BOOK REVIEWS

Instruction and Assessment for Struggling Writers: Evidence-Based Practices
Edited by Gary A. Troia

Reviewed by FINIAN O' SHEA a lecturer in learning support and special educational needs at Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin.

For anyone with a real interest in the teaching of writing, *Instruction and Assessment for Struggling Writers* provides a very welcome addition to what is a rather sparce landscape of quality publications on what has often been described as the 'most neglected of the three R's.' In this book, editor, Professor Gary Troia from Michigan State University brings together the collected wisdom of an admirable array of writers and researchers from the USA to address various aspects of writing instruction and assessment. Troia's own credentials make him uniquely qualified to edit this valuable reference.

In his introduction Troia sets out his stall, that the book will specifically look at writing instruction and assesssment for those students for whom writing is a challenge. He sees assessment and instruction as having a symbiotic relationship. However he cites evidence to show that we know more about instruction and less about formative and summative writing assessment. Troia sees this book as addressing this imbalance. It is unique in that "*writing instruction and assessment can and should attend to multiple levels of language knowledge and use and to integrate these to achieve maximum benefit for struggling writers*" (p2). And it is in this 'multiplicity and integration' that writing a short review of this book proved a challenge. Writing and the teaching of writing is a very complex and involved process. Contributor after contributor acknowledges this and sets about to look at one small aspect of their work in relation to the teaching of writing. The book's fourteen chapters are divided into five different sections.

The book begins by looking at the historical and theoretical perspectives that are prevalent today. The shift from 'product' to 'process' to 'product-process-product'

driven instruction is examined and frames the importance of teacher knowledge for effective instruction. Though a lot of research has been done in relation to how writing processes develop there is still a lot of work to be done on understanding how writing is used as a tool for learning. Self efficacy and procrastination in relation to motivation are examined in light of Bandura's social cognitive theory and suggestions are made to develop the former while reducing the latter.

The second section of the book examines how good effective evidence-based writing instruction is carried out in classrooms. The characteristics of programmes which promote such instruction are highlighted. In examining research by Trois, Lin, Monroe and Cohen (Chapter 3) emphasis is placed on the need for 'specific instruction' and for 'writing conventions' to support students who are struggling with writing. The link is also made between effective reading instruction and effective writing instruction with emphasis placed on how these can be effectively taught in combination.

The third section of the book is necessarily the longest. It examines how best to teach 'composing' to students who are struggling as well as how ICT can be used to support these students. The latter is discussed not only in terms of how high quality instruction can take place under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher but also how the internet and technology can be woven into such instruction.

Spelling is the main focus of the fourth section of the book. Here written expression is examined in terms of the unique problems presented by students for whom spelling is a difficulty. Evidence based instructional strategies are again foregrounded in helping students improve spelling skills.

The final chapter of the book deals with writing assessment which again highlights the very complexity of both language and of writing. Troia's own introductory comments on this section (p7) fairly sum it up- that the reader is left with more questions than answers!

This book is by no means an 'easy read.' It is a well written serious acadmic treatises on the subject. There are many challenges for the reader both in terms of content and of required further reading on each of the chapters. Troia has kept a tight rein on his contributors in terms of their inclusion of the 'practical element' in each of the chapters while allowing each chapter to stand alone. My own natural bent is more towards the creative aspect of writing education. Authors such as Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins, Eve Bearne and Regie Routman would people my own bookshelves. Though *Instruction and Assessment for Struggling Writers:*

Evidence-Based Practices may not have been a book I would have read were it not handed to me for review, I am actually delighted that I have read it and welcome the challenge of re-assessing my own thoughts in relation to the teaching of writing in light of these insights.

INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT FOR STRUGGLING WRITERS: EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES edited by Gary A. Troia is published by The Guilford Press, New York, 2009, and is available from Taylor and Francis Group, www.tandf.co.uk and costs Stg£33.00.

Positive Behaviour Strategies to Support Children and Young People with Autism
By Martin Hanbury

Reviewed by TOM DELANEY, a teacher of a special class for pupils with autism at St. Paul's Special School, Beaumont, Dublin.

The intended purpose of this book, *Positive Behaviour Strategies to Support Children and Young People with Autism*, purported by the Author Martin Hanbury, is to share the good practice in behaviour support which has emerged in the field of autism over recent years. Martin Hanbury himself brings a wealth of experience, having worked with people with autism for over twenty years in a variety of hands-on roles ranging from carer to teacher, to his current position as a regional tutor on the University of Birmingham's *Webautism* programme. My initial reaction to the title of the book was a positive one as it is not only aimed at supporting children but also young people with autism**,** an area for which it is often difficult to find research and literature. On a practical level the book is extremely accessible, divided into six chapters, and as a whole the book is characterised by an excellent holistic approach to positive behaviour strategies.

Chapter 1 *Autism and Challenging Behaviour* provides a short overview of current theoretical understandings of autism, highlighting the triad of impairments, theory of mind, central coherence, executive function and sensory integration difficulties as critical areas in which a person with autism experiences significant difficulties.