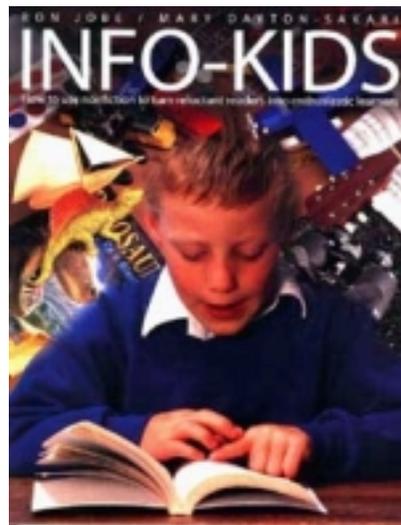


Review of:

Jobe, R., & Dayton-Sakari, M. (2002). *Info-Kids: How to use nonfiction to turn reluctant readers into enthusiastic learners*. Markham, ON: Pembroke.

Elementary and middle school teachers of English language arts and teacher librarians will find Jobe and Dayton-Sakari's second book on reluctant readers to be a highly practical and useful professional resource. In *Info-Kids: How to Use Nonfiction to Turn Reluctant Readers into Enthusiastic Learners*, the authors offer print and electronic resource recommendations, and reading and teaching strategies that will assist teachers to accomplish the aim set out so explicitly in their title. Both Jobe, a professor in Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, and Dayton-Sakari, a professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria, have practical and research experience with the use of children's literature in classrooms. Collaborative learning between the authors and reading teachers is the basis of this book, as the long list of teacher acknowledgements, the inclusion of quotations from teachers, and the use of mini case studies from reading classrooms illustrates. Teachers seeking ideas to help information-loving reluctant readers can be assured that the resources and strategies suggested by the authors have already been tested in classrooms and been evaluated by teachers. The authors believe "that students who are fascinated with facts – Info-Kids – are often actively engaged in learning on a variety of levels" (p. 8). Jobe and Dayton-Sakari have taken that belief as their starting point, and worked with teachers to produce an approach to teaching reading and writing that allows this particular "Info-Kid" group of reluctant readers to be successful participants in the classroom curriculum.



The book is divided into three parts that focus first on the "challenge" and the "reality" of Info-Kids and finally on the "satisfaction of working with Info-Kids." The magazine-style format of the text allows for easy browsing and locating of information. The highlighting of information in boxes is useful for quick reference as key information

from the chapter, or lists of recommended books on a topic are the usual content. The subject booklists are helpful because the bibliography at the end of the book is presented in the usual alphabetical format, whereas a teacher will often need a quick list of books on a specific topic. In the middle section of the book a “Teacher Realities” feature is presented in a box at the end of each chapter – again providing quick reference to encouraging tips for teachers. The continuous sidebar includes quotations from teachers, writers, and researchers; point-form lists of information included in the main text – especially booklists, and trivia questions typically asked by Info-Kids – and which may be stored by teachers for use at the right moment; and lots of blank space that serves to highlight the sidebar text when it appears. The authors encourage teachers to model the reading of all types of resources – and they make this easy to do even as we read this text because these trivia snippets are so attractively displayed. Headings are used to full advantage in this text, again making quick and easy reference to particular sections. The chapters are short and are focussed on narrowly-defined topics, and in Part B, “The Reality of Info-Kids,” the use of the same headings in each of the eight chapters is appropriate and helpful because these chapters focus on the eight characteristics of Info-Kids that the authors identify in the “Table of Contents.”

The content of the book is organized so that readers first learn to identify Info-Kids and their needs. The authors offer many distinct characteristics of Info-Kids that will help teachers to identify the Info-Kids in their own classrooms, including the key detail that “Info-Kids prefer to live in the ‘real world’ around them and often do not see the value of literacy” (p. 16). The importance of selecting accurate, up-to-date and attractive resources is emphasized in this beginning section, with a strong emphasis on the need to weed out the older resources from our classrooms and libraries so that we are not providing young information-seekers with inaccurate facts. While acknowledging that budgets may be tight, Jobe and Dayton-Sakari encourage high selectivity in resource selection rather than hanging on to the older, out-of-date material. The inclusion of an excellent list of selection criteria for print and internet resources is just one of the features of this book that will make it an indispensable resource for both classroom teachers and children’s librarians. The first section ends with a key chapter on the “parallel curriculum” (p. 28), a concept that is key to an understanding of the

teaching and learning strategies offered in the remainder of the book, and a route to the inclusion of Info-Kids into the prescribed curriculum. Jobe and Dayton-Sakari use the “parallel curriculum” to explain how to include all children in the process of learning. A parallel curriculum is created when teachers observe the interests of their reluctant readers, and work to include their interests in the curriculum that is unfolding in their classroom. The authors argue that it is the processes of thinking, reading and writing that are the most important pieces of the curriculum, rather than the subject content, and they urge teachers to “step back and ignore the ‘needs’ of the curriculum and pay attention to the ‘needs’ of the reluctant reader” (p. 29). The prescribed curriculum is not to be discarded, but it should be flexible enough to allow all students to find interests within it. Thus, one of the practical suggestions of the authors is to allow focussed study of one aspect of a broad topic such as the environment.

Part B, “The Reality of Info-Kids,” is the core of the book, and the place where teachers will find descriptions of real Info-Kids, strategies for how to capture the interests of each type of Info-Kid, lists of resources on topics from sports, to dinosaurs, to how-to books and more, and strategies for projects that will meet the needs of Info-Kids. Reading teachers will keep returning to this part of the book for ideas about how to encourage their information-focussed students. The final part of the book offers teachers methods of assessment, with an emphasis on the use of observation and checklists. Of particular use here is the inclusion of strategies to suggest for parents as they work with their Info-Kids at home. The concluding advice of Jobe and Dayton-Sakari is to show your Info-Kids that the reading they do is worthwhile, by reading information books yourself, including reading from them aloud in class.

Given the book’s message that reading for information is a valuable starting point that can be used to move students to develop their reading strategies – my one confusion with this book came on page 37, where in a section on sports books, the authors write “Get it straight! Finding out about yesterday’s game is *not* reading!” From my reading of the rest of this book this comment seems out-of-place, as the authors go on to say in the next sentence that “Info-Kids with a sports bent naturally gravitate to a greater diversity of reading material than do others.” Reading the sports sections of newspapers, the internet, and sports magazines for information about a game or

players seems to fit in to the information-reading interest that Jobe and Dayton-Sakari are urging teachers to make use of.

Perhaps the most appreciated feature of this book will be the extensive list of over 400 resources for Info-Kids that appears at the back of the book, along with a shorter list of professional resources and a detailed subject index. The list of resources for Info-Kids is especially useful because the authors have made a determined effort to include mainly items that have been published in the last 2-3 years. This current list means that the resources will still be available for purchase – making this a superb resource for anyone involved in book selection for children. Jobe and Dayton-Sakari have created a powerful resource that should be read and used by anyone with fact-loving students in their classroom or library.