



# Teaching Grammar in Context

By Constance Weaver



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More than fifteen years ago, Constance Weaver's *Grammar for Teachers* (NCTE, 1979) broke new ground by responding to widespread concern about the place of grammar in the curriculum. Suggesting that teachers need to know key aspects of grammar in order to teach writing more effectively, Weaver also argued that students need to be guided in learning and applying grammatical concepts as they revise and edit their writing. Attention to sentence structure and mechanics during the process of writing would result in better products.

With *Teaching Grammar in Context*, Weaver extends her philosophy by offering teachers a rationale and practical ideas for teaching grammar not in isolation but in the context of writing. She begins by introducing some common meanings of "grammar" and provides a historical overview of traditional reasons for teaching grammar as a school subject. After examining those reasons, she questions them, citing decades of research which suggests that grammar taught in isolation has little, if any, effect on most students' writing.

To lay the groundwork for a more effective approach, Weaver considers how preschoolers learn the basic structures of their native language and how second-language grammar is acquired. She goes on to suggest a research-based perspective on the concept of error and on the writing "errors" our students make, concluding with practical alternatives to what Lois Rosen has dubbed "the error hunt." Equally useful is Weaver's examination of the aspects of grammar on which we might focus as we guide our students in writing and revising sentences and in editing selected pieces. Her final chapter addresses the teaching of grammar from the perspective of learning theory.

The appendix includes numerous sample lessons from Weaver's own teaching, illustrating the five broad topics suggested in the text:

- teaching concepts of subject, verb, clause, sentence, and related editing concepts
- teaching style through sentence combining and generating
- teaching sentence sense and style through manipulation of syntactic elements
- teaching the power of dialects and dialects of power
- teaching punctuation and mechanics for convention, clarity, and style.

*Teaching Grammar in Context* fills a long-standing gap in the literature on teaching writing. It will prove invaluable to all practicing and preservice teachers, especially those at the middle and high school levels, where grammar is taught most intensively.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

“Weaver shows her growth as a teacher and researcher by bringing new insight and applications to her beliefs. A good book for all teachers who have their students write.”—Writing Teacher

### **From the Back Cover**

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### **About the Author**

For more than three decades, Constance Weaver has been one of the fields' leading voices on literacy topics ranging from the reading process to grammar instruction with writing. *Reading Process & Practice* first appeared in 1988 and became widely known as the most authoritative, comprehensive, and definitive book of its kind. Now available in a Brief Edition, it continues to help teachers define reading in ways that support high-quality instruction. Connie once again led the way with the 1996 publication of the bestselling *Teaching Grammar in Context* and its companion *Lessons to Share on Teaching Grammar in Context*. Since then she has expanded and deepened her insights and specific teaching ideas in *The Grammar Plan Book* and *Grammar to Enrich and Enhance Writing*. In 1996, the Michigan Council of Teachers of English honored Weaver with the Charles C. Fries award for outstanding leadership in the profession. Connie is the Heckert Professor of Reading and Writing at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and Professor Emerita of English at Western Michigan University.

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