

Be That Teacher! Breaking the Cycle for Struggling Readers

May 2013 – Volume 17, Number 1

Be that Teacher! Breaking the Cycle for Struggling Readers

Author: Victoria Risko & Doris Walker-Dalhouse
(2012)

Publisher: New York: Teachers College Press

Pages

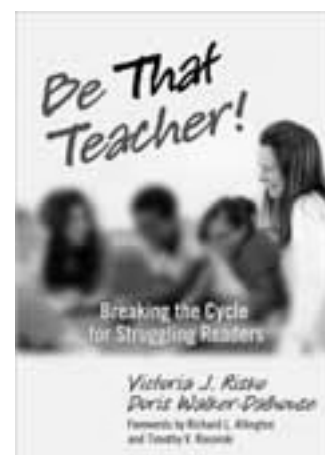
ISBN

Price

205 pages

978-0-8077-5322-4

\$26.68 USD



Victoria J. Risko and Doris Walker-Dalhouse's *Be that teacher: Breaking the cycle for struggling readers* has the global objective of assisting classroom teachers and reading specialists to better assist the multitude of learning needs of students who have difficulty in reading. This book is framed as a resource for teacher education and classroom practice with the goal of developing knowledge-for-practice of the complex understanding of reading instruction.

The text is organized by chapters based on varying focus topics to support readers with the overall impression of breaking the cyclic nature for struggling readers. Chapters One and Two define the category “struggling reader:” and the type of instruction needed to catch them up with their peers. The authors refer to struggling readers “not as a homogenous group; rather they vary in understandings, skills, and strategies they have acquired and those they need” (S.W. Valencia, 2011). They also appeal to teachers’ memories of students who return to school each year hoping this is the year they will become successful learners, challenging the reader with the question, “Are you that teacher?” Chapter Three addresses a variety of modals of assessment tools available to assist teachers in identifying strengths and weaknesses and in developing an action plan

for individual students. Each of these chapters is illustrated through intimate case studies of students who have varying difficulties with text with examples of how teachers are meeting or failing these students in classrooms. Chapters Four through Nine continue to highlight case studies relevant to the overall message of the book, while analyzing key instructional recommendations that have been proven to be beneficial to students of elementary and middle grades. The authors conclude each section with challenging reflection questions for the reader. These questions are helpful as teachers examine their teaching philosophies to determine if literacy strategies for struggling readers are woven into the current curriculum.

As a U.S. middle grades language arts classroom teacher who works with both highly proficient and struggling early adolescent readers—including English Learners— I found this book to be on target for daily intensive reading instruction. It would be a great companion for a first year teacher with the goal of becoming an exemplary reading teacher for his/her students. Beyond a daily guide for lesson plan building, the book highlights varying activities that can be used for formal and informal reading assessment to continue guiding instruction. The assessment pieces, specifically, were furnished very well within the text with examples of completed records done with students as well as blank forms to tailor individual teaching needs.

I found the jargon of this book to have high readability. Someone who is not as well-versed in literacy language may find the terminology to be more challenging to work through in order to understand the overall messages of the book. The authors artfully included some map organizers and blank forms, which could be converted into a document easily assessable to a classroom teacher; however, from my point of view, I would have appreciated an elaborated section of more hands-on activities to use with my students.

In classrooms around the world, I suspect there are many teachers who strive to “Be THAT teacher” for a student struggling with print literacy. We become teachers to make a difference in children’s lives; and, the title of the book affirms the ideal of making such a difference. Struggling readers are in all of our classrooms. The strategies discussed in this book do not cost money and there is no gimmick to invest in. The authors share ideas of reaching students at all reading levels, but especially, take focus on our classroom’s struggling readers. ESL/EFL teachers could benefit from this book. The research, practical hints, assessment suggestions, and additional teacher resources include simply good reading strategies for all.

Reviewed by

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