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## Book Reviews

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# Book Reviews

LAW IN THE SCHOOLS. By William D. Valente. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1980. Pp. 556. \$19.95

*Reviewed by Thomas N. Jones\**

The inundation of legal involvement in the operation of our nation's secondary school system requires administrators, educators, and attorneys to keep abreast of current and emerging issues in the field. Several books are published each year to aid school law specialists in their efforts to understand the many ramifications of educational law. *Law in the Schools* by William D. Valente is another effort by a legal academician to explain the law to those who possess a special interest in the area.

The book was obviously designed to provide basic knowledge of the law directly affecting public education in the United States. Valente's work is another attempt at a comprehensive text for administrators, attorneys, educators, and students. In general, the author has succeeded in presenting a thorough examination of the major issues facing educational authorities in the 1980's. The book deals with nine general topics, therefore much of the discussion is, by necessity, generalized and superficial. Those school law specialists who desire and need a detailed analysis of a specific area of the law will not find this book very useful. However, those who desire a broad overview of the entire field will discover this text beneficial.

This book is arranged with chapters presenting distinguishable areas of educational law which, when combined, provide the reader with a logical sequence lending itself to a comprehensive understanding of the many elements of school law. The author discusses and analyzes the following topics: (1) public education in the legal structure, (2) the law governing school organization, (3) religion and public education, (4) professional personnel, including a discussion of employment eligibility, employment rights and duties, and collective labor-management relations, (5) student rights and discipline, (6) equal opportunity in public education, (7) tort liability, (8) school

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finance, and (9) private education.

There are several methods by which educators communicate their subject to pupils and there has always been a great deal of controversy over which method produces the greatest educational benefit. In the legal field, it has long been the tradition to use the case method of instruction, while in many other fields of higher education, educators opt for a textbook which utilizes a narrative approach, rather than a strict case-by-case analysis. One of the best features of this book is that the author implements both methods of instruction, and the result is laudable. The contents are primarily a narrative discussion of the general principles of school law, supplemented and explained by illustrative excerpts of recent judicial opinions.

Valente should be awarded a gold star for his organization of the book. Each chapter opens with an outline of the topics covered, usually followed by an introductory paragraph which gives the reader an overview of what information will follow. In addition to the chapter outline, each section of the book opens with a table of cases which enables the reader to get a feel for the chapter prior to the actual reading. The narrative is well written and the author, although a lawyer, avoids the use of unnecessary legal terms which makes the text readable for administrators, educators, and students. The table of contents, general index, and table of cases make this book valuable as a quick reference tool.

The feature that sets this book apart from other comprehensive sourcebooks on school law is the inclusion of several "special feature" sections. The "special features" include the following: (1) selected provisions of the United States Constitution which have particular importance to school law issues, (2) compendiums of major federal statutes, (3) summaries of individual state school codes, and (4) an alphabetical listing of resource materials on selected topics. The latter feature is of particular importance to those working on a research project on a special interest topic.

In conclusion, this book is not a controversial work and the author does not espouse a central theme or reveal his personal assessment of the various issues discussed. Instead, this book simply defines the current status of school law from an unbiased and unemotional viewpoint. I would recommend this book for anyone who desires a basic, fundamental understanding of school law. However, for a more detailed analysis of a given topic, the reader will have to consult another source.