how she sets up her guided reading lessons, such as how to form guided reading groups, choose the reading materials to match children's diverse language levels and interests, manage the reading group, and use book rooms effectively. Chapter 10 recommends reading strategies that emergent readers can use in relation to their language level. Cappellini provides step-by-step guidelines and teaching examples. In chapter 11 reading strategies that early readers can use are described. This chapter also discusses the difference between an emergent guided reading lesson and an early guided reading lesson and indicates how teachers can manage their time to assess students' reading strategies and language level. Chapter 12 discusses the best way to lead a fluent guided reading lesson for ELLs and the time that teachers should spend in teaching vocabulary.

The fifth part of the book, chapters 13 and 14, includes instruction for the implementation of independent reading. In chapter 13 Cappellini shares her experiences of how to guide children in selecting books for their interests, age, language level, and reading level, and how to establish, manage, and run literature circles. In chapter 14 Cappellini highlights ways that teachers can work with individual students who have diverse strengths and needs. Her argument is that "Flexibility is the key within a structured program" (p. 243). At the end of the book, she highlights the need for individual ELL instruction suggesting that teachers need to assess the strengths and weaknesses of individual children in both language and reading development so as to help shape instruction.

The design of Cappellini's "reading to, with, and by children" reading program is very insightful. I particularly enjoyed reading the first two parts of the book. The informal assessment methods suggested are very detailed yet easy to follow. The idea of involving parents in the reading program is brilliant. Cappellini cleverly designed the *to*, *with*, and *by* bookmarks for parents to indicate their child's independent reading level. Parents are advised clearly on how to help students with the *to* and *with* books under the home-school reading program. If the parents' English levels are not developed enough to read books to or with their children, they will at least be aware of their child's independent reading level so that they might find an older sibling, friend, or neighbor who can read in English to or with their child.

To sum up, I highly recommend this book to English language teachers because it is an excellent resource. The book presents many practical tools and real teaching examples to help teachers plan their reading lessons. In addition, some of the methods contained in this book are likely to contribute more broadly to the development of an effective English language curriculum.

About the Reviewer

On Kei Lee is a Doctor of Education student at the University of Sydney. Her thesis is a Critical Discourse Analysis of the Hong Kong Extensive Reading Scheme. Her interests are in extensive reading, English language learning and teaching, critical literacy, critical discourse analysis, moral and civic education, and curriculum studies. E-mail: onkeilee@yahoo.com