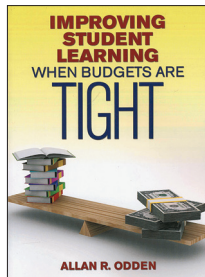


**Improving Student Learning When Budgets Are Tight.** Allan R. Odden. Corwin, 2012, 184 pages.

According to author Allan R. Odden, status quo budgeting will not work in the current high-stakes educational environment. He argues that effective use of educational dollars depends on explicitly linking research about improving schools and student performance with efficient resource-use practices. Such a connection becomes even more important as schools face fiscal constraints and budget cuts. *Improving Student Learning When Budgets Are Tight* provides school leaders with a strategic approach to resource use based on “concrete, specific actions that can be taken now, without major changes in the organization and governance of America’s schools systems.” Odden’s suggestions include both “macro-decisions” (made by states and districts) and “micro-decisions” (made by schools



and classrooms), which he believes will improve educational outcomes, despite reduced budgets. “School[s] can improve learning and teaching using research and best-practice-based strategies that, in many cases, do not require more money but the reallocation of existing resources.” The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter One presents an overview of research about school improvement. Here, Odden also provides his Plan of Action, which contains 12 key education-improvement strategies. While the other five chapters address topics such as resources, strategic budgeting, educator talent, and technology, all issues and suggested decisions are filtered through the lens of the Plan of Action. As a result, each

chapter does not simply suggest ways to reduce budgets or increase resource efficiency, but it also challenges educational leaders to ponder their priorities and practices when considering both short-term and long-term possibilities. Odden, for example, challenges typical class reduction practices and advises this money might be better spent on other resources. He also argues against automatic pay increase for teachers and presents possible alternative salary structures. As a mid-career school administrator, I especially enjoyed his presentation on educator pensions, which include examples of current pension systems and their alternatives. This book, which features easy-to-understand analysis, is an excellent and practical addition to the school improvement literature.

*Reviewed by Jeffrey D. Carroll, principal of J. Blaine Blayton Elementary School in Williamsburg, Virginia.*

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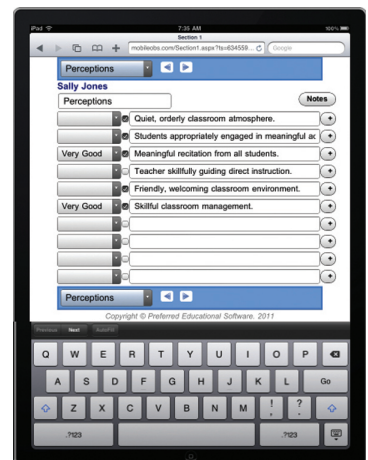
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