

# Capsule Reviews

*compiled by* Book Review/Updates Editor

NAN L. MAXWELL & VICTOR RUBIN, *HIGH SCHOOL CAREER ACADEMIES: A PATHWAY TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS?* (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2000. 190 pp. Cloth: \$34, Paper: \$15.00).

The career academy is touted as a promising educational reform at the high school level. This "school-within-a-school" approach integrates academic and vocational learning into a career or industrial track separate from the regular curriculum. These programs require greater resources to develop and operate relative to traditional high school curriculums, which raises the question to policymakers, researchers, and administrators of whether they are worth the extra effort.

This book offers evidence that will enlighten anyone interested in the development and performance of career academies. In it, Nan L. Maxwell and Victor Rubin examine the capacity of career academies to address academic reform in terms of increased education and workplace skills. They accomplish this on two levels. First by assessing academies' development and implementation within an urban school district, then by assessing academies' potential to promote post-secondary success among academy students as compared to non-academy students. Their findings will help educators and policymakers better understand the strengths and limitations of this method of reform.

To assess the development and implementation issue, the authors present results based on qualitative data amassed during a seven-year local evaluation of career academies in a single urban school district. This data led to findings on a number of key organizational issues including whether or not career academies can become a district's primary tool for educational reform. Also, the data suggested factors that inhibit and facilitate implementation in urban public high schools and how the structure and resources of the academy affect its impact on student outcomes.

On the second level, Maxwell and Rubin assess academies' potential to facilitate post-secondary success by analyzing a detailed data set on a group of about 10,000 public high school students along with a survey of

the students' education and labor market activities after high school. Analysis of these data allows the authors to determine: 1) whether career academies in urban high schools increase post-secondary skills and workplace skills, 2) if so, how this increase occurs, 3) the aspects of the academy that improves post-secondary outcomes, and 4) whether career academies are effective for all students and in all school environments.

Among the multiple results drawn from this study, the authors find that career academies have a number of positive, measurable effects. Most significantly, they say, academic skills picked up in a career academy increase the probability of a student pursuing post-secondary education, thereby facilitating labor market success as former students move from school to work. However, career academies cannot substitute motivation and career exposure for academic learning, and they may not be appropriate for all high schools or for all students. Maxwell and Rubin also find that career academy students fare no better than their non-academy counterparts in employment or wages soon after they leave high school.

STEPHEN M. KOHN, *CONCEPTS AND PROCEDURES IN WHISTLEBLOWER LAW* (Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2000. 544 pp. Hardcover: \$99.50).

Litigator, teacher, and scholar Stephen Kohn presents a comprehensive and unified examination of the thirty-five federal laws that protect whistleblowers and their rights, plus the common law protections available in each of the fifty states. For the first time in one easily accessed volume, readers will find the basic principles upon which all whistleblower law is premised. Mr. Kohn lays out the basic legal principles applicable to almost every whistleblower case, such as the scope of protected activity and who qualifies for protection. He shows what constitutes discriminatory conduct, what type of evidence demonstrates that improper retaliation occurred, the burdens of proof on both the employee and employer, how to calculate damages and attorney fees, common settlement and fundamental procedural issues, etc. This is all completed in meticulously documented detail and in a readable and engaging style.

Built upon Mr. Kohn's extensive practical experience and his scholarly research and teaching, not only is the book an essential resource for study and analysis of whistleblowing issues, but it is also a step-by-step guide for conceptualizing and litigating them. Attorneys with specialties in a wide range of fields involving whistleblower law and related policy issues will find a thoughtful, comprehensive examination, and an immediately applicable courtroom aid. This book will also be important for human resource executives, labor union officers and attorneys, government contractors, and recipients of government grants, university and

government libraries, federal agency executives and specialists, public interest and "good government" organizations. Many others will benefit from this publication as well, those who have become fascinated by this relatively new, but long-time coming, branch of the law, how it developed, and how it is being applied today.