



# Speaking of Fourth Grade: What Listening to Kids Tells Us About School in America

*Inda Schaenen*

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**Speaking of Fourth Grade: What Listening to Kids Tells Us About School in America** Inda Schaenen  
Fourth grade is ground zero in the fierce debates about education reform in America. It's when kids (well, some of them) make the shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," and tomes have been written about the fourth-grade year by educators, administrators, philosophers, and pundits. Now, in a fascinating and groundbreaking book, Inda Schaenen adds the voices of actual fourth-grade kids to the conversation.

Schaenen, a journalist turned educator, spent a year traveling across the state of Missouri, the geographical and spiritual center of the country, visiting fourth-grade classrooms of every description: public, private, urban, rural, religious, charter. *Speaking of Fourth Grade* looks at how our different approaches to education stack up against one another and chronicles what kids at the heart of our great, democratic education experiment have to say about "What Makes a Good Teacher" and "What Makes a Good Student," as well as what they think about the Accelerated Reader programs that dominate public school classrooms, high-stakes testing, and the very purpose of school in the first place.

A brilliant and original work at the intersection of oral history, sociology, and journalism, *Speaking of Fourth Grade* offers unique insight into the personal consequences of national education policy. The voices of the children in *Speaking of Fourth Grade* will stay with readers—parents, teachers, and others—for many years to come.

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