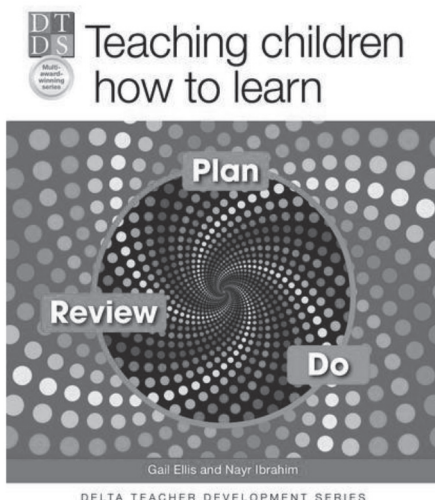


Book Review



Title	<i>Teaching children how to learn</i>
Authors	Gail Ellis and Nayr Ibrahim
Publisher	Delta Publishing 2015
No. of pages	176 pages
ISBN	ISBN 978-1-905085-86-6 [paperback]
Reviewer	Marilyn Lewis Honorary Research Fellow The University of Auckland

This new book for teachers of children is divided into three parts which the editors summarise as Plan (Part A), Do (Part B) and Review (Part C). In addition there are links throughout to the publishers' website which is accessed by clicking on the book's cover, a move which goes some way to answering any concerns about people accessing the materials without buying the book.

The book's layout is clear and attractive in both the parts addressing teachers and the sample activity sheets for children. One of its many attractive features is its interactive format, with suggestions being interwoven with reflective tasks for teachers.

Part A speaks directly to the teacher about general principles of teaching primary school learners.

Parts B is a collection of ready-to-go activities, grouped under three headings: Getting started, Listen and respond, Read and respond. The first of these chapters introduces routines for getting to know the class and organising portfolios. We also meet Wilbur the Worm, a sock puppet who appears throughout the book and, of course, in the children's classroom. At the heart of the suggested learning is the children's English Language Portfolio. Chapters 2 and 3 separate their activities according to the types of input: first verbal (Listen and Respond) and then, in Chapter 3, a mixture of Read and Respond activities involving pictures, objects and actions.

The book concludes with 25 pages of Teachers' Toolkits, consisting of ten principles and many teaching ideas. The content here is dense (in the best meaning of the word) with multiple details for each principle. As one example, for Principle 6 about routines, in table form readers are given for each principle a routine, the purpose of that routine, its details (ring a bell, play a game), guidance and intervention techniques, such as extracts from classroom transcripts. One poor teacher was looking for the 'right' answer to that familiar question "What did you learn this week?" (p. 155) while the children focused on the process of mask making and the materials they used. Finally she gave in and told them the answer was about vocabulary learning.

Teachers will want to know how this book compares with others on the same topic. There are many references listed as footnotes, but this one seems to break new ground by doing much more than following the usual pattern of providing a teacher's book to accompany a student text. It presents for teachers the principles of learning to learn and translates these into classroom activities for which the rationale for each is spelled out. The only disappointment was the lack of an index, but given the extensive cross referencing this might have been considered unnecessary.

In her note to readers, Ibrahim speaks of "engaging the child" (p. 3). The book does just that for its teacher readers. Not surprisingly for authors who combine decades of experience in investigating the topic of learning to learn a language, the book is full of ideas and leads teachers to reflect regularly on what they are doing.

Marilyn Lewis is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Auckland where she used to teach Academic Writing as well as subjects on the M.A. TESOL. She now runs workshops in different countries and co-writes books about learning and teaching.
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