

WinkWorld July 2005

Hello Friends,

In the middle of June, I visited the MidSouth (www.midsouth.info) Reading and Writing Institute in Birmingham Alabama. Dr. Maryann Manning, who finished her degree at the University of South Dakota, deserves high praise for creating a fabulous learning community at the University of Alabama, Birmingham; incidentally, at UAB this learning community is widely known as the **Manning Mafia**. I so enjoyed my time with all of them. The presentations are posted under my [schedule](#). Some of the previous speakers have been Mem Fox, Dick Allington, and Steve Krashen. Frank Smith was invited this year, but his health prevented him from attending, much to the dismay of many of us.

Some highlights of MidSouth this year:

Alfie Kohn spoke specifically about his book, *Unconditional Parenting: Beyond Bribes and Threats*. If you have ever seen Alfie present, you know that he has amazing passion and energy. In his presentation, he explained why carrots and stickies are not only ineffective, but actually counterproductive over the long haul. To raise children, who are good learners and good people, requires us to abandon strategies that do things to kids, in favor of an approach in which we work *with* them. And, underlying those *working with* strategies is the message that children do not have to earn our approval; rather, we love them, not for what they do, but just for who they are.

For a more complete overview of this book, I refer you to the work of Charles Schroeder, a teacher in CA, who wrote a review in class this spring. [news0705-schroeder.pdf](#)

In addition, Alfie shared the 7 ways to ruin a child's love of reading; presently, these are not published, nor posted on his web pages. However, I'm sure we can all look forward to reading these somewhere soon. In the meantime, I know that many of you can list your own 7. Continuing with his tongue firmly placed in cheek, Alfie talked about his fabulous new reading program, *Accelerated Direct Success: Because Test Scores Matter More Than Learning*, now available for purchase, of course. The huge crowd of participants burst into applause and laughter when Alfie mentioned that his new program had a value-added component, Decontextualized Instruction Betrays Every Last Student; think about the acronym. For a complete description, go to <http://www.alfiekohn.org/images/parody2.gif>

Several colleagues and I had discussions about the differences between constructivist and constructionist. For more on this, I refer you to:

Wink, J., & Putney, L. (2002). *A Vision of Vygotsky*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, pp. 25 - 28. This is a story of two student teachers, who understand Piaget, but not Vygotsky. Their university supervisor has read and understands both theorists. This story is a reflection of how theory turns to practice, when teachers actively reflect and learn from the context. Chris Kerfoot was instrumental in creating this vignette, when she was doing her masters. [vov25-28.php](#)

Wink, J., & Putney, L. (2002). *A Vision of Vygotsky*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, pp. 33 - 34. This chart is listed in a longer discussion of the theoretical similarities and differences between

Piaget and Vygotsky. [vov33-34.pdf](#)

The Central Ideas of Vygotsky, created originally for CAFE 1993; now adapted for MidSouth, 2005. [VygotskyCentralIdeas.pdf](#)

Wink, J., & Wink, D. (2004). *Teaching passionately: What's love got to do with it?* Allyn & Bacon, pp. 30-37. This is a story about the differences between construcTIVist and construcTIONist; it taken from a longer discussion of different perspectives on pedagogy. Professor JS* in this story is a real person who published a reflection on his struggles with perspectives on pedagogy in his 30 years of teaching. [professorjs.html](#)

*Spencer, J.N. (2001-2002, Winter). Thought and action. *The NEA National Education Association Journal*, XVII(2), 93-100.

In addition, Gloria Ladson-Billings was there, and her presentation was titled, *What If We Leave All The Children Behind?* She acknowledged that she knows she must give hope, but that she feels a curious sadness. I appreciated her language to clarify the differences in needs of students. For example, she referred to her own granddaughter, as "school independent." However, so many children come to school and are "school dependent." She also talked about the public's perception that standards will create a "central high quality" learning for all students. Rather, what she sees is that standards are creating a standardization, an overwhelming sameness. Chris Kerfoot, now working on her doctorate at University of the Pacific, wrote a review of Ladson-Billings' (2001) *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. [news0705-kerfoot.php](#)