

### **The Energy To Teach**

Written by Donald H. Graves

REVIEWED BY MONIE HAYES

### **Saying and Silence: Listening to Composition with Bakhtin**

Written by Frank Farmer

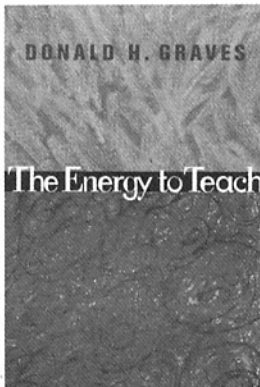
REVIEWED BY CHRISTIAN KNOELLER

### **Lighting Fires:**

### **How the Passionate Teacher Engages Adolescent Writers**

Written by Joseph Tsujimoto

REVIEWED BY KERRY A. HOFFMAN



### **The Energy To Teach**

Written by Donald H. Graves.

Heinemann, 2001. \$17.50; 180 pages.

ISBN 0-325-00326-2.

What gives you energy, what takes energy away, and what, for you, is a waste of time? These are the three questions that Donald Graves, professor emeritus of education at the University of New Hampshire, spent a year asking teachers nationwide. They are worthy

questions, given the frequent mention of “burnout” in professional lore, and the immediate, pressing demands teachers face every day. The answers his colleagues offer, along with suggestions for accentuating the positive in our professional surroundings, inform *The Energy to Teach*.

Here’s how Graves begins his book: “Teaching is an emotional roller coaster. In the space of eight hours and twenty-eight children, you try to accommodate two new students who arrive with no transfer papers, handle an explosion from a child who has just spent a weekend with his alcoholic father, or fight the interference of an imposing intercom when reading a story aloud to the class.” These are the sorts of time-wasting and energy-sapping circumstances Graves documents. But it is not the author’s intention to dwell on these negatives. Rather, he wants to share examples of the rewards that energize teachers, for instance, a student who is reading the very first book he’s ever read on his own and loving it.

It is this sense of balance that gives Graves’s book its gentle wisdom. Through a series of taking-stock exercises that he calls

invitations, Graves invites reader-educators to assess and build on the resources that are present in our classrooms, in our collegial communities, and with our children. For instance, “Think about what you do well,” “List the teachers you have had both in school and out who have had influence on your learning and teaching,” and “Take on an energy-giving project that involves the entire classroom looking beyond itself and helping others.”

Much of Graves’s book describes successful and replicable reforms. For instance, he devotes a chapter to Maine’s “bottom-up strategy for improving practice,” a reform effort he admires for being a community-based undertaking.

While *The Energy to Teach* acknowledges the many challenges teachers face as they go about the business of educating children, the sometimes heartbreaking and more often merely maddening demands that shape our days, the book is not mired in deficiency. He offers an at once practical, philosophical, and *positive* framework for making our teaching days rich and rewarding rather than merely frustrating and wearying.

While the book reflects the author’s history in elementary education, and while it may be of most use to teachers beginning their careers, it is intended for anyone in the business of young people’s learning. Experienced teachers will be able to focus on those invitations that can guide them individually toward reaffirming their sense of purpose. Graves’s book can help all teachers identify areas where they can tap the energy to teach more productively, meaningfully, and rewardingly, and pay less attention to the rest.

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