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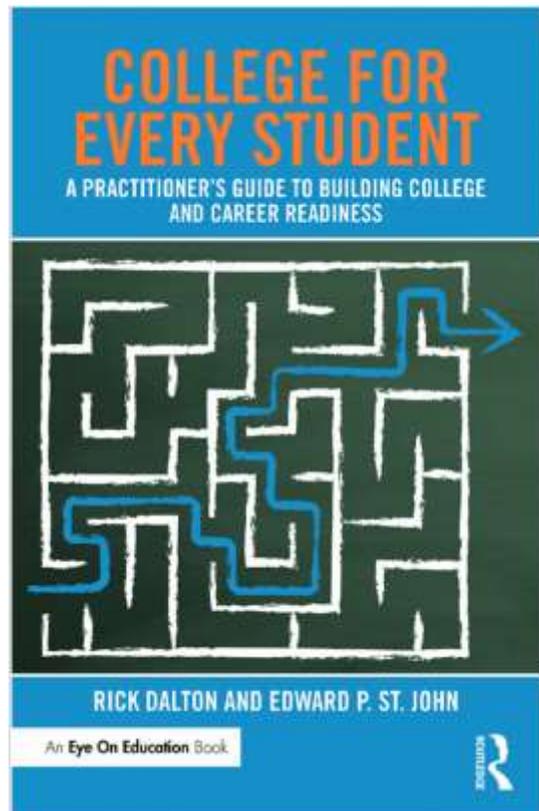
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A recent report cited in The Upshot - a *New York Times* section with analysis and data visualizations about politics, policy, and everyday life - found that access to the nation's top colleges hasn't changed much in the last decade. While one in four of the richest students make their way to an elite college, "less than one-half of 1 percent of children from the bottom fifth of American families attend an elite college; less than half attend any college at all."

To many educators, this pattern is of no surprise. College access has been a worrisome topic for over half a century; in more recent memory, the "research on the impact of loans to rationalize increased use of college loans" during the Reagan administration has since exasperated educational inequality for low-income students, many of them minorities (p. 13). More financial aid and policy proposals



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won't eradicate this opportunity gap. That's why Rick Dalton and Edward P. St. John wrote *College For Every Student: A Practitioner's Guide to Building College and Career Readiness*. The most needy students don't just require, but deserve a practical toolkit for navigating the complexities of college and the 21st century workplace, and so do the educators assisting these students on their academic and personal journeys.

Supported by decades of research, Dalton and St. John have comprehensively sewn together threads of student narratives, adaptive frameworks, and insightful studies, which prove it's possible to move the dial on college and career readiness. But this book is not just reserved for educators - the included resources will resonate with middle and high schoolers, parents, and community members. We all know that a student's well-being and academic success is contingent on the involvement and knowledge of those around him/her; this book is an appropriate first step for those who want to help level the playing field for low-income students.

Edward St. John and Rick Dalton have partnered together since 2009 to develop and share their evidence-based approach for improving and expanding educational outcomes for low-income students. St. John is a retired professor from the University of Michigan's School of Education who has written several books on social justice and K-16 educational policies. Dalton is the CEO of College For Every Student (CFES), a national nonprofit with international reach that has helped over 100,000 students gain access to, persist through, and graduate college. What sets CFES apart from its counterparts is its dedication to working with students in both urban and rural communities. Educational policy often targets inner-city children, but ignores the "30 percent of public schools...and almost 9 million students [attending them in rural pockets of our country]" (p. 117). Both authors recognize these different environments and the challenges they present. Urban students are often underprepared when choosing the right middle and high schools to attend, while

location limits the possibility of professional and college mentors for rural students.

A Practitioner's Guide to Building College and Career Readiness offers methods for addressing these challenges, all aligned with the three core practices of CFES: Mentoring, Leadership Through Service, and Pathways to College and Career. As Dalton and St. John demonstrate, the CFES model is a proven strategy for empowering students, raising their aspirations, and helping them develop what they've deemed the Essential Skills. These include grit, leadership, teamwork, perseverance, and adaptability. Yes, these skills might seem common sense - they are often mentioned in Ted Talks like Angela Duckworth's famous study on "true grit" - but the authors emphasize that educators take note of these, in order to "understand how student engagement links to the development of skills, their navigation of college and career pathways, and the role of developing new mechanisms for supporting student success" (p. 67). But what are some of these mechanisms and how do educators, already strapped on resources and time, incorporate any of this into their work?

A key suggestion Dalton and St. John offer is partnership with universities, local businesses, and community volunteers. Readers, particularly teachers, will be relieved that this book in no way places all of the ownership of preparing students for college and career on the shoulders of one group. No, *A Practitioner's Guide to Building College and Career Readiness* is well aware that its suggestions are not panaceas for solving all of our nation's most pressing educational challenges. It instead, outlines several avenues for readers to take depending on their individual circumstances. If you're looking to build STEM readiness in your students, there's a case study of how CFES successfully partnered with the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (p. 74). Or if you're wondering how to expose students to the diversity of the college world they'll soon face, adopt an urban-rural-school-to-school partnership as Middlebury College in Vermont did with DeWitt Clinton High School in the

Bronx (p. 93). Professional development your area of focus? Ernst & Young has been instrumental in the mentorship of students in 30 different cities, and their model could be replicated in your school and city.

At 167 pages, *A Practitioner's Guide to Building College and Career Readiness* is a brief, yet full read. From page to page, surprising data points and anecdotes pop out, creating a vivid image of our current educational landscape, and what it could be. The book's choice to organize resources via a series of figures, boxes, and tables, is unlike other educational materials out there. Through this format, readers will be guided to jump between chapters, exploring ideas and case studies that are most pertinent and applicable to their segment of work. Though if time permits, it's recommended that you read the entirety of the book as it will surely remind you of what brought you to education work in the first place. Moreover, it is imperative for us all to find examples of successful interventions and programs, particularly those we have yet to imagine.

Dalton and St. John write to an American audience, but the most surprising chapter may be Taking Action: The Irish Case.

In 2013, CFES and Trinity College Dublin began partnering through The Trinity Access Programmes (TAP), and since then, thousands of students have been exposed to CFES resources. Irish and American students share similar obstacles to higher education and career development, but through this international partnership, students have demonstrated increased knowledge about college cost, stronger relationships with mentors, and show higher aspirations for higher education and professional work. The Irish Case reminds us that with the appropriate measures, the organizational capacity of schools can grow, no matter the geography.

As a former CFES Scholar who personally developed the Essential Skills, then transitioned into a Program Director that helped implement these frameworks in schools across the country, I highly recommend adding *College For Every Student: A Practitioner's Guide to Building College and Career Readiness* to your reading list. Whether you're brand new to education or a seasoned veteran educator, the evidence provided in this book will empower and provide structure to your work in preparing students for college and future careers.

References

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About the Reviewer

Andy C. Ng is a former CFES Scholar and the youngest member of the nonprofit's Board of Directors. He is a graduate of New York University where he was a Gates Millennium Scholar and Dalai Lama Fellow. Andy is an advocate for minority and low-income students, and is particularly interested in the role of mindfulness and technology in education. He is currently a Staffing Services Associate at Google, supporting hiring for Global Business and Tech teams across offices throughout the US, Canada, & Latin America.



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