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Professional Books of Interest

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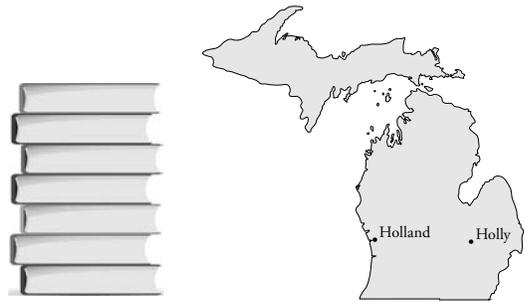
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Professional Books of Interest

by Kathy Highfield and Laura Pardo



Dear Readers,

As you settle into your fall school routines and get back into the swing of teaching, we want to remind you to keep your professional reading lives active. One of the reasons we love to write this column is that it keeps us focused on the goal of reading new and amazing books by researchers and educators that will help us to become better in our own profession. As a curriculum coordinator (Kathy) and a college professor (Laura), we too get busy with the day-to-day demands of our own jobs and personal lives. We challenge you this year to choose a professional book to keep on your nightstand amongst your reading choices. With technological advances and amazing researchers in our field, there is always something new, interesting, and insightful being published in the professional literature. We present to you four excellent possibilities for your reading list. Three of the books focus on two very important literacy topics: close reading and text complexity. The fourth book examines new research in the field of neuroscience that has the potential to transform your teaching and the lives of your students. Have a wonderful fall.



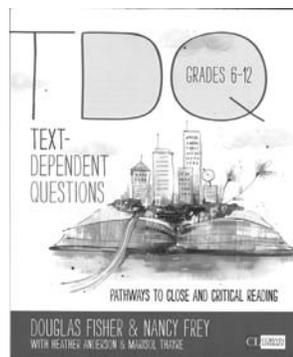
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Happy reading,
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Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2015) with H. Anderson & M. Thayre.
TDQ Grades 6-12: Text-Dependent Questions: Pathways to Close and Critical Reading.
Thousand Oaks, CA:
Corwin Literacy. ISBN
978-1483331379 \$27.95



researchers, and students as collectively they have struggled to determine what exactly it means to read a text closely. The conundrum for many educators was how to do a close reading of the text in a way that doesn't ignore a reader's background knowledge and experiences while encouraging students to read critically. In their new book, *Text-Dependent Questions*, Fisher and Frey explain how to do just that through an easily accessible and implementable four-phase process.

Since the term *close reading* emerged in the Common Core State Standards in 2013, it has become a curse for many teachers, administrators,

To explain where meaning lies within any text, Fisher and Frey draw from a large body of research that supports the view of comprehension as a

complex process in which multiple, overlapping perspectives can exist. Validating both the meaning and intent of the authors and the background knowledge of the reader, the process Fisher and Frey present will equip classroom teachers with the tools to guide readers through a close reading of a text. The four phases are:

1. What does the text say?
2. How does the text work?
3. What does the text mean?
4. What does the text inspire you to do?

In each phase, Fisher and Frey help teachers think about the purpose of the phase, the types of thinking needed to move through that phase, and the elements of the text that text-dependent questions should focus on to help students comprehend the text through close reading.

For the first phase, ‘What does the text say?’, readers engage with the text at a literal level. They explore two main areas – general understanding and key details. General understanding questions direct readers to determine plot, setting, character development, and sequence of events. Teachers might ask students to retell particular aspects of the text in order to help them focus on uncovering what the text says generally. Questions that focus students on details within the text can help them recognize themes. These type of questions vary depending on text structure and include the five W’s – who, what, when, where, and why.

Phase two, ‘How does the text work?’, provides a bridge from a literal understanding of the text to an interpretative one. Serving as a transitional phase between phases one and three, teachers ask questions about how the text works. To accomplish this, text-dependent questions in phase two focus on vocabulary, structure, and author’s craft.

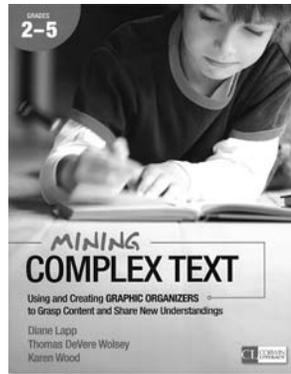
Phase three focuses on the question of what the text means, forcing readers to interpret the text through analysis, interpretation, and inference.

Questions that help readers infer come from delving into author’s purpose and intertextual connections, and these questions can fall into three categories: lexical, predictive, and elaborative. Author’s purpose questions ask readers to consider the author’s point of view, to think about the choices the author made and how they want their readers to react to these choices. Intertextual questions require readers to recall other texts – including songs, films, even conversations – to help them integrate information and determine the meaning of the text.

Phase four, ‘What does the text inspire you to do?’ builds on the first three phases, in which readers inspected the text, investigated it, and interpreted it. The final phase relies on action-oriented questions and tasks, such as Socratic seminars, projects, presentations, or debates. This phase enables the teacher to determine to what degree readers are able to transfer what they learned during the first three phases of the close reading. This phase may take several days to accomplish as students work through the preparation of the task.

An additional feature of Fisher and Frey’s book that readers will love are the tables in each chapter that illuminate the CCSS that are met by asking text-dependent questions within that phase and across grades 6-12. Sample texts and questions allow readers to practice the phases and to experience answering text-dependent questions. Because of the specificity of examples, and the variety of disciplines and grade levels, we are confident that secondary teachers will not only learn a great deal from the text, but will also be inspired to enact this process in their own classes.

Lapp, D., Wolsey, T.D., & Wood, K. (2015). *Mining Complex Text: Using and Creating Graphic Organizers to Grasp Content and Share New Understandings, Grades 2-5.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy. ISBN 978-1483311985 \$24.95



and

Lapp, D., Wolsey, T.D., Wood, K., & Johnson, K. (2015). *Mining Complex Text: Using and Creating Graphic Organizers to Grasp Content and Share New Understandings, Grades 6-12.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy. ISBN 978-1483316284 \$24.95



Not only did the CCSS bring the phrase close reading into the everyday vernacular of educators, but the market place has exploded with new sets of books and resource materials that claim to include or to support the comprehension of complex text. The new standards require K-12 students to read texts that increase in complexity, creating new opportunities and methods for comprehending more difficult texts. Rather than simply applying the same strategies each year with different texts, the goal is to systematically increase the level of rigor, critical thought, and content of texts. The group of authors who penned these two professional development texts provides insight into supporting students' understanding of complex text through the use of graphic organizers.

Graphic organizers have existed for a long time, and historically teachers have used them to help

students plan for writing, to showcase what they have learned, to organize concepts and ideas, to delineate parts of a larger whole, and more. The terms concept map, KWL, T-Chart, Venn Diagram, timeline, etc. are commonplace in teacher preparation classes, teacher's lounges, and professional magazines. However, the authors of these books help teachers elevate their use of both digital and print graphic organizers with students to tackle the comprehension of complex texts.

The first chapter in each book lays out theoretical and practical support for the renewed use of graphic organizers in the era of CCSS. Eight intertwined academic goals for using complex text, encompassing the reading, writing, speaking and listening standards, are presented in the chapter and provide a framework for the rest of the text. The authors identify eight goals:

- Acquire and use academic language appropriately
- Make connections
- Comprehend complex process or events
- Understand five types of informational text structures
- Understand content
- Explore a concept and determine the nature of inquiry
- Synthesize multiple sources
- Use reliable sources to form and write opinions

Each subsequent chapter focuses on the application of a variety of graphic organizers for different purposes, grade levels, content areas, and student abilities (including how to adapt graphic organizers through a three-tiered approach). Chapter foci include the following purposes:

- Help student read, reread, and take notes on a text
- Promote students' oral sharing of information and their ideas

Must Read Texts - Professional Books of Interest

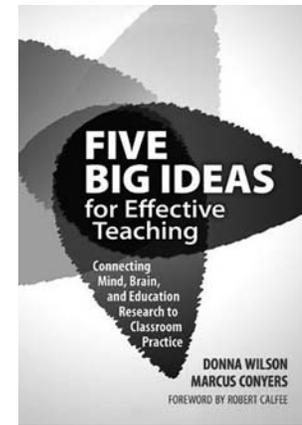
- Elevate organized note-making from complex text(s)
- Scaffold students' narrative and information writing
- Move student to independent thinking as they learn to create their own organizing and note-taking system

The authors rely on the gradual release of responsibility model in which teachers first take the responsibility for using a graphic organizer to develop meaning by modeling and thinking aloud. They then move on to provide scaffolded support as needed, finally allowing students to take full responsibility for their own selection and completion of a graphic organizer.

The two volumes are similar in structure and format with the main difference being the grade level focus. Both books cite CCSS in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as content-specific standards, offering numerous and robust examples. Explanations are also specific to the grade bands, content areas, academic abilities, and the necessary skill sets for using graphic organizers in K-12 schools with complex text. In each text, the authors cite research that supports the use of visual organizers to increase meaning-making, and they provide multiple examples across disciplines and grade levels, and in various student groupings (i.e. whole-class, small group, and independent). Additionally, each book ends with a large set of templates that can be used with students.

Teachers will find a certain level of comfort with the ideas presented in these texts because of their familiarity with graphic organizers. However, they are also likely to experience a renewed sense of challenge and ingenuity as they move their students towards comprehension of complex texts with a new wave of graphic organizers.

Wilson, D., & Conyers, M. (2013). *Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching: Connecting Mind, Brain, and Education Research to Classroom Practice*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press. ISBN 978-0807754252 \$29.95



Brain research has always fascinated us as educators.

The more we read about the complexity of the mind and the real impact that educators can have on brain development and learning, the more we admire the teaching profession. In their book, *Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching*, Wilson and Conyers look at the exciting and newly emerging field research that combines neuroscience, psychology, and education with the specific goal of improving classroom practices and student achievement.

There are pervasive assumptions that some teachers hold that have the potential to limit student learning and achievement. Carol Dweck (2007) refers to these assumptions as a mindset; teachers hold either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset when considering student potential and learning. While Dweck's book deals with the field of psychology, Wilson and Conyers support and further her work using new neurological research. Their findings will challenge assumptions that have been held, learned, and taught by many exceptional teachers in years past.

In their book, Wilson and Conyers look into five big ideas that intertwine and support a more optimistic view of learning potential in all children. Here is an introduction to the five big ideas as described on page 2.

1. Neurocognitive plasticity, renewed attention to the discovery that learning changes

- the physical structure of the brain as it changes the way students think.
2. The learning potential of every child, or the recognition that nearly every child can learn and improve his or her academic performance.
 3. The modifiability of intelligence, which stands at odds with the persistent myth that intelligence is fixed.
 4. The role of the body and the brain in learning.
 5. The need for explicit instruction on metacognition, or thinking about one's thinking, with the aim of enhancing learning.

These five interconnected ideas provide a sound foundation for each and every decision that teachers make regarding classroom instruction and learning. The authors examine each of these ideas in depth, including recent ground-breaking research. What impresses me most is that the authors also take each of these five ideas and follow through from research to the daily practices that take place in classrooms. For example, knowing that research now supports that even the most severely learning disabled students' brains will

physically change as a result of intentional learning experiences will transform the way we support struggling students.

While this book covers recent research breakthroughs and new technological methods of examining the brain and learning, it also connects very practically to the everyday life of classroom teachers. The book is readable, interesting, and insightful. While this book would be an excellent choice for a professional book discussion group, we would challenge every educator and parent to read this book. Becoming informed about the most innovative and interesting breakthroughs in science, and how these will positively improve classroom teaching, will motivate and inspire every teacher.

Works Cited

Dweck, D. (2007). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York, NY: Random House.

