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Dawidziak, Joe (2010) *Back to Common Sense: Rethinking School Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Pp. x + 118 ISBN 978-1607095606

Reviewed by Allen H. Seed  
University of Memphis

*Back to Common Sense: Rethinking School Change* eschews academic language to make its case for thoughtful school change in common sense, laymen's terms. While avoiding the numerous citations and references of academic writing, Joe Dawidziak frequently mentions that the research supports his assertions and often refers to the dean of school change, Michael Fullan. The author successfully fulfills his intended purpose in this engaging and thought-provoking book.

Dawidziak provides insight into successful school change through the lens of professional leaders which includes principals and others such as teachers, staff members, and board members. He defines the common sense approach as one that takes into consideration the myriad facets of school change. The stories that he uses to introduce the reader to his points are based on real events.

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The chapters are organized around the pattern of story-theory-practice. The stories connect the reader to the reality of the component of the school change process being examined. The theory lays out the reasoning behind the author's claims. The practice illustrates how this would or should work in changing schools.

The aspects of school change scrutinized include the usual and a couple unusual ones. The usual include successful schools denying that improvement is needed, hiring the right people, dealing with resistance to change, and money is not the solution to all problems. One of the unusual facets of school change is discussed in Chapter 11, *Let the Problem Ripen*. Dawidziak states that educators are far too often hasty to make decisions about problems that will frequently solve themselves if allowed to ripen. This rush to take care of problems prevents others from rising to meet the challenge and utilize their problem-solving skills. The author does proffer this caveat, "there is a very fine line between letting a problem ripen and letting it rot." (p. 92)

The most intriguing chapter is entitled *Well, Well, Well*. This piece deals with a notion that appears to be sorely lacking at the time of this writing, caring about those engaged in improving their schools. Dawidziak cites Gary Vaynerchuk's book, *Crush It*, when he posits that if you hire the right people, you should show that you care for them throughout their career, including after they retire. Two new ideas to this reviewer were career debriefing and retirement mentoring. The former refers to pre-retirement conversations that allow the retiring educator the opportunity to de-stress in a safe, risk-free environment. The later is as important as new teacher mentoring, according to Dawidziak. Retirement mentoring should assist retirees fill the emotional and social void left after stepping away from such a high profile career in schools. *Back to Common Sense: Rethinking School Change* is a guide for those interested in leading successful school change. The book provides valuable insights for those wondering how to best work with and in schools to bring about instructional improvement. *Back to Common Sense: Rethinking School Change* is another rich addition to the literature on school change.

## About the Reviewer

Allen H. Seed is an Associate Professor at the University of Memphis. His research interests include school change, middle level education, and experiential education.

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