

American Education

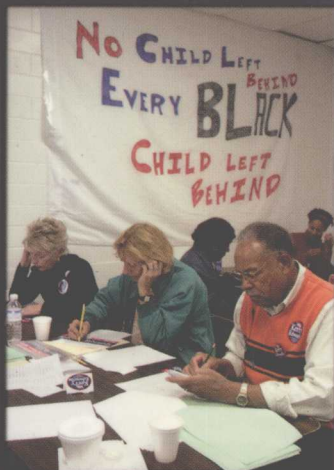
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JOEL SPRING

American Education

TWELFTH EDITION



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AMERICAN EDUCATION

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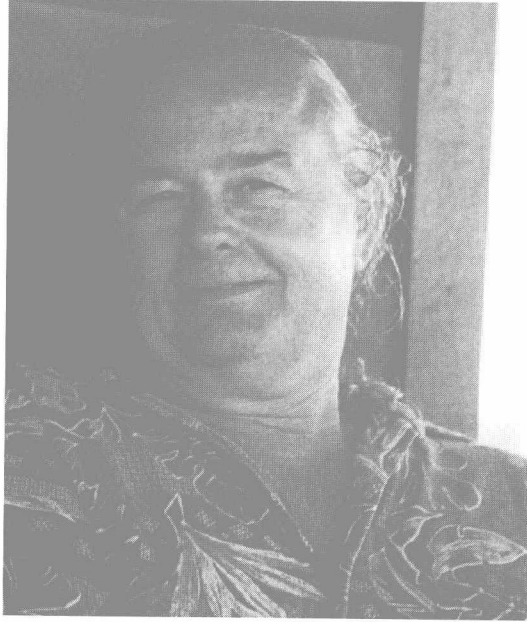
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Preface

The first edition of *American Education* was written from lecture notes used in an Introduction to Education course I was invited to teach at the University of Cincinnati in 1976. Enrollment in the course eventually reached over 900 students. My goal in the course was to provide an understanding of the political, social, and economic forces shaping the direction of American education. The classroom teacher's training, pedagogy, and content of instruction were directly affected by these forces. Also, I believed that the role of teachers extended beyond the classroom to participation in shaping the direction of schools in local communities, state governments, and national politics. I wanted future teachers to know that schools are not isolated from local and national events.

Of course, school policies change over time. By the 1980s, school curricula and pedagogy were being shaped by global economic forces. American education and its teachers were becoming central to debates about globalization. I began revising *American Education* every two years to keep up with the rapid changes in school policies. One factor speeding up change was the discovery by national politicians that education was a good campaign issue. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, American public schools became dominated by federal education policies and by the decisions of national political leaders. Classroom teachers were directly effected by these national policies.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 continues to be central to American education. In this twelfth edition, I have added material on the legislation throughout the book. In addition, I have updated tables. Below is a list of changes and additions to this edition.

Chapter 1

- New discussion of the educational goals of the 2004 Republican, Democratic, and Green party platforms for 2004.

Chapter 2

- Updated census tables on income, race, children's health insurance, and poverty rates.

Chapter 3

- New section entitled “Institutional Racism: Relationship Between Racial Segregation and High School Dropouts.”
- New section entitled “Disparity in Educational Funding Based on Race.”
- New section entitled “Inclusion and No Child Left Behind.”
- Added new 2004 information on decline in graduation rates among black and Hispanic students.

Chapter 4

- New tables and information on foreign-born by world region of birth, population, educational attainment, and nativity; people living below the poverty level by nativity and by world region of birth; language use at home for the U.S. population aged 5 to 17 years; and English ability in non-English-speaking households for students aged 5 to 17 years.

Chapter 6

- New section entitled “Are Charter Schools Failing?”
- New tables and information on the racial, gender, income, and occupational makeup of school boards; numbers and achievement levels of home-schooled children; why people choose home schooling; charter school laws; cyber charter schools; and growth of for-profit educational companies.

Chapter 7

- New section entitled “Does High-Stakes Testing Work?”
- Additional material on cheating on high-stakes tests and the reading wars.

Chapter 8

- New section entitled “Teacher Education and No Child Left Behind.”
- New tables and information on beginning and average teacher salaries and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Chapter 9

- Updating information on textbook and Internet censorship.

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PART ONE

School and Society

The Goals of Public Schooling

Educational goals influence what students learn and how teachers teach. In American education, the political process determines these goals. But the process as we'll see, is anything but straightforward. This chapter will discuss the controversies surrounding educational goals and their effects on teaching and learning.

POLITICAL AGENDAS AS EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Why do we have public schools? Does this sound like a simple question? Consider the educational goals given in the Republican, Democratic, and Green Party 2004 national platforms. In the education section of the 2004 Republican Platform, for example, social organization and the economy are given as the primary goals for public schools:

- "Public education, access for every child to an excellent education is a foundation of a free, civil society."
- "We believe there is an inseparable link between a vibrant economy and a high-quality educational system. . . . Strong schools will . . . produce a workforce with the skills to compete in the 21st economy. We must have citizens capable of conceiving the next generation of new technologies and innovations, mastering the art of analyzing problems and crafting their solutions. Education is the key to prosperity and fulfillment—the foundations on which all other success is built."

What is meant by a "free, civil society" or the "skills to compete in the 21st economy"? Are the Republican Party's educational goals empty rhetoric? No! The Party's goals are closely tied to specific proposals. The relationship between goals and specific educational proposals is also evident in the Democratic Platform, which primarily focuses on economic goals for public schools. The Democratic Platform states:

- “The simple bargain at the heart of the American Dream offers opportunity to every American who takes the responsibility to make the most of it. . . . Today, people compete with workers on every continent. Information flows across oceans. High-wage jobs are more dependent than ever on high-level skills.”
- “Now, as never before, education is the key to opportunity, essential to a strong America. So we believe in an America that offers the best education to all our children—wherever they live, whatever their background. Period.”

Both the Republican and Democratic 2004 platforms stress the importance of preparing students to work in a twenty-first-century economy. But should the emphasis in public schooling be on job preparation? Not according to the educational goals of the 2004 Green Party Platform which emphasizes as educational goals diversity, environmentalism, and promotion of the arts. The Green Platform states:

- “Access to quality education for all Americans is the difference that will lead to a strong and diverse community. . . . Greens support educational diversity. We hold no dogma absolute, continually striving for truth in the realm of ideas. We open ourselves—consciously and intuitively—to truth and beauty in the world of nature.”
- “Freedom of artistic expression is a fundamental right and a key element in empowering communities and moving us toward sustainability and respect for diversity. Artists can create in ways that foster healthy, non-alienating relationships between people and their daily environments, communities, and the Earth.”

The Green Party’s references to “diverse community,” “educational diversity,” “the world of nature,” and “artistic expression” are not mentioned in the Republican or Democratic platforms.

Ralph Nader’s 2004 presidential campaign called for a new civic education in public schools that would foster political activism: “And the government should encourage schools to infuse their curriculum with a citizenship emphasis that teaches students both how to *connect civic skills classroom learning to the outside world and how to practice democracy*.” The Nader campaign claimed that “an emphasis on civics for democracy promises instead to take students from instruction to learning to knowledge to application until the highest educational goal is reached—the sustained onset of educational self-renewal of, by and for the confident, motivated student.” In addition, Nader stressed the importance of doing something about advertising that targets children and turns them into nonthinking consumers: “Children are overwhelmed with marketing images that reduce their attention spans and vocabulary and orient them to an overweening focus on immediate gratification, low-grade sensuality and conspicuous consumption.”

Do these differences in educational goals make any difference in school practices? Consider the Republican and Democratic goal of preparing students for jobs in the twenty-first-century economy. Both political platforms support the educational standards and testing sections of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as the best means for ensuring that students are educated for the new