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educational HORIZONS (ISSN 0013-175X) is published quarterly by Pi Lambda Theta, 4101 East Third Street, P.O. Box 6626, Bloomington, IN 47407-6626. Membership in Pi Lambda Theta, which includes subscriptions to *educational HORIZONS*, is \$35 per year. Individual subscriptions are available for \$18 per year, U.S.; \$25 per year, Canada and foreign. Periodicals postage paid at Bloomington, Ind., and other mailing offices. Single copies: U.S. \$5; Canada \$6.50; foreign \$8; plus \$1.50 postage. POSTMASTER: Address changes should be mailed to: Pi Lambda Theta, P.O. Box 6626, Bloomington, IN 47407-6626. All claims must be made within four months of publication. Back volumes available on microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346; (313) 761-4700. Indexed in Current Index to Journals in Education and Education Index. Member, Educational Press Association of America. Copyright 1999, all rights reserved, by Pi Lambda Theta, Inc., Bloomington, Ind. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of Pi Lambda Theta. *educational HORIZONS*® is a trademark of Pi Lambda Theta.



Book Reviews

Jay C. Thompson, Jr.
Book Review Editor

The Proactive Educator: Examining Strategies Regarding Educational Ethical Issues

How can educators develop activist approaches to professional growth and effectiveness? Issues and problems in schools today and the societal expectations attached to them accentuate our need to develop additional skills rapidly. How should teachers and parents deal with issues such as cheating, plagiarism, and school safety? How can teachers become more reflective in practices and actions in the classroom? What strategies related to these issues have worked effectively for others? Such questions present problems and ethical quandaries for many educators. Bold responses to them can make a difference not only for us, but also for our students and communities.

The following books provide ideas and tips to enhance personal knowledge and skills in these important educational areas.

Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It, and Prevent It by Gregory J. Cizek Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999

Reviewed by
Connie P. Williams
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Gregory J. Cizek, a veteran commentator on assessment issues, provides a comprehensive view of testing and the impact of cheating on tests from the educator's perspective. His "Cheating on Tests" covers the spectrum of cheating and its pervasiveness. Whether euphemistically called "falsely reporting success," "intentional knowledge appropriation," "innovative behavior not unambiguously forbidden," or "knowing how to circumvent the rules and gain a tactical advantage," it is still cheating (p. 4).

In these days of accountability, so much is riding on test performance that "everybody does it" has become the justification for cheating—never mind that cheating impedes our ability to truly assess student accomplishment. Often, we have to question whether a test has measured actual knowledge gained or skill at cheating.

In Chapter 2, Cizek reviews some of the methods used to study the frequency and perceptions of cheating at various educational levels. Cheating occurs often and at all levels. Elementary-age children have received the least research attention. The secondary level has been scrutinized more often, with

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the postsecondary and higher levels receiving the bulk of attention. The findings indicate that more than half the students completing surveys admitted to cheating in some form on tests.

The chapter "How to Cheat" may sound like a guide for those interested in cheating, but it is really an information base for those who must detect cheating. Cizek enumerates numerous methods of giving and receiving test information, including methods that use more advanced technological tools.

Cheating is not, however, confined to students. Cheating can continue even after formal education has ended. When a job, career, professional certification, or licensure hinges on test performance, the setting is ripe for cheating. Cheaters cover the gamut of all professions. Even educators may be guilty of cheating, especially when accountability pressures are present. Cheating is cross-cultural and universal in occurrence, as noted in Chapter 5.

As far-reaching as cheating is, it is still unfair, inequitable, dishonest, unethical, and just plain wrong. Cheating requires appropriate responsive detection and prevention. Cizek's book is an excellent resource for methods, strategies, and suggestions to detect and prevent cheating. It includes an extensive list of references on studies related to cheating and assessment. The book reads like a captivating lecture with humorous anecdotal references and quotations. Anyone serious about understanding the phenomenon of cheating will find it informative and beneficial.

***The Promise of Multiculturalism:
Education and Autonomy
in the 21st Century***

**by George Katsificas and Teodros Kiros
New York: Routledge, 1998**

Reviewed by
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The Promise of Multiculturalism is a diverse collection of articles that relate to the experience of, the practice of, or the concept of multiculturalism. The articles contained in the volume include personal narratives, an interview, histori-

ographies, and philosophical analyses—a sort of loose conglomeration that pushed me to make my own connections between each article, something I was not always able to do. But as with the mineral conglomerate one might find in the earth, after careful examination, small, polished jewels emerge from potentially dull or nonexistent connective material. In other words, I was able to suspend the effect of the volume's apparent editorial problem by forcing myself to appreciate each article on its own terms, and by its own merit. Because I do not have the space here to do justice to each article, I have chosen to discuss a representative few.

In Martin Bernal's personal narrative, "Politically Correct: Mythologies of Neoconservatism in the American Academy," he reflects on the impact that Cornell University's neoconservatives, such as Alan Bloom, had on his writing of *Black Athena*. According to Bernal, it was the smug, arrogant attitude of these academics, as much as it was their belief in the existence of an ethnically pure, proto-European ancient Greece, which prompted him to write the book. *Black Athena* effectively deconstructed the monocultural perception of ancient Greece by providing evidence of cultural influences beyond the boundaries of the city-state.

As the naive, ill-read, post-modern American relativist that I am, I had never equated Alan Bloom's classicism with political conservatism until I read Bernal's article. In my mind, at least, one could be an Alan Bloom-styled classicist and liberal at the same time. I had no idea that Bloom might have viewed "politically correct" cultural relativism as the first step on the road to the absolute relativism that he railed against in *The Closing of the American Mind*. According to my way of thinking, Bloom's book should be able to sit on the same shelf with any work by the likes of Edward T. Hall or James A. Banks without ideological conflict. Why? Because my extensive schooling in intercultural communication has taught me that cultural relativism is not so much a political position as it is a sociocultural fact, whereas the absolute relativism of Bloom's students is an unfortunate manifestation of contemporary American culture. Clearly, multiculturalism has come a long way since those early days. We have Martin Bernal to thank for initiating the dialogue in academe. Had I not read this article, I might never have understood his significance.

The philosophical articles in the volume shared at least one common concern: discovering

the meaning of liberalism in a world without distinct political poles. George Katsiaficus, in his article "The Latent Universal within Identity Politics," begins by discussing the fragmentation of Marxism's universal proletariat. In the place of this single oppressed entity, numerous oppressed entities have emerged, each with its own identity—hence the designation "identity politics." But this fragmentation is not all bad. When the oppression of one group is lessened, all oppressed groups benefit. Such sharing is possible because of the existence of an alternative, transcendent universal: the "universal identity of human beings as a species" (p. 77).

The philosophical articles established that the concepts of identity and autonomy are key to understanding identity politics. However, none of these articles clarified or defined these important terms. I consider this to be a major flaw, not only with the philosophical articles, but also with the volume as a whole. Although this omission might be explained by the presence of clarifications or definitions in earlier articles on the subject, such as Todd Gitlin's "The Rise of 'Identity Politics': An Examination and a Critique" (*Dissent*, Spring 1996), that excuse is not acceptable. Clearly, a book entitled *The Promise of Multiculturalism* is targeting an audience greater than the political philosophers who happen to be actively engaged in the dialogue surrounding identity politics.

Whether intended or not, these omissions permit the impression that identity and autonomy have one universally agreed-upon meaning, and that they are valued by all people equally. These are problematic assumptions that hint at an ethnocentrism of the worst sort. For example, the autonomy of a white, male, middle-class college professor is going to be significantly different from the autonomy of a poor, black, seventeen-year-old female with three children, in both kind and amount. Their respective identities as well as their processes of identity formation will differ significantly. In short, autonomy and identity are tangled up in the particulars of an individual's experiences and culture. A failure to acknowledge this is to suggest that "when I say 'identity' and 'autonomy' I am referring to identity and autonomy as I have experienced them"—a stark violation of cultural relativism.

I would be remiss to close this review without mentioning a few more of the jewels that shine in this collection. Teodros Kiros's interview of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for one, provided genuine insight

into Henry Louis Gates, Jr., as a black man, as a man of letters, and as the racial Socrates (my term) of the academic world. Ngo Vinh Long's "Ethnic Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Development of Vietnam," for another, was also a delightful surprise. This article successfully removed for me the demonized image of the Vietcong by emphasizing the humanistic, educational, and multicultural aspects of their ideology. However, in the end, I must concede that most readers will not have the time or the patience to get beyond the "reader's whiplash" created by the book's apparently haphazard, unannounced shifts from one type of article to the next.

***Preventing Plagiarism and Cheating:
An Instructor's Guide***
The Plagiarism Book: A Student's Manual
by Gary K. Clabaugh and Edward G. Rozycki
Oreland, Pa.: New Foundations Press, 1999

Reviewed by
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Utilized as companions, *Preventing Plagiarism and Cheating: An Instructor's Guide* and *The Plagiarism Book: A Student's Manual* can make a difference in instructors' and students' considerations of plagiarism and cheating. Together, these resources can be employed by both instructor and student in a writing program. Reviewing both texts first will aid appropriate implementation.

"Academic dishonesty" encompasses plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism carries the vaguer definition. To clarify "academic dishonesty," *An Instructor's Guide* addresses the need for a written, custom-designed policy on plagiarism and cheating, recognized and implemented school-wide. Such a policy must be clear and, if possible, free of loopholes.

The chapter "Deterring, Detecting, and Tracing Plagiarism" provides specific strategies for preventing, discerning, and tracing plagiarism. They range from making students aware of plagiarism and its penalties, to a careful review of papers submitted, to using a different referencing style, to using Web meta-search engines as tracing strategies.

The chapter on cheating provides instructional and evaluative strategies to deter cheating:

traditional forms such as overt gesturing, stolen exams, or various forms of cheat sheets, and the high-tech variety, such as electronic organizers and programmable calculators. Even if an instructor is not technologically literate, moderate computer skills can counter and trace plagiarism on the electronic front. The authors have also included a chapter on "Plagiarism and the Web."

For student use, a first line of prevention against plagiarism would be *The Plagiarism Book: A Student's Manual*. This book can easily be implemented in any class, but it would be especially useful in classes that emphasize writing skills. The various sections of this text furnish definitions of plagiarism and transformation exercises that make it "easy not to plagiarize." The student practice exercise should help to delineate methods that could make plagiarism unnecessary.

A workbook test includes tools for measuring the degree of plagiarism and easy-to-read charts for transforming text. When students complete these exercises, there should be no question about what is and is not acceptable.

Editing errors in the instructor's guide are noticeable, but overall these companion books are effective tools for promoting and exercising academic honesty.

On Becoming an Innovative University Teacher

by John Cowan

U.K.: Open University Press, 1998

Reviewed by
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John Cowan offers resourceful thought—pieces in the tradition of Donald Schon's seminal work *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983)—in order to stimulate "reflection-in-action." The author uses a simple formula to pass on to his readers a wealth of knowledge about the teaching-learning process: he develops questions to focus the reader, provides examples, generalizes from the examples, and insists on using "everyday language" to widen the accessibility of the book. The main organizing concept that guides Cowan's analysis is the process of reflection.

Cowan offers Pierre Tielhard de Chardin's description of reflection: "Reflection is . . . the power acquired by a consciousness to turn in upon itself . . . no longer merely to know, but to know one's self; no longer to merely know, but to know that one knows." (*The Phenomenon of Man*, 1955: 165)

Cowan cautions the reader that the examples he uses can be "like anecdotes . . . with the seductive effect most anecdotes often have" (p. 3) and that they may distract the reader from the generalization or abstraction they are meant to be demonstrating. He avoids that trap by systematically bringing the reader's attention back to the larger principle at stake in each example. The writing strategy seems to follow the same pattern Cowan would employ when facilitating student learning in the context of a course. The pattern is an effective use of Kolb's cycle, which Cowan paraphrases as a continuous move from experience, to reflection, to generalization, to testing, and back to experience (p. 34).

"On Becoming" needs to be interacted with, not consumed in one sitting. The reader is expected to think deeply and explore the multiple dimensions of the dilemmas Cowan poses, and in effect, be transformed by the experience. Cowan describes teaching as "the purposeful creation of situations from which motivated learners should not be able to escape without learning or developing" (p. 47). There is no doubt that Cowan is teaching with this book.

Making Schools Safe for Students: Creating a Proactive School Safety Plan by Peter D. Blauvelt

Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 1999

Reviewed by
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Peter Blauvelt builds on a wealth of experience in *Making Schools Safe for Students*. His experience as director of security in a school system and as a police detective has enabled him to comprehensively inventory issues, sample policy topics, and regulations a school district needs to consider in making schools safer. As an international consultant and expert witness, Blauvelt has conducted extensive investigations of school safety. He presents two assumptions: 1) no school is

immune from violence, and 2) the villain does not always come from outside the school.

The author cautions against merely making a crisis plan, then sitting back and admiring the finished work—only to discover that those responsible for implementing the plan have retired or moved. Just when the plan must function, critical elements can break down. The plan must be active and each responsibility must be carried out with precision. Blauvelt borrows from earlier works and presents various forms and procedures for investigating crisis issues.

Reviewing national trends and projections in school violence, Blauvelt says societal change is responsible—problems such as increased alcohol and drug abuse, familial stress, child abuse, social unrest among diverse groups, and lack of employee-screening processes.

The author's seventeen chapters clearly delineate topics related to school safety: board of education policies, creating a S.A.F.E. team, security resources, incident profiling, crimes against persons, crimes involving property, security resources, setting up an office, and an emergency management plan—essentially everything from violence prevention to crisis management.

Chapter 14 details how to select an emergency management team; distinguishing problems from crises; using the right language; and avoiding ambiguous messages. Training suggestions covering a range of possible emergency scenarios are also presented. Blauvelt stresses communication in such situations. Who communicates and how should they communicate? Terminology such as “Code Red” and colored cards to convey unmistakable messages make for an informative chapter.

The section “What Do You Do If . . . ?” is filled with scenarios that anticipate crisis situations. Each option is explored, including systematic action plans to deal with crises. Preceding this chapter is a detailed emergency management checklist. The placement of this chapter illustrates the usefulness of the checklist to determine if security resources are in place to deal effectively with an emergency.

The author's message is explicit: a crisis-management plan must be an active plan. Because this book is easy to access and update, it offers school officials an excellent resource for periodic review of security policies and resources. It should be in every administrator's personal library.