

Wood, Karlyn E. (2015). *Interdisciplinary Instruction: Unit and Lesson Planning Strategies K-8*. 5th Ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

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Review by Harmony Ráine

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It was my pleasure to review Karlyn E. Wood's (2015) *Interdisciplinary Instruction: Unit and Lesson Planning Strategies K-8*. This text demystifies the key concepts and terminology surrounding interdisciplinarity. The author contends that there has been some resistance to the widespread implementation of interdisciplinary instruction, which he attributes to bureaucracy, lack of awareness, and uncertainty on the part of educators. Wood, however, makes a compelling case for interdisciplinarity not only as a preferential pedagogical practice, but as a learning process that is as natural as breathing air.

Wood prefaces the text by assuring readers that interdisciplinary instruction is not a new, trendy, or foreign concept, having been successfully employed by early childhood educators for many years. He opines that much of the hesitation to implement interdisciplinarity in public schools is due to new federal and state mandates such as the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)*, *Race to the Top*, and *No Child Left Behind*, which have made many teachers wary about altering their teaching methods (29). The author notes, however, that interdisciplinary instruction does not imply non-compliance to state standards. Such concerns are an important component of the text, and are not exclusive to U. S. readers, as educators everywhere are bound by standards set by regulatory boards and agencies responsible for funding.

Wood then aptly delineates the important differences between multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to learning. While both interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary instruction use two or more academic disciplines in the exploration of a topic or theme, multi-disciplinarity suggests a greater focus on individual disciplines (a distinct separation rather than integration) (3). Different teaching professionals might apply different areas of study to the same topic at different times, for instance. By contrast, interdisciplinary instruction occurs when one discipline is subsumed into another, such as reading and writing (literacy) into other areas of the curriculum. The author explains that subjects such as history, geography, economics, and other social sciences are considered naturally integrated and that a common feature of the integrated approach is "that it may provide clear connections with students' lives apart from the school environment" (3).

Wood's rationale for interdisciplinarity rests squarely on the work of numerous experts, cited throughout the volume. He relies heavily upon Piaget and Inhelder's research on holistic learning, which suggests that "in a young child's mind, isolated concepts and bits of information remain unrelated" unless they are connected through holistic learning (in Wood 2015: 10); Dewey's project-centered approach, which emphasizes exploration skills and higher-level reasoning (in Wood 2015: 8); Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which emphasizes individual cognitive strengths and learning styles (in Wood 2015: 40); and Wiggins and McTighe's backward design, in which essential (or big) questions, learning objectives, goals, and standards are identified before lesson plans or strategies are set (in Wood 2015: 5-6).

This text is thorough and well-organized, with topics arranged in a logical, straight-forward manner. The author outlines and describes in detail every aspect of interdisciplinary instructional design from theoretical frameworks to the challenges of teaching interdisciplinarity in schools today. He includes step-by-step lessons and unit plans, (including complete examples, materials lists, and alternatives), web designs, protocols, effective questioning techniques, suggestions for organized field trips and classroom research centres, and samples for review and assessment. Each chapter concludes with a summary and suggested activity. In addition to an extensive, alphabetized reference section, there is also a bibliography categorized by discipline.

In *Interdisciplinary Instruction*, Wood makes a strong case for interdisciplinarity and provides practical, realistic strategies for its implementation, while remaining cognizant of its inherent challenges. Wood is a seasoned, well-published educator (having taught students at all levels from elementary grades to his current position as Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York), with a writing style that is clear, accessible, and readable. I would highly recommend this text as an indispensable resource for teachers of elementary and middle school students and I also think it would appeal to a broad readership including educators, students, researchers, and parents.