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Brief reviews for June 2005

Conley, David (2005). *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley/Jossey-Bass.

Not only is the title of this book a "mouthful" but what Professor David Conley heaps on the reader's plate may also be a little hard to digest. Based on the findings of Standards for Success, a three year project of the Association of American Universities in partnership with the Pew Charitable Trust, this volume focuses on the basic knowledge and skills college-bound students will need in English, math, natural sciences, second languages, and the arts, in order to be ready for college.

In explaining why many secondary school graduates are not prepared for the rigors of the college classroom, Conley emphasizes that there is a big difference between college-eligible and college-ready. A student may have taken and passed the courses that have been approved by college admissions officers but, alas, that doesn't mean he is actually prepared to meet the expectations of his college instructors. The author does not infer that all college bound students are unprepared but there are enough to merit a book of this nature. As the name implies, the goal of Standards for Success is to identify the specific knowledge and skills necessary for success in entry-level university courses.

Assuming the findings of the study are correct, it becomes obvious that any attempt to align state and district content standards with the material set forth here will be a very tall order. In theory there should not be a wide disparity between what the study indicates students need to know for entry-level university courses and what the state, county, and local education bureaucrats deem is necessary for graduation. Unfortunately, that gulf exists. Even if one focuses just on the college prep, honors and Advance Placement courses that schools offer and then look at the compendium of material college-ready students are suppose to have mastered, the shortfall is staggering.

Should we should throw up our hands in anguish and cry the situation is hopeless. Certainly not! But there will be a tendency, as teachers ponder the material in this book, to be overwhelmed by what they read.

The best way to approach what Conley sets forth is to consume the material in small doses. If you are a district curriculum coordinator, principal, or department chair, don't dump this on the table at one sitting. Small portions will not only be easier for your staff to digest but also won't make them gag when they see what needs to be done. In most schools, some of this is already in place, so emphasize the positive. Next, prioritize the things that need to be done. Create a realistic action plan that addresses the changes or additions to course curriculum that you wish to make and then get on with it.

A professor of educational policy and leadership in the College of Education at the University of Oregon, Conley presents the findings of Standards for Success in as palatable a format as possible. There's much to mull over and discuss in each of the content areas so dig in, but don't bite off too much to begin with.

Pages: **350** Price: **\$24.95** ISBN: : **0-7879-7397-1**

Reviewed by **Robert F. Walch, Retired educator, Monterey, California**

Kedro, M. James (2004). *Aligning Resources for Student Outcomes: School-Based Steps to Success*. Latham, MD: Scarecrow (now Rowman Education).

Increasing student outcomes has become a matter of survival for many schools in this era of high stakes testing when the failure to improve student test scores has serious consequences. Even assuming that high levels of commitment and adequate funding exist, school leaders are left struggling to know how to approach improving student learning. Research has shown that providing increased funding and outstanding teachers does not necessarily lead to higher test scores. To quote Kedro, "If our input is excellent, our outcome should be no less, right?" Yet he answers his own question with the response "Not exactly" (p. 19). This book is his attempt to provide guidance on how schools can move forward through thoughtful budgeting within the framework of school-based management.

The book is described by the publisher as a "roadmap" to help school personnel. I suspect that even Kedro might consider this a bit of an overstatement. He is quick to point out that there are no easy answers, and he advises school leaders to do their own research, although he warns them that "the stack of SBM studies by academicians and practitioners that piles up on your desk could rival a skyscraper" (p. 3). In fact, I would advise readers to start with the resources Kedro lists. His case studies of schools that have effectively implemented site-based management, the web page addresses, and other sources cited are among the most useful features of the book. The examples of partnering that he includes, especially those implemented in his home school district of St. Louis, are particularly informative and useful.

Kedro's style is informal and highly readable. He utilizes numerous allusions from popular culture that draw in the reader and make his points more memorable. I thought a section adapted from one of his earlier works that asks whether today's "innovations" are really new was fascinating. However, I found the targeted audience a little confusing. I assume that the book was written for school administrators. Certainly the chapters entitled "Consultative Leadership, Budgeting for Instructional Coherence," "Targeting Staff Development," and "Overcoming Resistance and Unlocking Potential" all seem to be written specifically for administrators or school leaders. Additionally, each chapter includes "Reflection and Discussion" questions that seem to target administrators. But it also strikes me that some of the background information, for example, a rather lengthy explanation of the budget planning cycle, would be unnecessary for most educators, and certainly for administrators.

Although the title of the book is intriguing, I think maybe it promises a little too much. Perhaps a more accurate, although admittedly less compelling, title would be *A Guide to Budgeting in Site-based Management*. Although Kedro provides much useful advice and analysis, I struggled to make the link between aligning resources and student outcomes that I had anticipated from the title. I also think that including the word *Management* after *School-* or *Site-Based* in the title would give the reader a better idea of what follows. Despite this reservation, however, the book should prove a useful source for leaders involved in site-based management.

Recommended for libraries serving educational administration or educational leadership programs.

Pages: **252** Price: **\$32.95** ISBN: **1-57886-127-6**

Reviewed by **Sharon Naylor, Education Librarian, Illinois State University**

Kuykendall, Crystal (2004). *From Rage to Hope: Strategies for Reclaiming Black & Hispanic Students*. Second Edition. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Thousands of educators have been inspired by Dr. Crystal Kuykendall's uplifting speeches throughout the United States. In her 2nd edition of *From Rage to Hope*, Kuykendall brings readers a compelling and dynamically informative insight to the academic underachievement, apathy, and rage among America's Black and Hispanic youth. Kuykendall's credentials range from a former primary, junior high, and senior high school teacher to a university instructor and a guidance counselor for potential high school dropouts. She holds a doctorate in educational administration and a law degree. Her dedication to the field of education and the coined phrase "Merchants of Hope" is the foundational message that

sings out to those who possess a love for teaching.

Kuykendall describes a “Merchant of Hope” as anyone who enriches or benefits the life of another. Individuals who educate, encourage, inspire, uplift, and mentor are marvelous “Merchants of Hope” (p. xv). Kuykendall uses this premise throughout her book; those who choose to work in the field of education are indeed a special breed. She is not just speaking about teachers being “Merchants of Hope;” she includes people from the immediate community through the state level. Classroom teachers may find that the strategies the author suggests would be well received by Black and Hispanic students, will be effective in reaching all students.

From Rage to Hope is divided into 11 chapters and one appendix. The first four chapters provide the reader with information about the cultural background of Black and Hispanic students. The author asserts an urgency for change in how we approach these students in order to build and maintain a positive academic outlook and a strong social self-image for later success. Chapters five through seven are a teachers’ dream. The chapters are full of powerful strategies to help teachers deal with discipline problems. Kuykendall includes helpful pointers regarding how a teacher’s or any school personnel’s behavior may be the trigger to a student’s behavior. She asks educators to self-reflect on their own behavior and their beliefs about kids. The author strongly supports Ron Edmonds’ views saying “Schools can enhance student achievement regardless of home influence or socio-economic status” (p. 21). She cautions educators not to use damaging terminology, such as “culturally deprived”, “underprivileged” or “economically disadvantaged”. She states that teachers will find gratification if they look past these labels.

The final section focuses on parent involvement, magnifying the teacher’s power by mentoring, school leadership and focusing on the future. The author lists eleven strategies to get parents more involved and three diagnostic worksheets for assessing teachers and students’ attitudes and behaviors. In these chapters Kuykendall provides the steps to change for our schools, which she feels simply need a boost of inspiration. As a woman who is greatly admired for all that she has overcome, she states that the *real* challenge for today’s educational leadership is to commit themselves 100% to youth. “When more teachers increase their commitment and their repertoire of teaching techniques, more students will be able to succeed, and more educators will reap the *real* joy this profession is capable of providing” (p. 243).

The ultimate message sent in this book is the author’s belief in the concept “Merchants of Hope”. The problem of Black and Hispanic youth underachieving in schools today will continue to escalate unless all adults in contact with them confront the real challenges to solve problems and enhance commitment to ensure student success. The author speaks to the heart of the reader, leaving a feeling of inspiration and hope that our professional excellence and student success can happen if we choose to make a difference.

The Appendix contains reproducible worksheets that come in a checklist format to collect quick informal but important assessments about students and teachers as “Merchants of Hope”. The worksheets include: “Academic Self-Image and Social Self – Image,” which assists teachers to gather information on the students; “Teaching Behaviors that Improve Student Achievement”, that serves as a self evaluation for teachers to improve their approach; “Student Activities that Enhance Self-Image”, which helps improve students self-image; “Counseling and Mentoring Behaviors that Improve Student Motivation”, that facilitates effectiveness of individuals participating in positive youth development; and “Leadership Skills for Facilitating Student Success and School Improvement”, a helpful checklist for administrators to rate their effectiveness as agents of change.

Summary Comments. I have heard Dr. Kuykendall speak and now have read her book. I highly recommend both to educators and administrators. In my opinion, this book provides the next step in knowing how to scaffold success for our Black and Hispanic students who are underachieving. From *Rage to Hope* not only states clearly ‘how to’ teach Black and Hispanic students to ensure their success but also gives a shot of inspiration to get it done! I believe that if we as educators follow these simple yet profound steps in our teaching the results could surpass our wildest dreams for our vulnerable students.

References

Edmonds, R. R. (1980). Effective education for minority pupils: Brown confounded or confirmed. In D. Bell(Ed.), *Shades of brown: New perspectives on school desegregation*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pages: **276** Price: ISBN: **1932127151**

Reviewed by Milcah Hawk, School Psychologist, Adams State College & University of Colorado at Denver

Martin, James & Samels, James E. (2004). *Presidential Transition in Higher Education: Managing Leadership Change*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Last year, Martin and Samels published a comprehensive volume of essays written for and by college presidents, university board members, and scholars of higher education. The book, *Presidential Transition in Higher Education: Managing Leadership Change* was the first of its kind to thoroughly address the concept of preparing for and dealing with presidential change. Martin and Samels indicate, "As many as one-fourth of all 3900 U.S. colleges and universities in any year are preparing for a presidential change, are in the midst of one, or have just selected a new president" (preface, x).

With presidential turnover occurring at an alarming rate, Martin and Samels' book provides a wealth of guidance for institutions to survive – and possibly thrive – during the process. Because presidential change is inevitable yet challenging, the book discusses several strategies for transition management. Key chapters include the role of trustees, executive search firms, interim presidents, public relations, presidential spouses, and maintaining institutional advancement. Nearly all chapters are written in first person by contributing presidents and others who have dealt with such situations.

Notable contributors include Dr. Arthur Padilla, former Vice President of the University of North Carolina System, Dr. Patricia Stanley, the President of Frederick Community College in Maryland, and Dr. Tom Trebon, who confronted and overcame major financial hurdles as President of Carroll College in Montana. Another interesting contributor is a representative from The Registry for College and University Presidents. The Registry is an interim presidential search service that engages former university presidents to serve as temporary leaders while institutions are conducting a formal search. Contributors such as these provide insightful observations and first-hand experiences, both good and bad, which may help others navigate future leadership transitions.

While this book does not offer easy answers or fool-proof suggestions, the ideas and examples are substantial. *Presidential Transition in Higher Education* will soon become a staple for anyone dealing with a change in institutional leadership. Martin and Samels argue, "Many of those now leading colleges and universities are coming to recognize that an effective transition process is far more difficult to manage than most higher education guidebooks and resource manuals ever acknowledge, because, while presidents, ultimately, come and go, how they come and go has a profound effect on the institution and largely determines the difference between extended periods of failure and success" (p. 22). This book proposes thoughtful ideas for a successful transition period. Individuals concerned for the welfare of their institution should have an awareness of change in leadership and its consequences for the university.

Pages: 273 Price: \$45.00 ISBN: 0801879345

Reviewed by Kimberly Nehls who is nearing completion of her Ph.D. in higher education administration at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She works part-time in the UNLV Foundation and teaches communication classes through the continuing education department. Kim can be reached at kim.nehls@ccmail.nevada.edu.

O'Hara, Mark (2004) *Teaching 3-8: Meeting the Standards for Initial Teacher Training and Induction*. Second Edition. London: Continuum Publishing Group.

This textbook generally follows the Professional Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status of the Teacher Training Academy (TTA) in the United Kingdom for teachers of children ages 3-8. These standards describe the expected values, knowledge, and teaching ability of new teachers in an easy to navigate text. O'Hara deftly divides the book into three major chapters that correspond to the three divisions within these standards; Professional Values and Practice, Knowledge and Understanding, and Teaching.

This practical handbook offers novice teachers some practical advice for specific situations. In other

words, the author supplies references to UK national curriculum mandates and offers pragmatic suggestions, but provides few connections to recognized research or theorists. O'Hara presents examples for immediate use, questions for later thought, and a laundry list of additional print and electronic resources. However, if the reader wishes to consult research or investigate the claims of a theorist, he or she must search additional texts.

The text provides support for novices working in the field and wanting a quick solution for an immediate need. However, it is unsuitable as a *primary* textbook for initial teacher training coursework because it lacks depth. For example, chapter 1 provides suggestions relative to issues of governance, working with parents, and student diversity, among its many other topics. Chapter 2 includes a focus on literacy and other content issues, while chapter 3 offers tips about planning and teaching.

This reviewer found many similarities between the Professional Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status and those for initial teacher licensure promoted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) housed in the United States. It appears that beginning teachers in the UK and the US have like needs, therefore, teachers of young children on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean can benefit from this text.

Pages: 224 Price: \$33.95 ISBN: 0-8264-7005-X

Reviewed by Mary Ransdell, Ed. D, assistant professor of elementary education at the University of Memphis. She enjoys her work with preservice teachers, both before and during their professional semester, and with those preparing for national board certification. Her professional interests include master teachers and the use of cooperative learning. Email: mransdell@memphis.edu.

Roberts, Jane (2004). *25 Prewriting Graphic Organizers and Planning Sheets: Must-Have Tools to Help All Students Gather and Organize Their Thoughts to Jumpstart the Writing Process*. Scholastic Teaching Series, Grades 3-5. New York: Scholastic.

This book presents a rationale for focusing on prewriting, the first stage of the writing process, and then goes on to provide organizational strategies to help children at this stage. To quote from the author, "Prewriting helps students create images and ideas about the assigned topic, as well as consider their emotions and values in relation to the topic" (p. 6). Prewriting is important because children do NOT write like adults; achievement, the author attests, is higher when students use prewriting strategies. Roberts lists five domains of writing: focus, content, organization, style, conventions. She also includes Standards Benchmarks for writing, grades 3-5, as benchmarks for assessment. These are taken from the 1996 Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory and the Pennsylvania Department of Education,

The help that is outlined in this book for students' writing is in the form of 25 graphic organizers and planning sheets. They are presented in alphabetical order (for easy reference) with brief descriptions. The descriptions are quite clear and easily understandable. A "thumb-nail" sketch accompanies each and the reader is told that she/he is able to find the aids in the last chapter of the book. Since each of the aids is pictured on a separate page in that chapter, I recommend that the exact page number be given for each of those frameworks. Some of the small sketches are just too small to be useful.

The organizers and frameworks are then grouped into six categories: relatively unstructured frameworks, visual frameworks, verbally structured frameworks, frameworks for grouping ideas, oral frameworks, and frameworks for analysis. These categories are useful to the teacher in deciding what types of issues to focus on in the prewriting stages, and provide some leeway for the teacher to choose from teacher-directed to student-directed activities. The headings of the six categories are confusing, however, especially as the categories include organizers as well as frameworks but are labeled only as frameworks.

Next the author provides sample writing lessons incorporating the various graphic organizers and planning sheets that are included at the end of the book. The lesson plans appear in the same order as the aids (again, alphabetically). Grade levels are suggested for each of the lesson plans as guidelines. However, only one lesson is specifically directed for students in grade 3, and more than half for students in grade 6. This is not totally consistent with the grades identified in the title, but lends credence to my assessment, that the book targets students not in grades 3-5 but rather in grades 4-6. Each lesson plan is accompanied by the standards criteria for the five domains of writing quality to

assist the teacher and student in terms of the assessment of the writing. As before, I would suggest inserting the exact page number of that reproducible aid for faster access.

The final chapter contains the 25 reproducible graphic organizers and planning sheets, in the same (alphabetical) order as they have been referred to previously. The frameworks vary in the amount of reading difficulty and complexity; some, I think, are too challenging for even students in grade 5. I would recommend that the next edition of this book be augmented by a CD; all of these graphic organizers and planning sheets could easily be put onto a CD for even easier access by both teachers and students. Indeed, Scholastic already has many of these frameworks on their website <http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/graphicorg/>.

In summary, I consider this is a clear and well-organized 'how to' book, useful for every teacher, and in particular, those teaching grades 4-6. I say useful for every teacher, because I believe that graphic organizers and planning frameworks are helpful for students at every level. Indeed, while elementary students may be exposed to these aids for the first time, organizational aids are relevant to every student. Educators recommend these same graphic organizers and planning frameworks for students with learning exceptionalities and for absent-minded adolescents. My own son, who has always found writing a challenge, now in grade 11, relies on a graphic organizer (drawing the story) when writing a book report. I suggest that every educator should become familiar with and recognize the importance and widespread usefulness of these organizational aids in students' learning.

Pages: 96 Price: \$15.99 ISBN: 0 439 51369 3

Reviewed by Ruth Rees, PhD, Professor of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

Thody, Angela & Bowden, Derek (2004). *Getting Organized*. London: Continuum Publishing Group.

This is an excellent practical book for school teachers. The book aims to provide guidance in the use of their time, how to avoid and deal with stress factors in their job, how to develop their career in teaching and how to move to an alternative career using the skills acquired in teaching if they choose to do so. Thody and Bowden have bags of experience in these areas, each having spent well over 30 years in teaching related posts, and that experience shows throughout the book.

The book will be of especial interest for teachers who have just started or are in the early years of their career –although senior managers will find information of interest to them too. There are new teachers who think that perhaps the way things are done in their schools are the way things are “meant to be in any school”. For those people, the book will be a key tool to help them to put their school's practice in perspective. They will benefit the most from the, perhaps, key message of the book: the need for a carefully thought career plan, which can be built through time and implemented, if one is to succeed as a teaching professional.

Thody and Bowden's advice is also particularly useful for new teachers since it often argues for well-thought changes to common practice: the book is not just repeating “common sense” arguments, although there is a good deal of that too. It also provides some provocative tips on how to improve established ways of action (who would not support their idea of getting rid of meeting's minutes and bring in “action points” or getting junior staff to chair meetings from time to time?) and plenty of advice on how to make changes that may be uncomfortable in the short term, but will bring teachers long-term gains.

A key strength of the book is that it not only provides “great plans” to change things, but also mixes these with numerous real-life practical examples on each of the topics covered. Examples, moreover, are presented in such a way that the authors cleverly avoid providing one simple “right answer” to the exercises or advocating “one type of teacher”. Rather, the book provides a menu of options and issues to think of when approaching those problems, acknowledging that people reading the book will have different personal styles in everyday life problem solving. Different readers will have different responses to the utility of the suggestions, and I have found some of them of likely little use, but that is the exception rather than the norm.

The book, moreover, is thoughtful in “putting individual teachers in context” throughout. Teachers are treated as members of schools, and ideas are also provided on how to improve the performance of their teams and schools as a whole through changed individual action. Organisational characteristics of different schools (e.g. between small and large schools) are also carefully taken into account

whenever relevant. There are references to teachers as “human beings” with wider social and personal interests outside the school. A high degree of realism on the teaching profession and what can be expected from teachers is, as a result, present throughout the book, and will help new teachers to realise that they cannot do everything to improve their school alone, and certainly not everything at the same time.

Perhaps the main shortcoming of the book is that it is focused on the English experience. Although teachers from other countries will still find much of the book useful, it is fair to say that they will find other parts –in particular those about career search, results from teaching surveys that enable benchmarking on career development and time-lines, hours worked and other issues with fellow teachers, and the “useful addresses” provided at the end of the book– less relevant than English teachers. Sometimes the advice provided seems to turn into unrepentant advocacy for the teaching profession –not without a sense of humour at points. That is not necessarily a bad thing when it comes from passionate practitioners. The authors, for instance, mention that teachers should “welcome distress ... as a naturally created mental workout ... equivalent to creating a physical workout artificially by going to the gym” (p. 51). Although I am not a great fan of gyms myself, this seems to push things a bit too far.

This is, overall, a thoroughly enjoyable book to read, easy to read within one hour, full of useful advice, written in clear, plain language and which successfully meets the goals it sets out for itself. It is a mentor for new teachers in their pocket! Now teachers just need similar books written for parents and students.

Pages: **100** Price: **\$11.95** ISBN: **0-8264-6770-9**

Reviewed by Manuel Souto Otero, a doctoral candidate in Social Policy at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work of the University of Oxford. He specialises in access to post-compulsory education and training. He has previously managed research projects in different areas of education, training and youth for UK and Spanish Government Departments, and the Directorate General of Education and Culture of the European Commission, amongst other public sector bodies, working as a Senior Research Manager at ECOTEC Research and Consulting.

Valenza, Joyce Kasman (2004). *Power Tools Recharged: 125+ Essential Forms and Presentations for Your School Library Information Program*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Power Tools Recharged: 125+ Essential Forms and Presentations for Your School Library Information Program is a revision of *Power tools: 100+ essential forms...*(1998). The first edition of this book recognized the role of the librarian as a change agent. The preface of the first edition described itself as “...a toolkit to simplify your job to give you a way to manage when there is no time to create” (Valenza, 1998, p. v). The earlier edition admirably fulfilled this obligation, the current title carries on the mandate.

The 1998 book was in three parts. The first part was a bound paperback arranged into broad topics with a descriptive annotation of each form or presentation and suggestions for their use. The second part consisted of a loose-leaf binder of reproducible forms and print- outs of presentations. The third part was a CD-ROM of the forms and PowerPoint presentations.

Power Tools Recharged: 125+ Essential Forms and Presentations for Your School Library Information Program has combined the first two parts to make a more useful, integrated loose-leaf volume with tabbed chapter headings. Each chapter begins with a table of contents of the forms and presentations in that section and the intended audience for each item. An annotated list of items precedes the collection of reproducible forms or presentations in the chapter. The volume also includes appendices of library related quotations and librarian’s resources on the Web. Unfortunately there is no index, so one has to rely on the chapter groupings: “Communicating Your Program”, “Program Administration”, etc. to locate the appropriate forms. In keeping with the format of the earlier edition, a CD-ROM of all the forms and presentations is included so that they may be tailored for specific school uses.

This book is an amazing resource for school librarians and teachers too! Some of the forms included are specifically of use to school librarians such as the “Citizen Request for Reconsideration of Materials” or the “Shelving Guide.” Many of the other forms have multiple applications for classroom

teachers and administrators such as an "Academic Integrity Policy for Student Research," "Note Cards," "Research Task Requirements Checklist" and the "Keyword Search Plan." The section on presentations has print-outs of PowerPoints on topics such as plagiarism, research, and evaluation of resources. This section updates the first edition's presentations on introducing the Internet and web searching, children and the Internet, and the role of the school librarian.

The forms present not only helpful handouts, but a battle-plan for enhanced faculty-librarian-student communication. The book provides an accessible path to collaboration within the school. This furthers the transformation of a school into an Information-Powered school in keeping with the American Association of School Librarians guidelines.

Power Tools Recharged: 125+ Essential Forms and Presentations for Your School Library Information Program is recommended for school libraries, and for academic libraries with education and curriculum collections. It is a worthy update to the older edition and an excellent supplement to the 2001 work, *The Information-powered School*.

References

Hughes-Hassell, S. & Wheelock, A. (Eds.). (2001). *The information-powered school*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Valenza, J. K. (1998). *Power tools: 100+ essential forms and presentations for your school library information program*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Pages: **362** Price: **\$55.00** ISBN: **0-8389-0880-2**

Reviewed by Sheila Kirven, Education Services Librarian, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ.



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