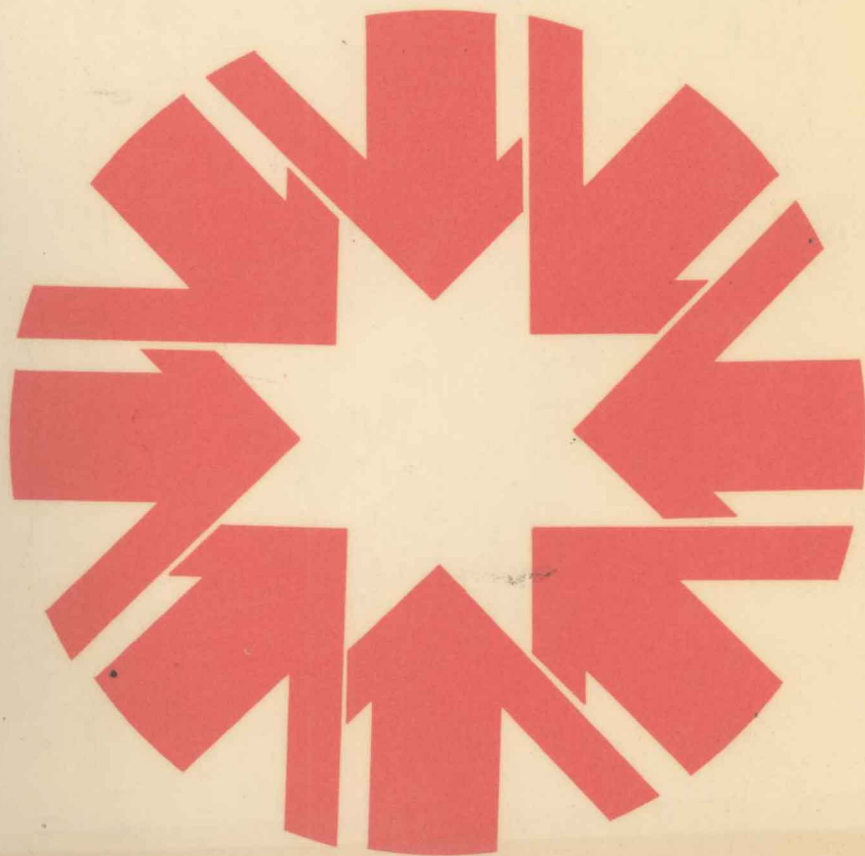


# Education Politics for the New Century

Edited by  
Douglas E Mitchell and  
Margaret E Goertz



The Falmer Press

Education Policy Perspectives Series

# **Education Politics for the New Century**

**The Twentieth Anniversary Yearbook of the  
Politics of Education Association**

Edited by

**Douglas E. Mitchell**

University of California at Riverside

and

**Margaret E. Goertz**

Educational Testing Service



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# Education Politics for the New Century

# Education Policy Perspectives

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Education policy analysis has long been a neglected area in the UK and, to an extent, in the USA and Australia. The result has been a profound gap between the study of education and the formulation of education policy. For practitioners, such a lack of analysis of new policy initiatives has worrying implications, particularly at a time of such policy flux and change. Education policy has, in recent years, been a matter for intense political debate – the political and public interest in the working of the system has come at the same time as the breaking of the consensus on education policy by the New Right. As never before, political parties and pressure groups differ in their articulated policies and prescriptions for the education sector. Critical thinking about these developments is clearly imperative.

All those working within the system also need information on policy-making, policy implementation and effective day-to-day operation. Pressure on schools from government, education authorities and parents has generated an enormous need for knowledge amongst those on the receiving end of educational policies.

This Falmer Press series aims to fill the academic gap, to reflect the politicalization of education, and to provide the practitioners with the analysis for informed implementation of policies that they will need. It offers studies in broad areas of policy studies, with a particular focus on the following areas: school organization and improvement; critical social analysis; policy studies and evaluation; and education and training.

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## *Acknowledgments*

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Completing this Twentieth Anniversary Yearbook for the Politics of Education Association leaves us with a real sense of satisfaction at having explored the frontiers of school politics and identified the features that will dominate the landscape of scholarly research and analysis for the remainder of the century. We are particularly grateful to the scholars who have written the eight invited chapters. They responded to our invitation to participate with enthusiasm for the project and with grace when we had to press for closure on the final text. We are also grateful to William Boyd who, as president of the Politics of Education Association, conceptualized the need for a book that takes a prospective look at issues and forces that will dominate politics in years to come. Without Bill's leadership this project would not have been clearly conceptualized and might never have been completed.

We have some others to thank for tireless and careful copy editing and bibliographic research needed to turn draft chapters into final manuscripts. In particular, we are grateful to several key staff members at the California Educational Research Cooperative at the University of California, Riverside. Jane Zykowski, Dana Sowers and several of the CERC research fellows proof read manuscripts and helped organize production of final copy. And especially, we want to express our appreciation to Robin Myers who did yeoman duty as bibliographer and to Tedi K. Mitchell who served as final copy editor and communications co-ordinator to help authors to get final editorial revisions into the text.

*DEM and MEG.*

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The **Politics of Education Association (PEA)** promotes the development and dissemination of research and debate on educational policy and politics. **PEA** brings together scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers interested in educational governance and politics; is affiliated as a Special Interest Group with the American Educational Research Association (AERA); and meets each spring in conjunction with AERA's annual meeting. The annual membership dues for **PEA** are \$US20.00. Members receive a copy of the annual Yearbook and the *Politics of Education Bulletin*, which includes news on member activities and occasional short scholarly pieces. Membership dues should be sent to Robert Wimpelberg, **PEA**, College of Education, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148, USA.

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## *Education Politics For The New Century: introduction and overview*

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*Margaret E. Goertz*  
*Educational Testing Service*

The year 1989 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Politics of Education Association (PEA). The PEA was founded by a small group of political researchers at the 1969 meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). It has remained an AERA special interest group (SIG) ever since, serving as a discussion forum and collegial organization for scholars and policy professionals interested in the dynamics of school program and policy formation. Initially, the PEA had few members and generated only modest interest among the broader AERA membership. Over its twenty year history, however, the political foundations of schools have become obvious to all. As a result, PEA members have become widely recognized as sophisticated analysts and reliable consultants on the problems and prospects of school improvement and reform.

This yearbook, *Education Politics for the New Century*, commemorates the PEA's first twenty years. Rather than take the usual retrospective look at the developments responsible for the current state of affairs, we have chosen to focus on the forces that will shape education politics and policy into the twenty-first century. This introductory chapter examines the changing social, economic, technological and political environment shaping education politics for the twenty-first century, and provides an overview of the contents of the book.

### **The changing environment of education politics**

Education politics in the twenty-first century will be shaped by fundamental changes in its social, economic, technological and political environment. Twenty years ago, education was just reaching the end of a quarter century of rapid growth. As the post-war baby boom generation matured, reducing population pressure on the schools, education achieved fiscal stability just as political pressure for change began to expand rapidly. Today, the school-aged population is smaller, poorer and more racially and ethnically diverse. Declining test scores throughout the 1970s undermined public confidence in the country's public school system and led business leaders to question the quality of the nation's future workforce. An eroding US position in the international economy turned policy makers' attention and energies to issues of efficiency, choice and excellence in education and away from earlier concerns with equity. Policy leadership thrust upon the federal government by the Russian *Sputnik* launching and the Supreme Court's desegregation rulings has shifted back to the states where fragmented and diffuse interest groups compete for control of the education agenda.

*The changing social environment*

The social environment of education politics encompasses the nature of the population to be educated and society's expectations for its schools. Both have changed dramatically in the last two decades. Between 1968 and 1987, the proportion of White students in American public schools declined sharply, while the proportion of Blacks increased slightly and the proportion of Hispanics doubled (Orfield 1988). Members of the Class of 2000, (now in the second grade) present real challenges to the educational system. One in four is poor, one in three is non-White or Hispanic, one in five is at risk of becoming a teen parent, and one in six lives in a family where neither parent has a job (Edelman 1988). Three in five of these students will live in a single-parent household sometime before their eighteenth birthday (Hodgkinson 1985).

These changing demographics have created an 'imperiled generation' of children (Carnegie Foundation 1988). Levin (1986) estimates that almost one-third of today's school children are educationally disadvantaged. This proportion will rise as more children enter school from poverty households, from single-parent households (specially those headed by teen-aged mothers), and from minority backgrounds. The educational problems of these children are confounded by their growing racial and economic isolation from mainstream society. While the level of segregation of Black students was unchanged between 1972 and 1984, the percentage of Hispanic students attending 'majority-minority' schools climbed. By 1984, nearly one-third of Black and Hispanic students attended schools that were 'intensely segregated', that is, 90% or more minority, and more than two-thirds attended schools that were more than 50% minority (Orfield 1987). The two separate societies – one White, one Black and Brown; one rich and one poor – envisioned by the Kerner Commission twenty years ago may become a reality in the twenty-first century.

Shifting demographic patterns also threaten education's political support in the state and federal policy arenas. As the nation's population ages, fewer individuals have a direct stake in the public education system (as parents or employers). Moreover, those population groups with the largest vested interest in education are those with limited political power – low income and minority citizens. Increasingly, education must compete for resources with public policy issues of interest to senior citizens and voters without school-aged children (Kirst and Garms 1980).

Social values about education have changed as well over the last twenty years. At a time when the number of disadvantaged students in our nation's schools is growing, society has retreated from its commitment to equal educational opportunity. A quarter century ago the civil rights movement heightened public awareness of inequities in society and passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) focused federal government attention on issues of equality of educational opportunity. The education reform movement of the 1980s, however, has redirected attention to excellence and choice. New educational policies emphasize higher educational standards: more coursework, particularly in mathematics and science; more homework; longer school days; better teachers; higher levels of minimum proficiency and parental choice. There are signs that a renewed interest in issues of equity is emerging as educators begin to address the problems of persistent dropout rates and differential performance between minority and majority students. Equity interests, alone, are not responsible for this interest in at-risk youth, however. Business leaders join in this emphasis out of a concern for national security and economic development as least as often as they seek to revitalize the equity concerns of the last generation. Thus, even in

addressing the issue of at-risk students, the tension among the values of equity, excellence, efficiency and choice remains.

### *The changing economic environment*

The education reform movement of the 1980s was dominated by economic concerns: declining US competitiveness in an international economy; low industrial productivity; and changes in the skill level, size and composition of the nation's labor force. Worker productivity must continually increase for the United States to compete successfully in the global economy. Yet employers in both large and small businesses in the United States decry the lack of preparation for work among high school students. At a time when workforce skills are growing increasingly complex and undergoing rapid change, too many students lack the necessary reading, writing, mathematical and problem-solving skills to meet entry-level job requirements (CED 1985). American students fare poorly on international assessments when compared to their peers in other nations, especially other industrialized countries. Students in foreign countries take more mathematics and science, spend more time in school and do more homework. Equally important, employers complain about large numbers of young workers who lack the core values associated with labor market success.

The poor educational preparation of students will intersect with the changing demographics of the United States in the next decade. In the 1960s and 1970s, the baby boom and the entrance of women into the labor market generated a plentiful supply of qualified entry-level workers. In the 1990s, the pool of new workers will be smaller. High schools will graduate 20% fewer students in 1990 than in 1980, and the proportion of women in the workforce will not grow as quickly as in past years. As poor and minority individuals come to constitute a larger and larger portion of the labor force, policy makers must address the educational needs of the disadvantaged. 'Business leaders have come to understand that the emerging labor supply problem is essentially an educational problem' (Timpane 1984 p: 390).

### *The changing technological environment*

Changing technology *in the workplace* has major implications for *what* the next generation of students need to learn. Changing technology *in the schools* can have a major impact on *how* we teach them. Much has been written about the promise of the computer in the classroom. Some computer advocates even envision a future without schools. Papert, for example, argued that 'the whole system [of schools] is based on a set of structural concepts that are incompatible with the presence of the computer' (1984). Others, while acknowledging the proliferation of computers in schools, question whether children will receive a better education with the help of computers than their parents did without them (Peterson 1984).

The introduction of computers in the classroom has been a unique educational innovation. Unlike most innovations, the stimulus for adoption came from a combination of outside business interests and rank-and-file teacher enthusiasm. Formal curricula and state level support have come slowly. Parents who witnessed the computerization of the workplace feared that their children would not be competitive in school or in the workforce if they were not computer literate. As schools purchased computers, often with

funds raised by parent groups or from federal compensatory education programs, educators struggled to identify the best way to use the new technology. Administrators use the machines to simplify basic administrative tasks, such as attendance, scheduling and reporting grades. Instructional use includes drill and practice, computer programming and computer literacy. Math and science teachers tend to use the machines more for instruction than English, social studies and foreign language teachers, reflecting in part differences in the availability and quality of instructional software (Cuban 1986). Recent developments in technology have expanded beyond the microcomputer to include interactive distance learning systems that combine one-way video and two-way audio instruction.

The introduction of computers and distance learning technologies raise the same set of knotty issues for policy makers and educators that accompanied earlier technological innovations, such as instructional television and language labs (Cuban 1986). The first concerns the equitable access to the new technologies. There is a great deal of variation in which schools have the needed hardware and how it is used. Wealthier suburban communities, for example, have more computers and use them to teach computer programming and enhance academic instruction. The few computers available in poor urban schools are dedicated to drill and practice in remedial education programs. With inequitable distributions like this, the new technologies may widen, rather than narrow, achievement disparities between the haves and have-nots.

The second issue involves the cost-effectiveness of innovative technologies used in instruction. We have little research to date that shows whether computerized instruction or interactive video instruction teaches students knowledge and skills more efficiently and effectively than other instructional alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

The third issue is how technological change affects schools, organizations, teaching practices, and teacher-student relationships. Will computers and video images enhance the role of the teacher in the classroom or further the mechanization of teaching? Will computers or other new educational technologies replace teachers or only expand the work roles of those who use them? Finally, what is the impact of an interactive video or computer learning environment on what children learn? What are the intended and unintended consequences of high technology learning on the acquisition of values, knowledge and skills?

### *The changing political environment*

The political environment of education has also undergone critical change in the last two decades. Three major trends are important to note as we move into the twenty-first century: the changing roles of the federal and state governments in education policy; the growing political and programmatic fragmentation of education; and the re-emergence of non-education interests, particularly business, into the education policy arena.

While the federal government has always played a modest role in public education, federal involvement expanded rapidly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Two issues stimulated this expansion: curriculum development and equality of educational opportunity. Implicit in the design of federal programs was the belief that education could shore up the national security and break the cycle of poverty. Although federal aid to education never exceeded 9% of all spending on elementary and secondary education, the impact of its financial contribution was far-reaching. The Reagan administration, however, significantly reduced and redefined the federal role in education in the 1980s.

During the Reagan years, the federal government sought to influence education policy with moral suasion rather than federal aid; to emphasize demonstration over intervention; and to decentralize the administration of federal programs.

As the 1980s unfolded, abandonment of education by the federal government created a leadership as well as a financial vacuum. Politics abhors a vacuum, so state level education policy makers, headed by a group of reform-oriented governors, undertook an education reform movement that sought to operationalize the federal exhortations of excellence and choice. The policies that emerged from state legislatures, however, were shaped by a new configuration of education interests. Unlike the 1960s, when education politics was the province of broad-based education interest groups (state education departments, schools of education, superintendents, administrators and teachers), the 1980s reform was dominated by business leaders and elected public officials. In earlier years, groups like the Educational Conference Board in New York State and the Princeton Group in New Jersey sought to build consensus among educational interests on the policy goals and legislative priorities in their states. The growth of collective bargaining for teachers and creation of interest groups organized around new categorical education programs shattered this consensus, however, replacing it with competing centers of power – teacher unions, administrator groups, bi-lingual, Title I (now Chapter 1), and special education advocates. These groups confronted new centers of power in recently activated business groups. The absence of a broad consensus about the purpose of education led to a patchwork of state education programs to meet the demands of different and often competing interests. What was unique about the politics of state education reform in the mid-1980s was the relatively unimportant role of education interest groups in the formulation of new state policies. While opposed to specific aspects of the new reforms, education groups were stymied. Strong public and business support assured backing from governors and state legislators. The knowledge that increased state aid generally accompanied reform provisions made educators reluctant to ‘bite the hand that feeds them’. Moreover, the fact that some members of their diverse constituencies favored reform efforts kept professional opposition from becoming well organized (Fuhrman 1988).

As we approach the twenty-first century, we face a number of unanswered questions. Will the federal government remain a passive player in the education policy arena? If so, who will champion equal educational opportunity? Will education regain control over policy and school finance in the state political arena? Is meaningful education reform possible in fragmented local and state policy environments?

### **Overview of the Yearbook**

The chapters presented in this Yearbook address some, but not all, of the issues facing education policy makers as they move into the next century. Some issues, such as excellence and choice, state education reform, school administration and school-site management, were covered in previous Yearbooks (Boyd and Kerchner 1987, Hannaway and Crowson 1988). Other topics, including the politics of curriculum and testing, will be examined in the 1990 Yearbook. This Yearbook focuses on the roles to be played by education professionals, local citizen groups, government agencies and business leaders in shaping education policy, responses to racial and ethnic segregation, school restructuring, technology utilization, and the development of education politics and policy in Australia.

As we approach the twenty-first century, the politics of education in the United States will continue to be shaped by the neo-conservative legacy of the Reagan



administration. In chapter 2 of this Yearbook, David Clark and Terry Astuto predict no change in direction for federal education policy. Education will remain a low priority in Washington, characterized by few new initiatives and declining fiscal support. Despite his claim to be an education president, President Bush's education policies will almost certainly be constrained by economic, ideological and attitudinal factors beyond his control. The large federal deficit and President Bush's pledge of no new taxes preclude the adoption of any new, expensive education programs. The prevailing political and educational ideologies are compatible with a federal emphasis on state and local initiatives rather than federal interventions, and a focus on excellence, ability and productivity rather than on equity, access and student needs. Public opinion polls show strong support for these priorities. Clark and Astuto conclude, however, that the unmet educational needs of a growing number of poor children require the federal government to reassert its presence in education. A failure to respond, they insist, would 'be more costly in services, loss of productivity and human tragedy than the cost of a response'.

The retreat of the federal government from its role as a champion of equal educational opportunity comes at a time when continued housing segregation is intensifying the racial and economic isolation of children attending school in the nation's largest cities. In 1986, twelve of the fifteen largest school districts in the United States were more than 50% non-white (Orfield 1989). In chapter 3, Gary Orfield and Lawrence Peskin argue that if attempts are not made to integrate urban schools, poor and minority children will be condemned to attend schools that are both separate and unequal. These authors examine the educational impact of the 'Atlanta Compromise', a voluntary agreement among Black and White leaders to retain segregated schools in exchange for Black administrative control of the Atlanta school district. Policy makers took this action to avoid the 'White flight' they believed would follow any program of forced bussing. Atlanta's Black leaders were confident that they could achieve equality of educational opportunity within a segregated school system. The years have proved them wrong, however. The White community did not support the plan, and both White and Black middle class families fled the school system. Atlanta's schools became the most segregated schools in the South and now serve the poorest children in the metropolitan region. Although dropout rates have declined and elementary test scores have improved in the city schools, a tremendous gap remains between Black and White and city and suburban high schools. 'Class and race remain the decisive determinants of school conditions for the region'. A racially and socially segregated school system will perpetuate, and perhaps even intensify, unequal educational opportunity in metropolitan Atlanta and in other urban areas of the country.

Short of extensive inter-district desegregation efforts, what steps can be taken to improve education in disadvantaged schools? The education reform movement was supposed to improve the quality of educational instruction and, in turn, student achievement by raising curriculum standards, tightening teacher certification requirements and lengthening the school day and the school year. Critics of these state-directed reform efforts argued that these policies were doomed to failure because they did not, and could not, change the fundamental relationship between teaching and learning. In what has been dubbed the 'second wave' of education reform, calls have come for fundamental changes in school structure and organization.

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Yearbook explore political, institutional and cultural forces that shape school restructuring efforts. In chapter 4, Thomas Timar examines the impact of the macro-culture on attempts by three school districts to implement the radical restructuring advocated by TheodoreSizer and his Coalition of Essential Schools. Unlike other restructuring efforts, Sizer and his schools seek to alter the fundamental interaction