**Pay-for-Performance Teacher Compensation: An Inside View of Denver’s ProComp Plan.** Phil Gonring, Paul Teske, and Brad Jupp (Harvard Education Press).

The authors have delivered a straight-shooting, inside account of the design, politics, and implementation of the much-discussed Denver ProComp teacher pay plan—a plan the *Denver Post* termed “the nation’s most ambitious.” Widely regarded as the most substantial departure to date from the traditional “step-and-lane” pay scale, the “Professional Compensation plan for teachers” required Denver’s teachers to vote for a new pay model and local voters to boost taxes by $25 million annually to fund the program. How the plan’s champions won these two unlikely victories forms the backbone of the tale. The book first recounts the technical challenges in reforming teacher pay and the reasons for teacher resistance, then how trial and error, tough negotiation, and assiduous efforts to win hearts and minds convinced teachers to endorse the plan in 2004. Opening with a broad discussion of the case for reforming teacher pay and closing with some reflections on what has been learned thus far, the narrative is detailed, pithy, and highly readable. The volume obviously benefits from the contribution of Brad Jupp, a former Denver Classroom Teachers Association official and a maverick who played a key role in crafting ProComp.

**Charter Schools: Hope or Hype?** Jack Buckley and Mark Schneider (Princeton University Press).

Long before becoming commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, Mark Schneider had embarked with his current deputy, Jack Buckley, on this ambitious, multiyear study of Washington, D.C., charter schools and the families who attend them. They surveyed parents from both charter and traditional public schools on four occasions between 2001 and 2004 and launched an innovative web site that allowed them to track the search behavior of parents seeking out school options. Although they find modest advantages for charters in terms of parental satisfaction, school-based social capital, and civic instruction, they emphasize that these differences—some of which diminished over time—fall well short of the promises made by the charter movement’s most ardent supporters. They also note that parents devoted as much time online to learning about the racial composition of schools as about student achievement. Overall, this is a careful, balanced analysis of a unique new data set on charter schools from a city in which they have made considerable headway. It is unlikely to change anyone’s opinion about charter schooling’s potential as a reform strategy, however, not least because of the lack of information about student achievement.

**The Last Freedom: Religion from the Public School to the Public Square.** Joseph P. Viteritti (Princeton University Press).

Joe Viteritti’s new book is a fresh take on what might at first seem to be a tired topic: the role of religion in America and the state of religious freedom. The author’s bold claim is that a prejudice against religious belief has become legitimized in American life and that those who take religion seriously have become increasingly vulnerable. Many of the controversies explored in this book involve education, and Viteritti makes a strong case for resisting the urge to drive religion from the public (school) square, for allowing religious institutions to perform some public functions, and for granting deeply religious parents greater accommodations when their children attend public schools.

**The Education Mayor: Improving America’s Schools.** Kenneth K. Wong, Francis X. Shen, Dorothea Anagnostopolous, and Stacey Rutledge (Georgetown University Press).

The prose in this volume will appeal more to the citation-enthralled political scientist than to the informed citizen, but the study itself brings together the best available evidence on the consequences of mayoral efforts to reform big-city school systems. Wong and his colleagues make a solid, if still preliminary, case for shifting power away from school boards to a single, elected leader who can be held accountable to a citywide constituency. Combining anecdotal material with quantifiable data from a nationwide sample of large cities, they find positive impacts on both school management and elementary school achievement.