

Rac(e)ing to Class: Confronting Poverty and Race in Schools and Classrooms. H. Richard Milner IV. Harvard Education Press, 2015, 212 pp.

Race and poverty are widely held to be among the most impactful factors in public schools across the country. H. Richard Milner IV uses his new text, *Rac(e)ing to Class*, to promote his mission of helping districts to consistently pursue principles and practices that can make a difference. He encourages decision-makers to “work towards those principles even if they are not able to completely implement them.”

Milner’s book will appeal to education leaders concerned with the effects of race and poverty in the



classroom. It advocates for district leaders to practice equitable decision-making, respond to neighborhood conditions, reduce class size for school-dependent students, and rethink/reform the inflexible, narrowed curriculum.

Within the text, Milner offers specific, research-based steps to reduce the effect of race and poverty in classrooms. He presents case studies so readers can compare their situations to those faced by other schools across the nation. Milner provides both quantitative and qualitative data to support his ideas, while advocating throughout for the child and teacher. According to Milner, while an individual teacher can make a difference, meeting the needs of students due to challenges from race and poverty will take systemwide reform, and districtwide structures and policies will have the greatest impact in student achievement.

Milner offers a call to action and renewed sense of urgency by advocat-

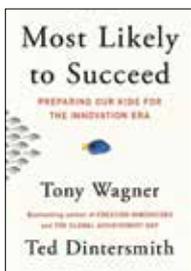
ing for better teacher education to support educators’ abilities to fight the effects of poverty and racism on student learning. He recommends that macro- and micro-level policies be examined for barriers to teachers growing their knowledge base about race and poverty education. He also offers short- and long-term steps for the professional learning community of teachers to recognize the effect of race and poverty on the classroom.

As a school principal, I found that Milner’s text challenged some of my own thinking, validated some of my own practices, and offered me ideas for addressing the needs of all students on my campus. He writes with a true passion for the topic, while connecting his research and the research of others to make his point. The book is a manageable read at 212 pages and provides many thought provoking opportunities throughout.

Reviewed by Kristin Liewehr Bishop, an elementary school principal in Plano, Texas.

Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era. Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith. Scribner, 2015, 296 pages.

What’s wrong with the American education system and how can we fix it? In *Most Likely to Succeed*, the authors explore the history of education in America and offer readers their vision on what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning. Tony Wagner, an educator, speaker, writer, and Harvard graduate, paired up with Ted Dintersmith, a Stanford-educated venture capitalist and technology innovator, to “explore the contradiction between what students must do to earn a high



school or college degree versus what makes them most likely to succeed in the world of work, citizenship, and lifelong learning.”

The title made me hopeful that this book would go beyond criticism and a historical review of how we’ve gotten to where we are. Unfortunately, only 45 out of 296 pages are dedicated to the authors’ vision of what the American education system should be. They start by questioning the value Americans place on academic credentials. They note, “Despite our enormous investment in education, the majority of our students lack the skills necessary to get a good job, be an informed citizen, or—in some way that defies crisp definition—be a good and happy person.”

Wagner and Dintersmith examine what constitutes real learning, explore what is at stake if nothing changes, expose the roots of modern

education, ponder the value of a college education, and decry the over-emphasis on testing. The picture they paint is both bleak and familiar. But educators know the system is broken; they want to know what to do about it.

The final chapter begins to address “the fix.” The authors want to create a new vision by reframing the problem, creating new outcomes, and setting a new purpose for education. While simple ideas are on the surface, the execution of the plan is much more complex. Wagner and Dintersmith give readers a taste of what just might work in reforming the American education system. Unfortunately, it’s a taste that leaves the reader hungry for more.

Reviewed by Christopher Wooleyhand, principal of Richard Henry Lee Elementary School in Glen Burnie, Maryland, and adjunct instructor of teacher leadership at McDaniel College.