

frameworks feels overly canonical or restrictive, but others will benefit from the clear guidance and structure. Finally, the book is limited to elementary school cases given the authors' previous work and expertise.

Woven throughout the book is the theme of situated problem solving in teacher leadership, which is apparent in both the work of leaders, who must negotiate hybrid roles, and in the work of readers, who must piece together the contextual variables as they consider problems and solutions in each case. Pedagogically, the case approach is well suited for the study of instructional leadership, because readers are likely to develop flexibility of thought and a balanced approach to analysis and action—the same habits of mind required of instructional leaders.

C.E.B.

THE BOY ON THE BEACH: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PLAY

by Vivian Gussin Paley

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. 90 pp. \$17.00.

In the opening chapter of *The Boy on the Beach*, Vivian Paley stumbles on a scene as she walks along the shore. Eli and Marianne are playing. Quickly and fluidly, these four-year-olds adapt to one another—ready at a moment's notice to don new roles and shed old ones in response to their play partners. Eli is fireman, lifeguard, pool cleaner, father. Marianne is water carrier, mother. In documenting their play, Paley sets forth a principal idea of the book—that children play in order to know their ideas and, thus, to know themselves.

In a serendipitous twist of fate, Paley re-encounters Eli and Marianne in a kindergarten classroom where she has gone to observe that fall. *The Boy on the Beach* comprises Paley's observations of the children and teachers in this classroom and others, interspersed with tales from her travels to share her work with teachers across the United States and internationally. The book is also punctuated with letters between Paley and her pen pal, Yu-ching Huang, a teacher in Taiwan whom she met in her travels.

A theme that runs throughout the book, characteristic of Paley's work, is the role of the teacher in children's play. Paley describes a tension experienced by teachers: determining when to intervene and when to let the scene play out, leaving the children to find their own twists and turns and freeing them to discover their own endings. Likening the role of the teacher to an author who is blessed with preformed characters, she writes, "Teacher or novelist, one wants to improve the narrative by fleshing out what is unspoken and overlooked as multiple plots converge. How far can we encourage the story while waiting for the perfect ending to come along?" (pp. 3–4).

In a riveting example of this tension, Paley describes an event that takes place in Eli and Marianne's classroom in the fall of 2005, shortly after Hurricane Katrina hit land about one thousand miles south of their home. A scene

that starts in the doll corner with Goldilocks drowning quickly spreads to the whole classroom as children play out the startling images they have seen on television. “Get on the roof!” Eli cries. “Call 911. Call the Nationals! Don’t miss the boat!” (p. 21). Soon children playing at the water table are sloshing water all over the floor and the whole class has joined in chanting, “The river is broke, the river is broke” (p. 22).

Paley describes teacher Annie Olson’s creative response to this pandemonium. Olson calmly rings a bell to get the attention of the class and announces that they are going to pull on hip boots and rain slickers and slowly count to twenty while they imagine the water receding before they “clean up all the streets and houses in New Orleans” (p. 23). Joining the children in their play allows Olson to take control of the classroom, keeping the space safe while at the same time privileging the children’s need to explore a recent tragedy through play, thus keeping the space safe in an entirely different way.

Later in the book, Paley recounts her travels to London to demonstrate her method of storytelling and story acting with young children for a group of teachers. Afterward, the teachers reflect on what they have seen, adding to the many viewpoints expressed in this book. While one teacher thinks Paley’s method works because it simply requires children to play—something they know well how to do—another sees a deeper meaning in the method, one that differentiates it from children’s free play: “If these kids had been just told to play in any way they wished, there would have been no such response. Even on the playground, children are left out and wander around. This is a safer experience. You taped an enclosure, inside of which everyone had the same right to play” (p. 64).

Paley does not weigh in on this debate. Consistent with the rest of the book, she is not prescriptive, and the reader is left with the sense that Paley affords as much respect to the teachers as to the children themselves. In documenting her experiences with learners of all kinds, Paley raises questions without providing pat answers. Her purpose is to provide readers with much to think about. Thus, she exposes readers to the ideas of many—Annie Olson, the kindergarten teacher; Yu-Ching Huang, her pen pal; the teachers and student teachers she meets at conferences and workshops; Paley herself; and, of course, the children, who are both the heart and the sparkle of this book.

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