TRACY L. STEFFES

SCHOOL, SOCIETY, & STATE

A NEW EDUCATION TO GOVERN MODERN AMERICA, 1890–1940

TRACY L. STEFFES

School, Society, & State

A NEW EDUCATION TO GOVERN MODERN AMERICA, 1890–1940

The University of Chicago Press   Chicago and London

Tracy L. Steffes is assistant professor of education and history at Brown University.

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 2012 by The University of Chicago
All rights reserved. Published 2012.
Printed in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12   1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-77209-7 (cloth)
ISBN-10: 0-226-77209-8 (cloth)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Steffes, Tracy Lynn.
School, society, and state : a new education to govern modern America, 1890–1940 / Tracy L. Steffes.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-77209-7 (cloth : alkaline paper)
ISBN-10: 0-226-77209-8 (cloth : alkaline paper)
1. Educational change—United States—History—20th century. 2. Education and state—United States—History—20th century. 3. School management and organization—United States—History—20th century. 4. Schools—Centralization—United States—History—20th century. 5. Education, Compulsory—United States—History—20th century. 6. Democracy and education—United States—History—20th century. 7. Educational sociology—United States—History—20th century. I. Title.
LC191.4.S74 2012
379.73—dc23   2011032763

⊗ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

School, Society, & State

For my parents, Richard and Mary Jo Steffes

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have accumulated many debts in the years it has taken me to write this book. I owe the largest to my parents, Richard and Mary Jo Steffes, who have been unfailing in their support, encouragement, and patience through what has sometimes felt like endless years of schooling, research, and writing. They have inspired me to work hard, to strive for balance in life, and to follow my passions even when they lead to something as foolish as graduate school in history. I am also enormously grateful to the rest of my family for their love and support, including my grandmother Elaine Steffes; my siblings, Brian, Julie, and Maryann Steffes; my best friend, Kara Brooklier, who has become family over the years; and the entire extended clan of Steffeses and Hollicks. Thanks for keeping me grounded and reminding me of what is important.

I am also indebted to the many wonderful teachers I have had over the years. Teachers at every level have inspired, encouraged, and guided me in innumerable ways: from Adele Solomon, Kimberly Voss, and John Bassett at Chippewa Valley public schools to Janet Coryell, John Houdek, and Paul Meier at Western Michigan University; to Amy Dru Stanley, Kathleen Conzen, Mae Ngai, George Chauncey, and William Novak at the University of Chicago. I owe a special debt to William Novak, my dissertation adviser, who has always pushed me to ask big questions, offered constructive feedback and practical guidance, and provided positive encouragement when I needed it most. It was Bill who started me on the path to this book. After shooting down all of my other ideas for a seminar paper, he observed that there might be potential in civics and school reform as a research topic and encouraged me to pursue it.

I am also enormously grateful to two other teachers and friends who have offered unwavering support and guidance, Jonathan Zimmerman and Carl Kaestle. With characteristic energy and generosity, Jon has read countless drafts, provided invaluable advice at crucial moments, and offered steady support and encouragement. I will consider it a great success if I can

become half as good of a teacher and mentor as Jon is to all of his graduate students and adopted advisees. Carl Kaestle welcomed me to Providence with warmth and enthusiasm and has been exceedingly generous with his time, advice, and friendship. I cannot express how much I have appreciated and enjoyed our lunchtime conversations that have ranged from research and teaching, to education policy, to sailing and singing. Jon and Carl are models of how to balance rigorous scholarship, commitment to high-quality teaching and advising, and a rich and robust life outside of work. I am deeply grateful to both of them.

I have also been fortunate to have fantastic colleagues in graduate school and since who have enriched my work and my life while doing it. Thank you for great conversation, feedback, and inspiration in reading groups, workshops, and coffeehouses and bars throughout Chicago to Joanna Grisinger, Kyle Volk, Lisa Andersen, Matthew Perry, Emily Brunner, Karrin Hanshew, Sean Forner, Moira Hinderer, Matthew Miliken, Grant Madsen, Laurel Spindel, Stephen Porter, and Erik Gellman. I also appreciate the intellectual and social community I have found since graduate school at Brown, national conferences, academic centers, and especially at the annual meetings of the History of Education Society, including but not limited to Hilary Moss, Joan Malczewski, Sarah Manekin, Leah Gordon, Daniel Amsterdam, Karen Benjamin, Marc VanOverbeke, Diana D'Amico, Heather Lewis, Amy Lippert, Jason Sharples, T. Austin Graham, Thomas Crocker, Heather Tresslar, and Coleman Hutchison.

I am also grateful to many scholars, colleagues, and friends who have offered critical feedback on this project at various stages. I owe special thanks to Michael Katz, Mitchell Stevens, Hilary Moss, Jonathan Zimmerman, Carl Kaestle, Joanna Grisinger, and the anonymous press reviewers for reading the entire manuscript and providing constructive feedback and suggestions. I am also indebted to Kyle Volk, Joan Malczewski, Luther Spoehr, Patricia Spacks, Amy Lippert, and Thomas Crocker for careful readings of the introduction and sections of the book. Thank you also to commentators and audiences at conferences and workshops who have helped me to refine my ideas along the way, especially Brian Balogh, James Sparrow, Elisabeth Clemens, Thomas Sugrue, Christine Ogren, Maris Vinovskis, Ellen Lagemann, and William Reese. In addition, I owe a special thank you to Robert Devens at the University of Chicago Press for believing in the project, offering helpful feedback, and deftly guiding it to publication.

I am also indebted to generous financial support that has enabled me to research the book and given me time to write it. I could not have completed the research without fellowships and travel grants from the University of Chicago, Brown University's Richard T. Salomon Faculty Research Fund,

the Rockefeller Archive Center, and the National Parent-Teacher Association. I have also been fortunate to receive fellowships that have not only given me the support to write fulltime but also introduced me to other junior scholars that have enriched this writing. Thank you to the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, the Social Science Research Council Program on Philanthropies and the Non-Profit Sector, the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship program, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Visiting Scholars program.

Brown University has been a wonderful place to research and teach. I appreciate the intellectual stimulation, guidance, support, and community provided by colleagues in the education and history departments. I am particularly grateful to Kenneth Wong, Luther Spoehr, John Tyler, Cynthia Garcia Coll, and Jin Li in education and to Nancy Jacobs, Tara Nummedal, Omer Bartov, Kenneth Sacks, and the entire Americanist history faculty: Howard Chudacoff, Linford Fisher, Elliott Gorn, Francoise Hamlin, Karl Jacoby, Seth Rockman, Robert Self, Naoko Shiwashabi, and Michael Vorenberg. Friends and colleagues outside of my departments have also made Providence a great place to live and work. Thanks in particular to Savvas Koushiappas for helping me to try to visualize state power and to Edel Minogue, Meredith Hastings, Deborah Rivas Drake, Masha Ryskin, and the whole happy-hour crew for many enjoyable nights.

Last but by no means least, I am grateful to the wonderful undergraduate students I have had at Brown with whom I have discussed many of the ideas in this book. They have made teaching a constant pleasure and learning experience. I am particularly indebted to terrific student research assistants who worked with me during summers and semesters to collect and analyze scores of court cases, newspapers, and reports: Alice Costas, Kaley Curtis, Lauren Faulkner, Jamal Hill, Mark Robbins, Kimberly Spanier, and William Tatum. Thanks to Brown's Undergraduate Teaching and Research Awards (UTRA), which made some of this work possible.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

Introduction 1

ONE *Urban School Reform, Professionalization, and the Science of Education* 15

TWO *The Rural School Problem and the Complexities of National Reform* 47

THREE *Redefining State Responsibility in Education* 83

FOUR *Public Interest and Parental Authority in the Compulsory School* 119

FIVE *Creating Citizens and Workers: Curriculum Reform and the Aims of Education in a Democracy* 155

Conclusion: School, Society, and State 195

NOTES 211 INDEX 269

Introduction

When Edward Nolan knocked on the door of Elma De Lease in December 1916, he provoked a violent confrontation that ultimately landed them both in court. Nolan was the attendance officer for the school district in Malborough, New York, and he had received a complaint from a local teacher that twelve-year-old Edward De Lease was absent from school yet again. The boy had attended only fourteen days within the previous ten weeks. His mother claimed he had tonsillitis, but she refused to provide a doctor's note, and neighbors reported seeing the boy riding on horseback and running errands for her in town that morning, several miles away. A few decades earlier, De Lease's refusal to send her son to school would have been regarded by local school officials and the state of New York as her common-law prerogative. In 1916, however, Elma De Lease ran afoul of new state laws requiring parents to send their children to school until age fourteen. Attendance officers like Nolan, hired and supervised by local school boards, were at the center of new efforts to enforce state attendance laws in the early twentieth century, and they were invested with broad legal authority to investigate absences, apprehend truants, and prosecute parents.

Attendance officers could often use persuasion, backed by the threat of legal prosecution, to secure parents' compliance with the law, but Elma De Lease would not be persuaded to send Edward to school that day. After the verbal conflict escalated, Officer Nolan decided to break the standoff with a show of force. He grabbed Edward and tried to drag him from the house, but his mother took hold of her son and refused to let go. Unable to pry Edward from his mother's arms, Nolan wrapped a chain around Elma De Lease's arm to force her to release the boy, injuring her in the process. Two other household members—De Lease's sister and a boarder—tried to intervene, but Nolan succeeded in wresting Edward away, hauling him out of the house, and delivering him to school.

Elma De Lease responded by suing Nolan for trespassing and assault. The trial jury awarded her damages, but the New York Supreme Court

overturned the decision and in a striking rebuke warned that *she* could be prosecuted for interfering with the performance of the officer's duty. According to the court, Nolan had the right and duty under the state compulsory attendance law to enter De Lease's home and take the boy into custody, for "the State is sovereign in the matter of attendance of a child at school. The dominion of the State is absolute as far as attendance upon instruction is concerned during the ages prescribed."[1]

While the physicality of the encounter was exceptional—most attendance officers did not have to literally wrestle children out of the arms of their parents—the principle it articulated was not. Public schools were state institutions, state courts throughout the nation ruled at the turn of the century, and state legislatures had a compelling interest in and expansive authority over them on behalf of the public welfare. Officer Nolan's insistence that Elma De Lease send her son Edward to school according to state statute reflected a new, more assertive claim of state authority over local schools and over children themselves in the early twentieth century.

State constitutions had long invested state legislatures with legal responsibility to maintain public schools, but throughout the nineteenth century legislatures had discharged this duty by empowering local districts and giving them wide latitude to manage their own schools. Beginning at the turn of the century, however, and especially after World War I, state legislatures and growing state departments of education were pressured from above and below to take a stronger role in governing public schools. Reformers operating at local, state, and national levels turned to schools to address a host of concerns stemming from the great social and economic transformations of the era, including problems of social cohesion and community, changes in the nature of work, and growing economic stratification brought about by industrialization and urbanization. In the process they defined children's education and welfare as a public interest that transcended the family and community and justified new state interventions. Professionalizing educators and an array of groups from outside the school pressured state legislatures to expand state and county supervision of schools, increase state fiscal support, articulate new statutory requirements and minimum standards, and develop new mechanisms for standardizing schools and coordinating them into systems. They aimed to diffuse modern school reforms and to promote equal educational opportunity, which they defined as access to an adequate, minimum education for all throughout the state.

As the conflict at De Lease's doorstop shows, however, state legislatures did not always assert their authority directly. Although compulsion was a policy defined by state statute, legislatures delegated its enforcement to local school districts. Hired and supervised by the local school district, Nolan

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com

answered to local school officials who determined how vigorously to enforce the law on the basis of community sentiment. In this and other school policies, state legislatures and departments of education defined goals and standards over time and then worked with local districts, voluntary groups, and other nonstate actors to accomplish them. Local districts retained considerable authority to manage and finance their schools, and their role in implementing state policy meant that it varied across space, sometimes considerably. Yet state interventions subtly reshaped and circumscribed local control. Local schools found themselves increasingly embedded in coordinated state systems, governed by new standards and accreditation policies, dependent on state funds that came with strings attached, and beholden to state leadership and aid to implement reforms. By working with and through local districts rather than administering policies directly, state governments were often able, slowly but surely, to get local districts to invest in state goals and policies without generating hostility to state imposition.

The confrontation between De Lease and Nolan also dramatized ways in which school reform, particularly the deepening state role and claims of public responsibility, transformed the public school as a governing institution. In the nineteenth century, schooling was only one of many ways that parents educated their children and school attendance was often casual and intermittent; it supplemented education received in the home, work, church, and community to transmit literacy and basic intellectual skills and build character. The compulsory, twentieth-century state school, on the other hand, expanded public oversight over children's education and invested the school with primary responsibilities for socialization; it pursued more ambitious aims to develop and adjust youths for modern society and economy in the public interest.

Through compulsory attendance policies, state legislatures and local officials extended public power over children and households. They attached new regulations and intervened in decisions about children's education, health, labor, and welfare that had once been wholly private household matters, such as whether to send children to work or school or what constituted a legitimate illness. Elma De Lease learned firsthand that this public interest in schooling could quite literally cross the threshold of the home and challenge traditional parental authority. Often unacknowledged by reformers at the time and neglected by scholars since—but utterly unforgettable to parents like De Lease—schools were state-building projects that expanded the institutions and authority of government.

By 1916, when Nolan and De Lease fought over the state's attendance law, compulsory attendance had become effectively a national policy

despite the absence of a federal government role. State legislatures in nearly every state had passed compulsory attendance statutes and in the process had borrowed statutory language, enforcement techniques, and attendance practices from examples in other places and from a burgeoning national educational policy conversation. Throughout the nation, states and localities addressed common problems and converged on common solutions. Despite legal control at state and local levels, American education came to appear so uniform, both structurally and functionally, that many Americans perceived and spoke of a national "system" in their midst.

A wide array of groups fostered this national discussion and diffusion of reforms. Professionalizing educators formed national ties through new associations, conferences, publications, networks, and university training programs, and also developed a science of education that provided a common language and models to which states and localities often turned. In addition, a variety of national actors played important roles in spreading school reforms: philanthropic foundations like the Rockefeller-funded General Education Board; reform organizations like the National Child Labor Conference; voluntary societies and interest groups including the General Federation of Women's Clubs and American Federation of Labor; and universities with national standing like Columbia's Teachers College. Some were self-conscious nation builders who saw education as a national project. Others were focused on their particular state or community or a particular reform goal—the problem of child labor or Americanization, the benefits of vocational education, the need for a modern school building—and turned to expert solutions or examples from other places. Although schooling was not a federal government project, it nevertheless became a national policy issue as national, state, and local players spread reforms around the United States and converged on shared practices in both deliberate and wholly unanticipated ways.

This emerging national policy conversation reflected a conscious and unconscious turn to schools as a national social policy strategy to address the social consequences of industrialization. While public school advocates had long touted schooling's social benefits, reformers around the turn of the century began to work in more systematic and focused ways to expand the social responsibilities of schools and define investment in education as a solution to social problems. For example, clubwomen, laborers, and medical professionals looked to public schools to safeguard children's health. They lobbied schools to add health study to the curriculum, established new health regulations such as mandatory vaccination, and added new services such as school meals, medical inspection, and supervised play. Laborers, child welfare advocates, and other reformers turned to schools

to address problems of child labor, poverty, and economic instability. They supported expansion of high schools, introduction of vocational courses and guidance, and compulsory attendance policies in order to steer children away from unskilled, low-paying, dead-end jobs by equipping them to make wise decisions.

Concerns about democracy suffused many of these reform efforts throughout the period and came to the forefront of public discussion during and after World War I. Many commentators and reformers worried about how to define and protect individual freedom—the central value of democracy—in a world where individual autonomy and opportunity seemed to be retreating in the midst of increasing economic stratification, class conflict, and large-scale organization of the economy, society, and government. They increasingly looked to the already expanding and modernizing public school system to address democratic concerns about individual freedom as well as democratic community, social cohesion, and self-government. Public schools would safeguard the democratic freedom of the individual and the stability of the democratic state, reformers asserted, by guaranteeing access to educational opportunities that would equip them as workers and citizens to thrive in the new society and economy and instill civic and social values. In the postwar period, reformers mobilized behind calls to provide "equal educational opportunity": they wanted to guarantee that more students would have access to schooling and that students would undertake more schooling, all the way through high school; define minimum standards; reshape the school program to meet the needs of a diverse student body; and offer services and interventions to ameliorate barriers to attendance.

The effort seemed to bear fruit. By the end of the 1930s, Americans pointed with pride to the rapid expanse of schooling, particularly the high school or "people's college," as an expression and guarantee of American democracy. While it had been an elite endeavor in the nineteenth century, serving only 4 percent of adolescents, by 1940 public high schools educated over 50 percent of American youths. By 1940, more kids attended school for longer periods of time than ever before: elementary education was nearly universal (over 90 percent) for all ethnic groups in all regions of the country when it had previously been so only for Northern whites, and average daily attendance had nearly doubled from its 1890 levels, from 86 days per year to 152 days per year. New curricular differentiation, extracurricular activities, and pupil adjustment services purported to offer democratic adaptations to meet individual needs and recognize individual differences.[2]

Yet this vision of equal educational opportunity was limited. Not all groups were included on equal terms in this project in either theory or

practice. African Americans in segregated Southern schools, for example, were usually left behind in the project of school building as resources were disproportionately distributed to white schools. Equality of opportunity, reformers were quick to point out, did not mean the *same* opportunities for all but rather access to an acceptable minimum education to prepare youths as good citizens, workers, and community members. What constituted an adequate minimum level of education for black Southern agricultural laborers was consequently different than that for white middle-class urbanites. Reformers' efforts to promote equal educational opportunity were also limited by their reliance on local control, and particularly local property tax, which virtually guaranteed educational disparities in resources because of the unequal distribution of wealth. Despite a rhetoric that sounded universalistic, reformers in practice accepted differences and inequalities in education as inevitable and acceptable.

In a period of tremendous change and uncertainty that prompted many European nations to create new social insurance programs, Americans invested heavily in schooling, fiscally and emotionally, to address the social tensions and risks of industrialization, to safeguard democracy, and to provide for the individual and collective welfare of citizens. Reliance upon schooling was a social policy choice, made sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, which reflected American social policy preferences and values. This choice has often been overlooked by scholars who have tended to view American social policy as weak and laggard compared to Europe and who have sought explanations for the underdevelopment of the American welfare state. European nation-states reconciled democracy with industrial capitalism by socializing risk and constructing a social safety net for all citizens, laying the foundation of modern welfare states beginning in the late nineteenth century. Social reformers seeking to enact similar policies in the United States usually met with failure until the emergency of the Great Depression, but even New Deal policies usually described as the foundations of the American welfare state (such as Social Security) were far less universal and generous than similar policies abroad. However, in taking European policies as the normative model, scholars have overemphasized American failures to act and in the process have missed the social policy initiatives Americans *did* undertake.[3]

Americans chose education. Public schooling was arguably *the* American public investment of the early twentieth century. Americans spent generously on their schools, increasing school expenditures from $141 million per year in 1890 to $2.3 billion per year by 1940 in constant dollars, more than a sixteenfold increase. By 1940, public schooling shaped the everyday lives of 875,000 teachers and school employees and over twenty-five million chil-

dren who were enrolled in school. Schooling was the largest expenditure of state and local governments, averaging between one-quarter and one-third of their combined outlays throughout the period. In 1940, when state and local governments spent $9.2 billion for all purposes, they spent $2.3 billion on public elementary and secondary education, which represented half of all social welfare expenditures as defined by the U.S. census. One of the most outstanding expressions of this public commitment was found in expansion of free public high schools. The United States was the first nation on earth to make secondary schooling a mass institution. In 1940 when over 50 percent of American adolescents attended publicly supported high schools, fewer than 20 percent of their European counterparts did so, and in 1955 when American high school attendance reached almost 80 percent, no nation in Europe surpassed 40 percent.[4]

As a social policy choice for addressing the consequences of industrial capitalism, education was a limited strategy. It channeled social problems into schools, which could not hope to fix them, and ignored the ways in which social and economic structures outside schools shaped and limited what they could do. Schools might provide students with vocational guidance and training to make wise choices, for example, but they could not solve the problems of poverty and insecurity that resulted from the large number of unskilled, low-paying, dead-end jobs that industrial capitalism produced. Schools could prepare youths for better jobs, but this did not provide any actual opportunity if racial or gender discrimination, labor market stratification, or family need prevented people from pursuing them. Rhetoric about the democratic opportunity of schooling obscured these barriers and presented schooling as a project of individual effort and merit; failures were individual rather than structural.

This book argues that school reform was a major project of national state-building, a public governing response to the tensions of democracy and capitalism in modernizing America. Enacted from the top down and bottom up in ways both planned and improvised, school reform expanded the institutions, the reach, and the authority of the state, including both state-level government and public power operating at all levels of American governance. School reform was a national but not a federal social policy: reformers defined education as a national interest, spread reforms across the nation, and produced a new national policy arena and conversation. This heavy fiscal and emotional investment in public schooling to safeguard the democratic freedom of the individual reflected an American social policy preference for bolstering individualism rather than socializing risk as a way to address the democratic and social tensions of industrialization. This choice had important consequences. It legitimated American democracy

and placed responsibility for meeting social policy goals and aspirations to schools, which were often ill equipped to actually solve them. It also obscured the extent to which opportunity was stratified and unequal and schools could serve to deepen these inequities.

In a series of lectures titled "School and Society," delivered in 1899, philosopher John Dewey explained how his experimental Laboratory School fit into the context of wide-ranging educational reforms and experiments taking shape. "The obvious fact is that our social life has undergone a thorough and radical change," he observed. "If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation." This transformation was already in progress, he noted, and could be seen in new efforts to reshape school pedagogy, curriculum, administration, and organization. These efforts to frame a "New Education," Dewey concluded, were "as much an effort to meet the needs of the new society that is forming, as are changes in modes of industry and commerce." School reform was a response to the larger social and industrial changes of the era and an effort to develop and socialize individuals for this new environment. As urbanization and industrial change transformed older agencies of socialization like the home, church, work, and small local community, Dewey argued, schools should assume more responsibility for socializing children into an ever-changing society.[5]

By framing the problem as one of "school and society," however, reformers at the time and most historians since then have missed the role of the *state* at the center of this relationship. "The state" in this context means both state-level government and the myriad ways in which public governing power was deployed in the American nation-state. The school's power as a social institution came in large part from the public power and purposes that animated it. School reform and expansion reflected a major project of state-building and governance that extended public authority into households and pursued social policy goals through education.[6]

Putting the state back into examinations of school and society recasts the history of education and the period. First, it draws attention to the legal and political framework of schooling, particularly the role of state government. In histories of education of this and other periods, local case studies have dominated and tend to narrate reform as a local story. However, state constitutions, case law, legislation, and administrative policies structured the context in which local schools operated and the rules of the game by which they played, even in cities where the state's hand was often less visible. In

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com