BOOK REVIEWS

What Makes a World-Class School and How We Can Get There
by James H. Stronge with Xianxuan Xu, ASCD, Alexandria, Va., 2017, 146 pp. with index, $27.95 softcover

From the beginning, What Makes a World-Class School and How We Can Get There recognizes different standards exist in different countries for measuring successful schools. The ability to score highly on a short-term achievement test does not certify a world-class education.

Authors James Stronge and Xianxuan Xu point out the values of developing self-reliance and a quality of life within each local culture. They give full recognition to the rapid pace of change worldwide, contending it is not appropriate to measure the local school with the one next door. For American students to compete ably, we must recognize that globalization requires school systems to be aware of the best in the world and adapt successful measures.

This book gives the reader insights into successful pre-collegiate education in Asia, Europe and Canada and provides a summary of systems that equip students for success with international measurement. The intent is to let each of us measure our schools and districts to gauge if we are world-class.

Reviewed by Frank Kelly, executive director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education, Oakville, Ontario, Canada

Creating the Schools Our Children Need: Why What We’re Doing Now Won’t Help Much (And What We Can Do Instead)
by Dylan Wiliam, Learning Sciences International, West Palm Beach, Fla., 2018, 210 pp. with index, $29.95 softcover

The primary audiences for Dylan Wiliam’s newest book, Creating the Schools Our Children Need, are school board members and parents. However, the readers who will benefit most are superintendents and others charged with improving schools in their district.

The early chapters review many of the panaceas now being proposed to increase student achievement: luring smarter people into teaching; firing bad teachers; paying good teachers more; reducing class size; copying other countries; and expanding school choice. Research on each topic is cited, and the futility of implementing any of these strategies is developed appropriately.

The author is an emeritus professor of educational assessment at University College London and a respected authority on formative assessment. Wiliam is no pessi-mist on what can be done to fully develop student abilities, and his ideas can be implemented across a district, in a school or even in a single classroom. In brief, the key areas are a knowledge-loaded curriculum, close adherence to formative assessment and an environment for improving the skills of current teachers.

Reviewed by John C. Fagan, retired superintendent, Oak Park, Ill.

Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World
by Michael Fullan, Joanne Quinn and Joanne McEachen, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, Calif., 2018, 187 pp. with index, $32.95 softcover

The practices needed for instituting an instructional framework to support entrepreneurship and creativity are laid out for readers in Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World. The book defines the competencies for deep learning, the rationale for adoption, conditions for success and examples from the field.

The authors — Michael Fullan, former dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, and Joanne Quinn and Joanne McEachen,
educational consultants who serve as co-founders with Fullan of New Pedagogies for Deep Learning — define deep learning as “the process of acquiring these six global competencies: character; citizenship; collaboration; communication; creativity; and critical thinking.” Their book advocates for using learning experiences that impact the world, have high relevance and instill strong academic learning.

The suggested learning experiences require a changing role for educators as well as collaboration both inside and outside the schoolhouse.

Vignettes of schools that have worked with New Pedagogies for Deep Learning furnish additional insight into successful implementation and provide both cautionary notes and celebratory tales. The text provides a basis for moving toward instructional experiences that provide high relevance and rigor.

Reviewed by Judy Paolucci, superintendent, Smithfield Public Schools, Smithfield, R.I.

The Kids are Smart Enough, So What’s the Problem? A Businessman’s Perspective on Educational Reform and the Teacher Crisis

A symbiotic relationship exists between public education and the business community, so a business leader’s views on education reform and the teacher crisis could provide valuable insights for school system leaders. Unfortunately, The Kids are Smart Enough, So What’s the Problem? does little to promote a forward-thinking vision for education. Instead, author Richard Garrett focuses most of his attention on the impact of “disruptive” students.

In identifying the major challenges in education, Garrett (who earned a Ph.D. in operations research) presents a disjointed outline of factors ranging from low teacher status, lack of discipline and too much bureaucracy to devaluing education and poor test scores. All of these factors can and do affect schools, but this book is primarily focused on a lack of discipline.

The author conducted a research study to illustrate the impact of disruptive students and to suggest ways to remedy this problem. His study largely consisted of the experiences of four teachers who identified root causes and share data on the loss of instructional time they experienced. While research on the observations of four teachers can offer anecdotes, it does not yield significant findings to inform practice.

Garrett obviously recognizes the importance of education and values teachers. He fears the looming teacher shortage will lead to workforce development challenges. Those issues in public education are real, but this book does little to bring current research or innovative solutions to the discussion.

Reviewed by Theresa Alban, superintendent, Frederick County Public Schools, Frederick, Md.

ABSTRACT
Longevity Factors
Doctoral research by Richard Kriesky, for an Ed.D. at University of North Carolina at Greensboro, tried to identify the communication and relationship-building components that contribute to a superintendent’s longevity.

Through lengthy in-person interviews, he studied the behaviors of seven superintendents who had served five years or more in one district. His findings included these: (1) Long-serving superintendents recognize the importance of communication and relationship building; (2) long-serving superintendents give prominent attention to school boards and community; and (3) long-serving superintendents express concerns about superintendent training and support.

Kriesky developed recommendations for eight specific leadership behaviors that support communication and relationship building, all singled out by the long-serving superintendents as contributing to their longevity. Copies of “The Perceptions of Long-Serving Superintendents Regarding Specific Behaviors That Contributed to Their Longevity” are accessible at 800-521-0600 or disspub@proquest.com.

Crowdfunding Classrooms
AASA and DonorsChoose.org released a user-friendly digital tool to help educators tap into funding to support teaching and learning, especially in classrooms in low-income communities.

The Back-to-School Crowdfunding Toolkit provides a guide for school district leaders on supporting their teachers’ needs and access to a national network of education philanthropists through www.DonorsChoose.org.

Conference News
AASA will deliver daily news and information recaps during the 2019 National Conference on Education in Los Angeles.

Conference Daily Online will be delivered early each morning through members’ e-mail. The publication includes short articles about speakers and award winners, blog postings and photos.

AASA Mobile App
News about AASA’s policy and advocacy issues, children’s programs and leadership events are available through the AASA mobile app, sponsored by Blackboard.

The free app is compatible with both iPhone and Android. Visit http://aasa.org/app.aspx.

Readiness Assessment
Redefining Ready!, the national campaign promoting a new multi-metric, research-based assessment for college and career readiness, has been introduced in 33 states plus the District of Columbia and Montreal, Quebec. Details about the national cohort are available at www.redefiningready.org.