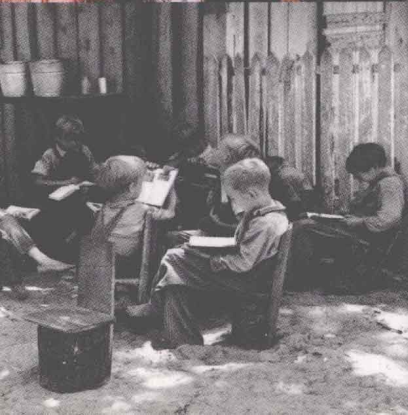
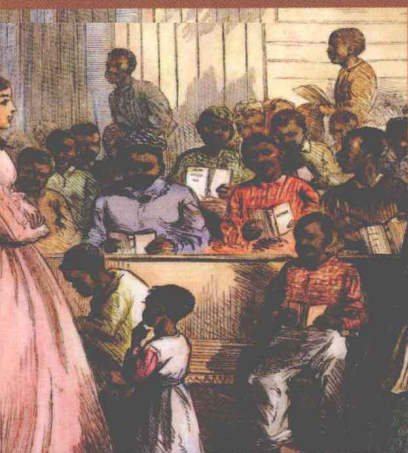


# THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

THE  
PREFACE  
TO  
THE  
COURSE  
1642-2004

*Fool Spring*



*Sixth Edition*



# The American School:

1642–2004

SIXTH EDITION

Joel Spring

Queens College  
City University of New York



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## THE AMERICAN SCHOOL 1642–2004

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 0 9 8 7 6

ISBN: 978-0-07-287566-9

MHID: 0-07-287566-6

Publisher: *Emily Barrosse*

Senior sponsoring editor: *Allison McNamara*

Developmental editor: *Beth Kaufman*

Senior developmental editor: *Cara Harvey*

Executive marketing manager: *Pamela S. Cooper*

Media producer: *Shannon Gattens*

Project manager: *Diane M. Folliard*

Production supervisor: *Tandra Jorgensen*

Designer: *George Kokkonas*

Lead supplement producer: *Marc Mattson*

Manager, Photo research: *Brian Pecko*

Cover and interior design: *Jo Anne Schopler*

Typeface: *10.5/12 Times Roman*

Compositor: *GTS Companies/York, PA Campus*

Printer: *R. R. Donnelley/Crawfordsville*

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Spring, Joel H.

The American school, 1642–2004 / Joel Spring.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of *The American school, 1642–2000*. 5th ed. c2001.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-07-287566-6 (alk. paper)

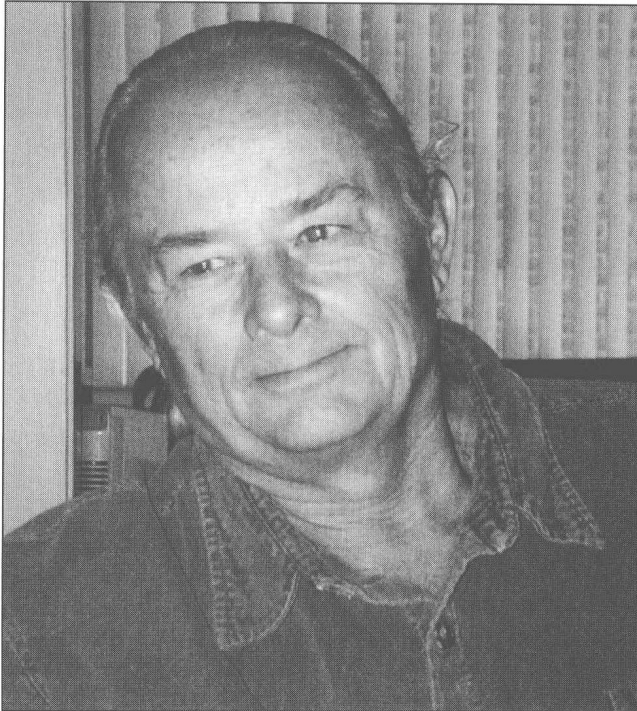
1. Education—United States—History. 2. Education—Social aspects—United States—History. I. Spring, Joel H. American school, 1642–2000. II. Title.

LA205.S64 2005

370'.973—dc22

2003068649

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOEL SPRING received his Ph.D. in educational policy studies from the University of Wisconsin. He is currently a Visiting Professor at Queens College of the City University of New York. His major research interests are the history of education, multicultural education, Native American culture, the politics of education, global education, and human rights education. He is the author of many books. The most recent are *How Educational Ideologies Are Shaping Global Society*; *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy*; *The Universal Right to Education: Justification, Definition, and Guidelines*; *Globalization and Educational Rights*; and *Educating the Consumer Citizen: A History of the Marriage of Schools, Advertising, and Media*.

# PREFACE

In this sixth edition, I have added new sections on home economics and environmental education. Home economics instruction in American schools supported some of America's major contributions to world culture such as consumerism, processed foods, and standardized fast food. Consumerism, the basic thrust of home economics instruction, was an economic argument that citizens should be encouraged to purchase an endless stream of products to stimulate the economy. The development of processed foods was encouraged by home economists who believed that they were the key to reforming the home and freeing women from household drudgery. In addition, children and teenagers were defined as new consumer markets. Environmental education was a reaction to the destructive qualities of consumerist ideology. In the late twentieth century, environmental education introduced a new paradigm that attempted to shift concerns in education from economic growth to sustainable development.

Below is a list of the new sections related to consumerism and environmentalism:

- Chapter 8
  - Home Economics: Education of the New Consumer Woman
  - School Cafeterias, the American Cuisine, and Processed Foods
- Chapter 12
  - Educating Children as Consumers
  - The Creation of Teenage Markets
- Chapter 14
  - Liberating the Textbook Town Housewife for More Consumption
- Chapter 15
  - Environmental Education: The Radical Paradigm
  - The Commercialization of Schools and Education for Consumption
  - Consumer Education
  - Fast-Food Education
  - Textbooks: Environmentalism as the New Enemy

Also in this sixth edition, I have added new sections on attempts by outside groups to directly influence the content of instruction. Of particular importance was the growth of the public relations industry, which considered the schools a natural arena for building positive attitudes toward their clients, particularly commercial enterprises. Sometimes this resulted in efforts to censor public school textbooks.

Educators' and parents' worrying about the effect of media and comic books on children's minds led to other forms of censorship.

Below is a list of new sections related to public relations and censorship:

- Chapter 11
  - Selling the "American Way" in Schools and on Billboards
  - Propaganda and Free Speech in the Schools
  - Textbook Censorship and the American Way
  - Rugg and Advertising
- Chapter 12
  - Controlling the Influence of Comic Books

I also expanded my historical sections on African American education, as indicated in the following list:

- Chapter 2
  - Enslaved Africans: Atlantic Creoles
  - Enslaved Africans: The Plantation System
- Chapter 5
  - Slavery and Freedom in the North: African Americans and Schools in the New Republic
  - Learning in the Plantation System
- Chapter 14
  - The Coloring of Textbook Town

Of course, no update would be complete without a discussion of the history of the revolutionary twenty-first-century legislation No Child Left Behind. I discuss this legislation in

- Chapter 15
  - No Child Left Behind: Testing and the Continuation of the Culture Wars

Readers of previous editions will notice major changes in the book's organization. To develop a more chronological approach to the history of the American school, I have integrated the fifth edition's chapters (Chapters 3, 8, 9, and 10) devoted to Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and African Americans into other chapters in the sixth edition. The content of these previous chapters can now be found in Chapters 2, 5, 7, and 8 of the sixth edition.

A special thanks goes to the instructors who provided feedback on the text:

Judy Arnold, Lincoln Memorial University

Robert Farrell, Florida International University

Denise Herschbach, University of Maryland

Anne Meis Knupfer, Purdue University

Otilia Salmon, University of North Florida

Ann Whitaker, Northeastern Illinois University

Sheryl McGlamery, University of Nebraska at Omaha

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# Thinking Critically about History: Ideological Management, Culture Wars, and Consumerism

I wrote this book with the intention of combining a particular approach to teaching history with a broader perspective on the content of the history of education. The reader will be presented with a variety of historical interpretations and historical issues. The presentation of material in this fashion allows the reader to think about history instead of passively receiving facts. The reader should decide which interpretation of history is correct.

The most important interpretive question is “**Why?**” For example: Why were public schools established? Historians might agree on dates and personalities involved in historical events, but they might not agree about motives. Were public schools established to ensure that all citizens would be able to protect their political and economic rights? Were public schools established to protect the power of an elite by controlling the economic and political ideas taught to students? Were public schools established to ensure the dominance of Protestant Anglo-American culture over Native American, Irish American, and African American cultures? Were public schools necessary to ensure the education of the whole population? These questions raise issues that are debated in the writing of history.

The answers to these questions have important implications for a person’s future choices and actions. The answers shape images and feelings about the past. Many people do not remember the details of history, but they do develop images and emotions about past events. For instance, the attitudes and feelings about public schools of a person who concludes that public schools were established to protect the political and economic rights of citizens will be quite different from the attitudes of a person who concludes that public schools were established to protect the political and economic power of an elite. Or if a person concludes that the establishment of public schools was necessary for the education of all children, then that person’s attitudes regarding privatization of schools will be quite different from those of someone who concludes the opposite.

Thinking about history involves an intellectual consideration of conflicting interpretations, emotions, and images of public schools. For example, at an early age a person might be taught a history that is designed to foster an emotional attachment, in the form of patriotism, to the political and economic organization of the United States. Later in life this person's emotional feelings about the United States might be challenged if the person reads a critical history.

One's knowledge, images, and emotions regarding the past have an impact on future actions. Individuals often make decisions based on what they believe to be the historical purposes and goals of an institution. The varieties of interpretations presented in this book provide the reader with an opportunity to judge past events and think about future actions. Like historians who weave together the drama of the past, consumers of history have their own political and social opinions. By engaging in an intellectual dialogue with the historical text, readers should be able to clarify their opinions about educational institutions and about the relationship of education to other institutions and to social events.

## **THERE IS NO CORRECT OR RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY**

---

Unfortunately, there is no right answer but only differing opinions about which historical interpretation is correct. *You must make decisions* based on your own social and political values. My goal is to provide a variety of ways of viewing educational history. You might find some of these interpretations personally offensive. I think that would be a good reaction because it would result in critical thinking about history and schools.

## **THEMATIC TIME LINES**

---

In order to focus on particular sets of related events in educational history, I have written thematic chapters rather than a purely sequential account. Because many of the chapters are thematic and cover similar periods of time, at various intervals in the book I provide time lines to help the reader understand the sequencing of events.

## **MY PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

---

This book contains a variety of historical interpretations, but it is dominated by what *I* consider to be important historical themes. These themes are my interpretative perspective. Just as you evaluate other perspectives referred to in the book, *you must decide* whether my interpretative framework is correct.



My interpretative framework includes these themes:

- A major part of the history of U.S. schools involves conflicts over cultural domination.
- Schools are one of many institutions that attempt to manage the distribution of ideas in society. I call this process *ideological management*.
- Racism is a central issue in U.S. history and in educational history.
- Economic issues are an important factor in understanding the evolution of U.S. schools.
- Currently, consumerism and environmental education are pressing issues in the evolution of human society.

In the remainder of this chapter I will elaborate on each of these elements of my interpretative framework.

## **CULTURAL DOMINATION AS A CENTRAL THEME IN EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

---

A major part of the history of U.S. public schools is the attempt to ensure the domination of a Protestant Anglo-American culture in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The struggle over cultural domination in the United States began with the English invasion of North America in the sixteenth century and continues today in the debate over multiculturalism.

“Culture wars”—the term originated in the work of Ira Shor—are a distinguishing characteristic of American history.<sup>2</sup> English colonists declared their superiority over Native American cultures and attempted to impose their culture on Native Americans. Finding English culture to be exploitative and repressive, Native Americans resisted attempts by colonists to transform their cultures. The hope of the leaders of the newly formed United States government was to create a national culture that would be unified around Protestant Anglo-American values. One reason for the nineteenth-century development of public schools was to ensure the dominance of Anglo-American values that were being challenged by Irish immigration, Native Americans, and African Americans. Public schools became defenders of Anglo-American values with each new wave of immigrants. In the twentieth century, the culture wars were characterized by Americanization programs, civil rights movements demanding representation of minority cultures in public schools, and the multicultural debate.

The concept of cultural perspective is important for understanding the culture wars. For instance, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some Native Americans decided that literacy might be an important tool for protecting their tribal lands and culture. In contrast, many whites considered the education of Native Americans as a means for acquiring Native American lands and transforming Native American cultures. This difference in perspective resulted both in major misunderstandings and in a cultural war that continues to the present.