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Hall, Stephen S. (2010) *Wisdom: From Philosophy to Neuroscience*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf

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In recent years, probably decades is more accurate, there has grown a library of books in which authors consider several variations on the question What is intelligence? The library includes books focusing on the history of intelligence testing and its modern implications (Gould, 1981), books interpreting emerging theory for educators (Gardner, 1983), books promoting educational practices (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) and popular books that describe emerging social and economic trends (Pink, 2006). Clearly, this brief list is far from complete, but this list does illustrate the continuing public dialogue about what it means to be intelligent and about the expectations society places on schools as our culture increasingly adopts and adapts to electronic information technologies and the rapid and unpredictable changes with global implications that accompany that technology.

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Stephen S. Hall's *Wisdom* is a recent addition to this library that deserves educators' attention. Most educators are familiar with the continuum that includes predictive educational theory (the domain of researchers) at one extreme and instructional models and practices (the domain of classroom teachers) at the other extreme. Between those extremes, we find frameworks that provide structure for instructional models and meaning for educational theory. Like other books that seek to define intelligence, *Wisdom* provides a framework within which individuals and groups can begin to understand what wisdom is and how this construct can be applied to generating and testing educational theory and creating instructional practice.

Hall does go to great length to describe the research and, especially the science, that is underway to answer questions related to wisdom. What emerges is a picture of a new, and not yet fully-formed, science that is grounded in diverse fields of human inquiry (as suggested by the subtitle). The book is organized into three parts; in the first the origins of wisdom in both western and eastern philosophy are introduced; in the second, eight pillars of wisdom and neuroscience supporting each are presented; and in the third, actions individuals and groups can take to promote wisdom in many different organizations are briefly presented.

The eight chapters in part two are rich with description of the emerging scholarly work, and Hall's experience as a science journalist serves his readers well. The eight pillars of wisdom supported by the evidence as reviewed by Hall are (a) emotional regulation, (b) establishing value and making judgments, (c) moral reasoning, (d) compassion, (e) humility, (f) altruism, (g) patience, and (h) dealing with uncertainty. Some of these pillars will sound familiar to those who have paid attention to the discussion related to intelligence alluded to in the opening paragraph of this review. Several strands of this dialogue point to common themes which suggest they will be the foundation of intelligence and school expectation in coming decades.

Hall's pillars and similar themes from other authors have not become obvious in the modern classroom. I write this review days after seeing boxes containing the latest

iteration of our standardized tests arrive in the school where I work. Recent faculty meetings have focused on strategies for ensuring students perform well, and the days of test-administration promise to be stress-filled for all, especially for my son who attends the school where I work. I expect to see my son's scores in a few months, but I am not sure those tests will measure wisdom. After reading Hall's book, I suspect his pillars of wisdom are more predictive of my son's future success than the scores on his upcoming standardized tests.

Although *Wisdom* is unlikely to make readers wise and *Wisdom* is unlikely to point educators to classroom practices that will make students wise, *Wisdom* does contribute to our collective understanding of the future and knowledge and skill that will be necessary in the future. Applying this and similar ideas to constructs of school achievement and academic outcomes will help us ensure that schools prepare students for the future they will invent.

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About the Reviewer

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