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Ian C. Friedman

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Facts On File, Inc.

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For Lene

CONTENTS

PART III
APPENDICES

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PART I

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION REFORM

It seems appropriate that a book about education reform in the United States begin with a standby of American schooling—a multiple-choice question. *Analyze the quotations below and answer the question that follows.*

> "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people."
>
> "Our standard for high school graduation has slipped badly. Fifty years ago a high-school diploma meant something."
>
> "Whether we like it or not, we're beginning to see that we're pitted against the world in a gigantic battle of brains and skills."

The quotations above reflect beliefs about the condition of U.S. public education commonly held in the

A 1980s
B 1950s
C early 1900s
D all of the above

The correct answer is D.

The first quotation is from the landmark 1983 publication *A Nation at Risk*, which served as a key catalyst for the growth of education reform ac-

tivity over the past 20 years. The second quotation is from a 1958 *U.S. News and World Report* interview of education historian and author Arthur Bestor. The "fifty years ago" referred to by Bestor is almost exactly the date of the third quotation, taken from Stanford education dean Ellwood Cubberley's 1909 book *Changing Conceptions of Education.*

Although more than 20 years have passed since the most recent of these quotations, each would be entirely plausible in the context of today's debate on education reform. The issue of education reform—the effort to improve the quality, methods, and purpose of elementary and secondary schooling in the United States—traces its origins to the inception of public schools, which preceded the founding of the nation by almost 150 years.

Since that time, education reform has both reflected and led social change in United States. The widely held belief that schools play a critically important role in shaping the nation's future has led to intense discussion on a variety of issues, including assimilation of immigrants, integration of African Americans, economic strength, the role of the federal government, constitutional rights of parents and children, and opportunity for individuals from lower economic backgrounds.

At present, as in the past, issues of effectiveness, fairness, and competitiveness shape the arguments over education reform. Advocates often have sharply contrasting views on such leading questions as

- Can school choice, including vouchers, charter schools, and privatization, successfully combat the cycle of poor children trapped in failing schools?
- What are the causes, outcomes, and implications of homeschooling?
- What are effective accountability measures for students and schools? Do curriculum standards and reliance on standardized assessments promote academic achievement? Are policies ending social promotion and bilingual instruction helpful and fair to students?
- Who will teach, particularly in chronically underserved areas? How can teaching become a profession that attracts, trains, and retains top candidates, especially in light of an expected teaching shortage?
- How can the culture within schools be strengthened to promote learning and safety? Are class-size reduction initiatives, zero-tolerance policies, and dress codes effective?

The background, themes, events, people, and movements that have shaped the history of education reform in the United States reveal a consistent though paradoxical tradition in which Americans maintain enormous faith in public schools while combating the nagging fear of their failure. This tradition is now at a critical juncture as the key issues of edu-

cation reform evolve and assume an increasingly prominent place in U.S. politics, culture, and society.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF U.S. EDUCATION

The roots of American notions of education reach back to ancient Greece and ancient Rome. The link between the state and support of the educational system was first described in Plato's *Republic* written around 360 B.C. The Greek philosopher's beliefs that the most intelligent were best able to lead the state and that education promotes the happiness and fulfillment of the individual by fitting him or her into his or her role in society have been espoused by education reformers of various ideological and pedagogical persuasions. Plato also expressed the belief that education could prepare individuals to function positively within society. Roman educator Quintilian extended these thoughts in the first century A.D. by emphasizing the advantages public forms of education could have, particularly on the socialization of a person. Quintilian, the tutor of the emperor's grandsons, believed that education should be concerned with a person's whole intellectual and moral nature, with the goal of producing an effective person in society. He recommended a broad literary education that included music, astronomy, geometry, and philosophy, preferably in public schools where a student could develop relationships and learn from his peers. Quintilian's views and methods helped establish a foundation for the education reformers in the United States, particularly leaders of the Progressive movement, who would follow almost 2,000 years later.

The Renaissance in Europe, which began in the 13th century and lasted more than 300 years, also had a significant impact on the development of U.S. educational thought and practice. Early in this period, Dominican monk and scholar Thomas Aquinas (1224–74) advanced reason, as well as faith, as sources of truth, helping to provide the basis for formal Roman Catholic education through curriculum that contained both theology and the liberal arts. Toward the end of the Renaissance, Dutch humanist and writer Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536) criticized the ignorance of the clergy and the injustice of society, advancing public education as a means of equity. His calls for the systematic training of teachers, abolition of corporal punishment of students, and recognition of the value of play and the importance of understanding the student's individual needs and abilities helped provide a philosophical base for subsequent education reform in the United States, including the current debates.

Other important contributors to Western educational thought included Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin (1509–64), John Locke (1632–1704),

and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). Luther advanced the resounding notion that education is necessary for the economic well-being of the state and that it should include vocational training. Luther's views influenced development of the concept of free and compulsory education as well as the concept of universal literacy, which became essential components of U.S. education. Calvin extended Luther's thought by stressing the need for elementary schools for the masses where they could learn to read the Bible and secondary schools to prepare the leaders of church and state. This helped establish a European tradition of a two-track system that was imported to the colonies and eventually spread throughout the United States.

British philosopher Locke and French philosopher Rousseau were leading advocates of education that promoted the development of reason, morality, and individual freedom. Locke's views helped establish a strong link between learning and participatory democracy, and Rousseau's beliefs—which led him to be considered by many the "father of modern child psychology"[1]—were instrumental in establishing the adaptation of instruction for children at different stages of development. Although their impact on U.S. schools has been enduring, the extent to which Locke's views of civic education and Rousseau's belief in adapted instruction should be implemented have been argued throughout U.S. education reform history.

EDUCATION IN EARLY AMERICA

The English, the predominant settlers of the North American colonies, had the greatest influence on the educational system that emerged in early America, though the cultural diversity and the presence of many different religious denominations in the colonies had a considerable impact on schooling. Colonial governments allowed individuals and religious groups to establish schools of their own. In general, colonial governments did not engage in close supervision of such schools. This early form of church-state separation came about largely due to the variety of religious denominations in the colonies, each seeking freedom of worship and each uninterested or unable to reach consensus regarding religious principles to be taught in schools founded by civil authorities.

Social and economic differences among colonial regions of British North America were also reflected in the formation of schools. In the southern colonies, religion was reverently practiced but was not the dominating force of life, as it was in New England. Therefore, the desire to have each person educated so that he or she could read the Bible was not of high importance to the wealthy English gentleman governing the southern colonies. This commonly held attitude was expressed in 1671 by Virginia governor Sir William Berkeley, who believed that every man should instruct his own chil-

dren according to his means, explaining: "I thank God that there are no free schools nor printing, . . . for learning has brought disobedience and heresy, and sects into the world."[2]

Some efforts at organized schooling did exist in the southern colonies, though the financial commitment to them was usually lacking. Educational opportunity was determined almost exclusively by social class, and many wealthy families sent their children to tutorial schools, essentially private institutions in which a tutor would instruct young people. Dame schools in which a woman would provide rudimentary instruction in her own home, often while carrying on household tasks, were also common throughout the colonies, including the South.

The Middle Colonies featured a striking diversity of faiths, languages, and cultures and tended to develop many different kinds of schools. This diversity prevented one particular group from imposing its will on the others and created a kind of tolerance of necessity. As a result of this, a coordinated system of public schools and state support or regulation of public schools failed to develop.

Among the Middle Colonies groups, the Quakers of Pennsylvania were the most active in education, particularly at the elementary level. Quaker schools were open to girls and the poor, and some provided education for free blacks.[3] Practical education, similar to what would later be termed vocational education, offering training in merchandising, navigation, trade, and mechanics, was emphasized at Benjamin Franklin's academy in Philadelphia, which opened in 1751.

New England was witness to the greatest and most influential educational endeavors of all the colonial regions. Education in New England during the colonial period was driven by the Puritan philosophy, a tenet of which was that man's sinful nature required activity to prevent idleness and instruction to avert evil.[4] New England had less fertile land than the rest of colonial America and consequently developed a greater emphasis on such occupations as shipbuilding, manufacturing, and trade. Because of this economic activity, it was essential to have people able to read, write, and think efficiently. The establishment of schools served the specific desires and needs of the people in this region.

In 1635, the Boston Latin School became the first public school in the British colonies. Seven years later, the first compulsory education law in the colonies was enacted with the passage of the Massachusetts Act of 1642. This law stated that parents and masters of those children apprenticed to them were responsible for their basic education and literacy. It also stated that should parents and masters not meet their educational responsibility, the government would have the right to remove the child from the home and place the child where he or she could receive adequate instruction. A

half-decade later, Massachusetts again led the way in education legislation with the passage of the Massachusetts Law of 1647, also known as the Old Deluder Satan Act. Provisions of this law required the establishment of elementary schools in all towns of 50 or more families and the establishment of secondary schools in towns of more than 100 families.

The significance of colonial education in New England was enormous, particularly in forming the traditions of public support for district schools, local autonomy, compulsory education, and distinct educational levels. Although New England's schools had, by modern standards, a rudimentary form, narrow curriculum, and weak support, they were the forerunners for what would eventually become the public education system in the United States.

In the years leading up to the American Revolution, education for the young was growing among the thirteen colonies, which had a total population of 2 million people. The ideas of the Revolution, such as those of Locke, were particularly influential. Locke believed that ideas came from experience and that the measure of truth of an idea is its correspondence with concrete, objective, commonsense reality. These beliefs helped lead to the growth of the kind of practical education programs supported by leaders such as Franklin.

The Revolution temporarily interrupted the momentum of education but eventually served to advance a unique form of American schooling. Though the formal bonds to Great Britain were broken, and with that any financial support previously provided, the United States began to define its own vision of public education. Among the primary architects of this vision were Noah Webster and Thomas Jefferson.

Webster, known as the "Schoolmaster to America," wrote the *Compendious Dictionary* in 1806, the first in a series of dictionaries that validated and disseminated an American lexicon. Also, Webster's *Elementary Spelling Book*, often referred to as the "Blue-Back Speller," was the most successful textbook ever produced in America, with an estimated almost 20 million sold by the time of his death in 1843. The book reflected Webster's strong nationalism and emphasis on the virtues of liberty, hard work, and morality. Accordingly, Webster vigorously supported legislative action leading to free schools in which U.S. children could learn these virtues.

Jefferson's impact on U.S. education was prodigious and mainly the result of efforts unrelated to his presidency. His support for the expansion of educational opportunity to ensure a wise populace that could protect democracy was evidenced with his 1778 proposal in the Virginia legislature known as the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge. The plan called for a state system of free elementary schools with local control of secondary schools supported by tuition and scholarships to help pave the way for poor boys. Although these provisions of the bill were not passed, it pro-

vided an often-imitated framework for future school systems, particularly the pattern of decentralized control and localization of financial responsibility. Jefferson's advocacy of the bill also served to help reduce the stigma of poverty as a barrier to receiving an elementary education and helped establish an American perception of educational equity, which is often at the center of today's education reform discussions.

The U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1789, did not explicitly mention education. The First Amendment's prohibition of government establishment of religion or religious practice did set a critical and oft-debated precedent separating state support for religious schools, though schools of all types continued to use religious material in instruction. The federal government supported the promulgation of schooling in the early republic through such acts as the Northwest Ordinance of 1785, which reserved a section in each township for schools and stated that schools and education should always be encouraged in the newly added regions covered by the act.

States emulated such support for provisions in their constitutions establishing funding for the creation of schools. The Pennsylvania Constitution, adopted in 1776, became a model for many states with its requirement that the state pay the salaries of public-school teachers. By the beginning of the 19th century most states had set up a system of schools with their constitutions. Formal education was not yet widespread, but the character and foundation of U.S. public education was established and ready to expand.

The Nineteenth Century and Beyond

The first half of the 19th century in the United States saw social, economic, and political developments that led to the advancement of what is often referred to as the "common man." This increased adherence to the notion of equality led many citizens to believe that all should be able to read in order to a participate in government and improve their standing in society.

One important factor in the growth of public education during this time was the rise of industrialization. During the early stages of America's Industrial Revolution, efforts to promote public education suffered because so many children were part of the working force. For example, in New England during the 1830s, approximately 40 percent of children under the age of 16 were employed in industrial occupations. However, industrialization also required training and often led to a need for affordable activities for the children of working-class parents. In addition, many reformers viewed education as a means of combating the negative effects of industrialization, such as urban poverty.

Industrialization also led to a population boom in the United States, particularly in northern and eastern cities. Much of this growth was the result

of huge waves of immigration from Europe. Schools were seen by many as an excellent tool to Americanize these newcomers, whose language and customs were different and often viewed as a threat to those of the native-born. Simultaneously, western settlers on America's frontier established one-room schoolhouses, often the only public building in a community, to educate their children. They were generally more reluctant than those in urban areas were to allow government influence over their educational institutions, reflecting an attitude that would be echoed decades later by advocates of homeschooling across the United States.

The emerging publicly supported common schools of the mid-1800s varied in size, organization, and curriculum. In rural areas, the one- or two-room schoolhouse was dominant. Progress in these schools was not marked by movement from one grade to another but rather by completing one text and beginning another. On the frontier, where there remained some distrust of too much education, the curriculum was limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic, while in larger cities the curriculum tended to be broader.[5] A wider variety of textbooks began to appear in common schools by the late 19th century, and the popular practice of rote learning, drill, and practice was beginning to be chipped away by early and sporadic measures of reform aimed at developing the individual talents of a child.

During the first half of the 19th century, states had gradually moved toward establishing educational systems. State superintendents, as educational officers were often called, of free schools, or common schools, usually had weak powers. Legal requirements for the collection of school taxes and compulsory attendance were often ignored as the tradition of parental and church responsibility for the education of children remained resilient.[6]

Two important leaders of this time who helped to propel state systems of education were Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. Mann was a Massachusetts legislator who led the effort to create a state board of education. When this measure was approved, he resigned to become the board's first secretary. During his 12 years in the post (1837–49), Mann was the most active leader of the common school education movement in the country. He succeeded in attaining state tax support for teacher salaries and new buildings, creating three of the first normal, or teacher training, schools in the country and establishing 50 new high schools. Attendance increased dramatically during Mann's tenure. Mann's educational philosophy influenced many other states and has had a profound impact on current mainstream thought.

Barnard, another important state education leader of the mid-19th century, had been a Connecticut state legislator before becoming secretary of the state board of education there and later in Rhode Island. Also like Mann, he espoused a democratic philosophy of education and was effective in spreading his message through the publication of the *American Journal of Education.*

The first half of the 19th century had also witnessed the emergence of the public high school. In 1821 the English Classical School was opened in Boston, becoming the first of its kind in the United States. High school growth remained weak over the course of the next few decades because of opposition to paying taxes for their support and the popularity of private academies, which had spread since the late 18th century and encompassed prestigious, exclusive institutions, as well as practical, religious, and military schools. By the 1860s there were only 300 high schools in the United States, one-third of which were in Massachusetts; however, the idea of free secondary education grew in popularity, particularly among the growing numbers of middle-class citizens who viewed a high school educational as necessary to fully realize one's social and economic goals. In addition normal schools, named for the standard or normal curriculum that was followed, sprang up in the 1840s establishing a model for state-supported training of teachers.

Despite these advancements in U.S. public education, African Americans and Native Americans were almost always systematically neglected. Education for blacks during this time was limited in the North and almost nonexistent in the South. Formal education for Native Americans, guaranteed in the many treaties signed between the U.S. government and various Native tribes, was usually provided in the form of substandard mission schools that emphasized basic literacy and vocational and agricultural instruction. This educational negligence would reap generations of dissatisfaction still found at the center of some of the most intensely argued education reform issues, such as bilingual education, standards and assessments, and school choice.

The common school period came to a halt with the Civil War. The disruption inflicted on education was pervasive, particularly in the South where the damage done to an already-less-developed system was severe. Reconstruction-era efforts to build the southern education system, particularly attempts to instruct the more than 4 million newly freed slaves, were insufficiently supported or actively resisted. Proposed legislation in the U.S. Congress to boost education systems in areas devastated by war were also unsuccessful. In 1870, Massachusetts congressman George Hoar introduced a bill designed to establish a federal school system in southern states. This measure was defeated and served as a symbol of U.S. hesitance to cede too much autonomy on education matters to the federal government. The 1882, Blair Bill, named for its sponsor, New Hampshire senator Henry Blair, passed the Senate three different times but never passed in the House of Representatives. It proposed the application of almost $80 million for states to use as they saw fit to fight illiteracy.

Despite the difficulties experienced in the South, high school growth accelerated significantly following Reconstruction elsewhere. In 1875, fewer than

25,000 students were enrolled in public high schools, but that number jumped to more than 500,000 by 1900. Part of this growth was due to the legal precedent set by the 1874 Kalamazoo Michigan School Case *(Stewart et al. v. School District No. 1 of the village of Kalamazoo)*, in which the state supreme court held that the state had the right to levy taxes to support high schools.

One problem confronting the rapid rise in high school enrollment was the standardization of curriculum. High schools offered traditional and practical programs, with emphasis usually on college preparatory curriculum, even though only about 10 percent of high school students in 1900 would attend college. The menu of courses from school to school varied extensively in scope and nature.

Two important events then took place to reform this lack of standardization: the creation of the National Education Association (NEA) in 1870 and that body's formation of the Committee of Ten in 1892. For decades, a variety of regional educational associations formed to deal with high school standardization issues such as curriculum, school day length, and quality of instruction. In 1870, the largest of these professional organizations—the National Teachers Association, the National Association of School Superintendents, and the American Normal School Association—merged to create the NEA, which quickly became recognized as the leading education group in the country.[7]

In 1892, the NEA convened the Committee of Ten to study and put forth recommendations relating to confusion over secondary schools' standards, curriculum, methods, and programs. The committee's name was a reflection of its composition: five college presidents, two headmasters, the U.S. education commissioner, a professor, and a high school administrator. Absent was any high school teacher.

The Committee of Ten's report reflected the group's college orientation, supporting an increased focus on general education subjects such as Latin, English, math, physical and biological sciences, history, and geography. Vocational and commercial subjects were largely ignored. The committee's recommendations further advanced the practice of studying each subject for one period each day, five days a week for a year. As a result of the report, the standard unit of credit for high school subjects, often referred to as a Carnegie unit, was established. The Committee of Ten also supported an eight-year elementary school followed by a four-year high school, though special subjects and methods were not suggested for students who did not expect a good college. Taken together, the Committee of Ten's efforts were critical in bringing a sense of unification to a national system of public education.

Vocational and manual training schools sought to fill the void that grew following the implementation of many of the Committee of Ten's recommendations, especially with the late 19th century's need for skilled workers,

who often wanted a high school education but had no intentions of attending college. Some teacher training colleges designed programs for vocational educators and the Industrial Education Association was formed in 1884.

Along with the growth of schools came a marked increase in teacher training schools. The number of such public and private normal schools more than tripled between 1871 and 1900 (from 114 schools to 345).[8] Despite this growth, fewer than half of the trained teachers that were needed to staff public schools were provided by normal schools or other teacher training programs. Most classrooms continued to be taught by low-paid young women, often with little education beyond elementary school. These conditions in the teaching profession were cause for concern at the time, leading U.S. commissioner of education Henry Barnard to express what would become a frequently heard expression of frustration with teacher quality, preparation, and status. As reported in the July 13, 1867, *Boston Examiner*, Barnard explained:

> *Too many of those we have entrusted to guide and guard our nation's youth have little knowledge beyond that which they are attempting to impart. Indeed, we might well question whether their knowledge is superior to that of many of their fellow tradesmen. Not only is the depth and breadth of their knowledge of the curriculum matter a subject of concern, but where knowledge is possessed, there exists most often an absence of any training in pedagogy . . . teachers will not be elevated to that place in society and receive that compensation they so richly deserve until they are required to undertake a special course of study and training to qualify them for their new office.*[9]

Private schools also became more established in the late 1800s, even as their student body became more conspicuously composed of the wealthy, those gaining military training, and Catholics, who were often shunned in schools that were overwhelmingly Protestant and nativist. The 1875 proposal of the Blaine Amendment, named for its sponsor, Speaker of the House of Representatives James Blaine, sought to prohibit the use of state funds for "sectarian" schools. Though this legislation narrowly failed to pass in the U.S. Congress, supporters of the amendment turned their attention to the individual states, where they had much more success. Blaine amendments were critical in the development of an organized private, Catholic educational system in the United States, and they have contributed to the broad conception of the separation of church and state.

As the 19th century came to a close, education in the United States was far different from what it had been 100 years earlier. Well established was a de jure expression of belief in free opportunity for all citizens, and with that, came a dramatic increase in school enrollment and prominence in society. Also well

established was the foundation for future arguments of education reform, including the role of government and religion in schools, teacher quality, and standards and curricula. This rapid and meaningful pace of change witnessed in the 19th century would only accelerate in the 20th century.

The Emergence of Education's Progressive Movement

In the early 1900s, most Americans felt pride in their public schools. Specifically, they believed that schools could enable children of humble origins to climb an educational ladder toward greater opportunity. Implicit in this widespread conception was the promise of a liberal education's role in providing access to knowledge previously only available to the elite. A movement was mobilizing, however, that would change the nature and purpose of American schools.

Central to the new education supported by the early 20th-century reformers was a focus on targeting instruction for practical subjects that would fit the future occupations of most students whose members were steadily climbing due to immigration, prosperity, and the implementation of laws preventing child labor. The primary proponents of such education were business leaders who wanted prepared and efficient workers and educators who would come to be known as progressive educators. Most of the progressives were teaching in the nation's burgeoning colleges of education and wanted the curriculum to serve the needs of society and the industrial age.

The leading colleges of education were Columbia University's Teachers College, Stanford, the University of Chicago, and Harvard. Teachers College professors were most prominent in combating many of what they considered conservative tendencies of a U.S. educational system that ignored the benefits of modern science. The establishment of these colleges of education played a significant role in wresting the authority of American education from school superintendents to professors in schools of education. From these schools came the ideas that powered the progressive education movement.

The progressive education movement had a variety of goals, including making school instruction more practical, introducing modern methods of teaching that recognize that students learn in different ways, and giving more attention to the health of students. It also sought to make education into a profession and in doing so, reduced the school-related influence of laypeople, especially in poor and immigrant neighborhoods. Toward these ends progressive reformers supported the creation of centralized school bureaucracies and civil service systems, particularly in urban districts. Progressive educators of the early 20th century often attacked the high school

curriculum as rigid, elitist, and an obstacle to social progress, particularly for the masses of poor and immigrant students in urban schools.

The leading spokesman of progressive education was John Dewey during the 1890s and into the new century. At the age of 35, the former teacher and professor assumed the chairmanship of the University of Chicago's Department of Psychology, Philosophy, and Pedagogy. Two years later, Dewey opened the University of Chicago Laboratory School to test new approaches to education.

Dewey believed that education, "must represent present life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground." He generally opposed the common practice of teaching by recitation. He advanced the notion that schools were instrumental to social reform, and he sought to create schools with, "an active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons."[10] For example, in Dewey's vision students should learn biology not by memorizing the technical names for different plants and their parts, but rather by observing the growth and considering the factors that affected their life. Dewey believed that the child should be viewed as a total organism and that education is most effective when it considers not only the intellectual but also the social, emotional, and physical needs of the child. He held that education was a lifelong process and that the school should be an integral part of community life, a concept that gave support to the development of the community school. Dewey wrote more than 500 articles and 40 books, and his imprint on education in the United States was unparalleled in the 20th century.[11]

Dewey's leadership brought cohesion and credibility to progressive education and helped the movement become the dominant doctrine in the new influential schools of pedagogy. The key ideas of the movement included the following:

- Education was a science, and the methods and results of education could be precisely measured.
- The methods and ends of education could be effectively derived from assessing the innate needs and nature of the child.
- The proper approaches and outcomes of education could be determined by assessing the needs of society and then fitting the student for his or her role in society.
- Education could effectively reform society.[12]

In order to determine the ways in which schools could advance society, progressive education theorists developed the concept of social efficiency. In

this framework, the value of academic subjects was evaluated by the degree that they served the purpose outside the classroom. According to this standard, many academic subjects, or at least the traditional approaches to them, lacked relevance for the great majority of students, who would most likely become workers or homemakers after they left school.

A leading figure in the social efficiency movement was the Massachusetts commissioner of education David Snedden. He believed that students should be assigned to different curricular tracks based on sociological criteria and that these differentiated curricula could be implemented for students by the age of 14 by scientifically trained educational experts.

In line with notions of school efficiency was the development of industrial education. In 1907, this aspect of education reform was notably boosted by President Theodore Roosevelt who stated, "our school system is gravely defective in so far as it puts a premium upon mere literacy training and tends therefore to train the boy away from the farm and workshop. Nothing is more needed than the best type of industrial school, the school for mechanical industries in the city, the school for practically teaching agriculture in the country."[13] Support such as this, the additional affirmations from the NEA and other prominent professional educators, and the defections of previous advocates of traditional academic education such as former Committee of Ten member Charles Elliott led to a marked shift in the orientation of U.S. public schools, particularly at the secondary level. With remarkable speed, the meaning of public education had been redefined by progressive theorists, from the relatively standardized academic ladder to a variety of paths leading to different destinations, with future professionals preparing for college, future farmers studying agriculture, future homemakers studying household management, and future industrial workers studying metalworking and woodworking. The view that all students take college preparatory courses was now usually seen as elitist, inappropriate, and undemocratic.

Advancing these views was Ellwood Cubberley, a former teacher, school superintendent, and education professor at Stanford. His books on education history and school administration describing the school's role in assimilating immigrants and training workers were standard reading in schools of education and remained so for many years. Also influential was his support for vocational education and curricular differentiation.

High school enrollment continued to boom throughout the early 20th century. In 1900, only 10 percent of those ages 14 to 17 attended high school, but by 1920, the percentage had increased to 31 percent. The obvious heightened prominence of high schools combined with the momentum of progressive educational thought led to the emergence of the school survey movement, designed to assess the efficiency of public schools.

The efficiency experts were largely the leading progressive theorists, and their evaluations and recommendations given to school systems reflected their support of changes, including intelligence testing and standardized testing for the classification of students. The results of the school survey movement was a continued rejection of the kind of broad education advocated at the turn of the century in favor of a socially efficient curriculum strengthened by tax-supported improvements to facilities and programs addressing specific needs of students. The movement also helped open the door to major battles over curriculum standards and the purpose and scope of testing that continue to rage to this day.

The reforms ushered in by the efficiency experts and progressive educators were essentially shut out of schools for African Americans. Black schools, particularly in the South, were woefully underfunded and inadequate compared to those for whites. Arguments about how best to educate black students included renowned scholar W. E. B. DuBois's belief in access to academic curriculum and educator Booker T. Washington's more accepted advocacy of the benefits of vocational education.

Critics of the progressive education movement, though dwindling in number, often spoke out against the proposed and implemented reforms. Among the critics were New York City superintendent William Henry Maxwell and University of Illinois education professor William Bagley. Bagley and Massachusetts education commissioner Snedden debated the merits of many progressive education reforms at a 1914 NEA conference, but it became clear to Bagley that he was fighting a futile battle, as evidenced in 1917, when the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act, establishing federal aid for vocational education. This act was the first federal program of any kind for public education.

In 1918, progressive education took another step forward with the publication of the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education.* This report was prepared by the NEA's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE), and it appeared exactly a quarter century after the Committee of Ten's report.

The *Cardinal Principles*, however, were very different in content and sensibility from the Committee of Ten's report. The composition of the CRSE was primarily made up of education professors who espoused the belief that high schools should promote different curricula for different groups depending on their likely future occupations. The CRSE explained that such reforms were necessary because schools needed to respond to new social realities, particularly increased industrialization; to support a larger and more diverse student population; and to apply advances in educational understanding.

Based on these assertions, the CRSE identified the main objectives of secondary education as:

1. Health
2. Command of fundamental processes
3. Worthy home membership
4. Vocation
5. Citizenship
6. Worthy use of leisure
7. Ethical character

Further, the CRSE noted that, "the purpose of democracy is so to organize society that each member may develop his personality through activities designed for the well-being of his fellow members and of society as a whole."[14]

The CRSE report was a critical milestone in the history of U.S. education. It crystallized and represented a new consensus about the direction of secondary education, one that emphasized social efficiency, socialization, and the authority of professional educators and education reformers.

Following the completion of World War I, education reform delved into an area that would prove to be a constant battleground: intelligence and standardized testing. This field of testing expanded during the war, and many educational theorists and practitioners believed that these kinds of testing procedures could be beneficial in constructing appropriate and effective public school curricula.

The group intelligence tests that had been administered in the U.S. Army during World War I were well suited for adaptation for schools, largely because they were relatively inexpensive, easy to administer, and resulted in the listing of group norms, which led to the assignment of students to the differentiated curriculum programs growing in popularity. The test quickly became a regular component of the public school experience, as evidenced by a 1925 U.S. Bureau of Education survey of 215 cities that reported that intelligence tests were used to classify students into homogenous groups by 64 percent of elementary schools, 56 percent of junior high schools, and 40 percent of high schools. These tests, a key component of what is sometimes called the measurement movement, allowed schools to classify, assign, and compare students, as well as diagnose learning difficulties and aptitudes. Opponents of widespread testing, then as now, decried the abuse of such assessment, arguing that the tests often led to faulty judgments about the quality of teaching and subjective judgments about students' potential.

Critics included William Bagley who warned of the "fatalistic inferences" of the tests and argued against the intentions of the testers, labeling them "educational determinists."[15] Popular newspaper columnist Walter Lipp-

mann echoed such opinion during the 1920s, criticizing how these tests provided fodder to anti-immigrant sentiment and noted that the purpose of the school was to increase, not measure, a student's capacities. Despite such arguments, intelligence and standardized achievement testing took hold in public schools.

The 1920s also were a period in which a great deal of attention was given to creating curricula that would support progressive educational theory. The rising prominence of curriculum experts, steeped in scientific research, signaled growth in the transfer of educational influence away from parents and teachers and toward these specialists who had control over many districts' curriculum.

Among the primary curriculum experts was John Franklin Bobbitt, author of *The Curriculum*, the first textbook of the theory of curriculum construction, which became a standard in teaching training institutions. Bobbitt likened his role to that of an educational engineer who could establish precisely what students needed to learn in order to function effectively in life and contribute to society. He sought to design curricula that could address deficiencies in the social order, believing, for instance, that if agricultural production dropped, it was the job of the school to provide better agricultural education.

Dewey's advocacy of the child-centered movement was another example of leading 1920s curricular thought. Inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's book *Emile*, Dewey emphasized the value of what a student learns in the ordinary course of living. At his Laboratory School, Dewey sought to demonstrate how traditional subjects, often taught through unimaginative drudgery, could be exciting and meaningful through projects and activities that appealed to a child's interests and therefore unleashed his or her intellectual energies.

Other key curriculum experts included William Heard Kilpatrick, who helped popularize and extend progressive practice of project-based learning, curriculum integration, and whole child education, which sought to balance intellectual, physical, and emotional development, and Harold Rugg, who developed a new social studies curriculum intended to replace traditional instruction of history, geography, and civics. They, of course, had their critics, including steadfast supporters of traditional liberal and classical education, as well as Dewey, who feared that some proponents of child-centered education went too far by not providing sufficient adult guidance to instructional activities.

The Great Depression that struck the United States in October 1929 both interrupted the progressive education reform momentum and galvanized its proponents who viewed the crisis as an example of how schools needed to reform society. During this time, progressive education's left wing

was articulated by leaders such as George Counts, a Teachers College educational sociologist, who, following a trip to the Soviet Union, promoted the abandonment of traditional American individualism and capitalism in the journal *The Social Frontier*. At the other end of the progressive education's ideological spectrum was Counts's colleague at Teachers College, Isaac Kandel, who ridiculed the notion that schools should be expected to build a new social order, nothing the irony that the same progressive educators who had consistently opposed efforts at a planned curriculum now advocated a centrally planned society.

From 1920 to 1940 U. S. schools experienced another surge in enrollment, particularly in high schools where the number of students attending rose from 2.2 million in 1920 to 4.4 million in 1930 and 6.6 million in 1940.[16] Many schools were built and additional teachers hired to deal with this new reality. Inside schools, the results of progressive education reforms were visible, often in the form of implementation of revised curricula. The vast majority of such changes reflected the progressive preference of experience-based over academic instruction.

One strand of curriculum revision, the activity movement, emphasized project-based learning evolving from student's interests. Many cities, including Ann Arbor, Michigan; Los Angeles; and New York City, launched ambitious activity programs in elementary schools. Even in these settings, however, the instructional result was often a modified version of traditional education, with the fundamental aspects of the classroom experience—the physical layout of the room, class size, rules, evaluation, and supervision—only marginally affected, despite the prolific use of progressive jargon.

The conflict between the needs of youth and academic curricula remained a volatile one during the late 1930s. The Progressive Education Association (PEA), an advocacy group for child-centered education, actively promoted the campaign contending that U. S. high schools needed to increase their emphasis of students' personal, emotional, and social problems and decrease their emphasis on academic studies and traditional forms of school structure. Formed in 1919, the PEA's guiding principles reflected the widespread beliefs of the increasingly influential movement. They included the following:

1. The child should be given the freedom to develop naturally.
2. Interest provides the motivation for all work.
3. The teacher should be a guide in the learning process, not the taskmaster.
4. The scientific study of pupil development should be promoted by the refocusing of information to be included on school records.
5. Greater attention should be given to everything that affects the child's physical development.

6. The school and home should cooperate to meet the natural interests and activities of the child.
7. The progressive school of thought should be a leader in educational movements.[17]

The PEA was joined in its efforts against the traditional academic curriculum by individuals and groups considered more mainstream, such as the NEA.

The academic curriculum remained a potent and steady force in U.S. schools, nonetheless, largely because achievement and academic coursework was still an essential measure determining college admission. In 1930, the PEA undertook what became known as the Eight-Year Study to demonstrate that such academic requirements for college admission were unnecessary. Results of the study, in which evaluations were made of college students admitted on the basis of following successful completion of required courses and exams and those admitted largely on the basis of recommendations, interests, and aptitude tests, supported their contention. Yet many observers questioned the reliability of the study and claimed that it lacked credibility because Ivy League schools did not participate. The academic curriculum survived but more than ever was associated primarily with the college bound and not with future farmers, housewives, and factory workers.

Evolution, Criticism, and Change

The pervasive effects of progressive education were highlighted by a 1938 *Time* magazine cover article, entitled "Progressives' Progress," that noted, "No U. S. school has completely escaped its influence."[18] Yet efforts by critics of progressive education, led by Bagley and other essentialists who stressed rigorous standards and a common academically oriented curriculum, continued, even as public attention remained focused on the economic crises at home and growing conflicts overseas.

Other prominent critics of this period included Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler. Hutchins was a high-profile educator who in 1929, at age 30, became president of the University of Chicago. Adler was then brought to the university by Hutchins to advance his Great Books curriculum, which focused on an academically oriented examination of classic works, which they believed could help counter what they viewed as the anti-intellectual aimlessness of many progressive education reforms, such as child-centered education.

Largely in response to such criticism, progressive education's towering figure, John Dewey, published *Experience and Education* in 1938. In this book, his last major work on education, Dewey sought to temper the accusations of laissez-faire individualism and radicalism that sometimes were

lobbed at progressive education by opponents. However, the tension among factions in education reform remained severe.

As the 1930s came to a close, the issue of teacher training and certification began to assume more prominence in the education reform debate. A leading advocate for national teacher testing was Teachers College professor Isaac Kandel. He defended the administration of the National Teachers Examinations, which were developed during the Great Depression when there were more teaching applicants than available teaching positions. The exams were first offered in 1940 in 20 areas, including such cities as Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Boston. The 10- to 12-hour exams, developed by the American Council on Education, assessed the teacher candidate's command of such fields as English expression, reasoning, quantitative skills, literature, science, history, fine arts, and current issues, as well as teaching methods and educational history, psychology, and philosophy.

Those opposed to these exams feared that they would lead to greater uniformity and would place too much emphasis on teachers' factual knowledge rather than their ability to teach. The conflict over teacher testing subsided when World War II created a teacher shortage, puncturing reliance on the test. However, the questions of who should teach, how the individual is prepared, and how visions of curricular standards relate to strengthening public schools had established a prominent place on the education reform menu.

By the end of World War II, a half century after the movement had begun, progressive education was the reigning ideology of U.S. public education. In the mid 1940s, the NEA published *Education for All American Youth*. The report, endorsed by the leading school administrators' and principals' organizations, defined the role of public schools as oriented toward effective career guidance. As a result of the report, increased emphasis was placed on aptitude and intelligence tests for college admissions and the classification of subjects such as physics, chemistry, history, and algebra as elective courses. Hollis Caswell, dean of Teachers College, helped advocate these and other curriculum reforms that sought to have a direct impact not only on theory but also on classroom practice.

The 1950s, though often characterized by its sense of societal conformity and political conservatism, was also an era of significant ferment in education reform, signaling many of the key battles of the coming decades. Critics of public schooling spanned the ideological and cultural range. Included among them were those who believed that a jargon-intensive education establishment, disconnected from parents and community, had lost sight of education's central purpose of developing the knowledge and intellect of students in favor of efforts to place young people within society according to their perceived personal needs. More religious and cultural conservative

types worried that public schools would become too secular, undermining the nation's moral and spiritual foundation. Others, fueled by McCarthy-era fears of communist influence, blamed lax public school standards for such ills as diminished respect for authority and decreased school discipline, as featured in the popular 1955 film *Blackboard Jungle*. Largely as a result of such concerns, a push for increased recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance (with the words *under God* added in 1954) gained momentum, as did calls for more school prayer. However, proponents of prayer in public schools suffered a major setback when the U.S Supreme Court ruled in 1962's *Engel v. Vitale* that public schools may not require the recitation of prayers.

A common complaint of 1950s public schools was that while schools of education required the study of teaching methods, they did not require teachers or administrators to be well educated. This, they asserted, was reflected in the de-emphasis of academic studies in high schools, and these critics pointed to statistics for support. High school enrollment in academic subjects such as physics, foreign languages, and geometry had significantly declined since the beginning of the 20th century.

Critics of public school standards enjoyed a breakthrough with the enormous popularity of Arthur Bestor's 1953 book, *Educational Wastelands*, and Rudolf Flesch's 1955 book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Flesch argued that modern reading approaches such as the look-see method found in the Dick and Jane readers often used in elementary schools were not as effective as traditional phonics instruction. Flesch noted that, "reading isn't taught at all. Books are put in front of the children and they're told to guess at the word or wait until the teacher tells them. But they're not *taught* to read."

Why Johnny Can't Read set off a national debate about literacy instruction and more broadly the common teaching practices of public schools. Most reviewers and the general public embraced its viewpoints, and it remained on the national best-seller lists for 30 weeks. But most prominent educators rejected its premise. The book spurred a Carnegie Corporation study led by Jean Chall of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and designed to determine the most effective method of reading instruction. Chall's three-year study concluded that both approaches were effective, with phonics instruction better suited for young readers and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In response to Chall's report, most early to mid-1960s reading textbooks for early readers emphasized instruction in phonics. But, like the vast majority of other education reform issues, this trend was temporary, and the reading curriculum war would rage again later.

Progressive education encountered other challenges to its wisdom and authority during the late 1950s. In 1955, the PEA, unable to raise sufficient money or recruit members, closed its doors. Increasingly, the perceived

excessiveness of the movement's methods and practices were mocked, as evidenced by satirist Tom Lehrer's song "New Math":

Hooray for new math,
New-hoo-hoo-math,
It won't do you a bit of good to review math.
It's so simple,
So very simple,
That only a child can do it![19]

But the biggest blow to progressive education practice in the 1950s occurred outside the realm public schools. The Soviet Union's 1957 successful launch of the space satellite *Sputnik* struck fear in Americans and served as a symbol of the lagging quality of U.S. schools. In 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower and Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, which among other provisions, included unprecedented federal aid for school construction and for math, science, and foreign language curriculum support. Admiral Hyman Rickover reflected this shifting in the popular view of education's purpose and signaled future debate over standards in his 1959 book *Education and Freedom*, noting,

life in a modern industrial state demands a great deal more "book learning" of everyone who wants to make a good living for himself and his family . . . the schools must now . . . concentrate on bringing the intellectual powers of the child to the highest possible level. Even the average child now needs almost as good an education as the average middle and upper class child used to get in the college preparatory schools.[20]

Defending public schools was former Harvard president James Conant, whose 1959 Carnegie Corporation–sponsored book, *The American High School Today*, became a national best-seller. Among Conant's key points was that large comprehensive high schools that offered multiple curricula were most effective. He also asserted that every high school needed to have a high-quality counseling staff to help its students into the right program. He described the often-followed practice of requiring four years of English, three or four years of social studies, one year of science and math, with all other courses selected as electives, largely based on aptitude tests. Conant also endorsed social promotion in the required courses, which resulted in students moving on to the next grade based more on factors such as their age rather than academic achievement. *The American High School Today*, which did not refer to its recommendations as progressive education, was very influential in reducing the number of small high schools that could not

provide a full array of academic, vocational, and general courses and in blunting the attacks of 1950s public school critics.

Among the most dissatisfied participants in public education during this time were African Americans and others who supported their access to education. The frustration over the substandard conditions of the largely segregated public school system could no longer be overlooked following the U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous, landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which prohibited state-imposed racial segregation in public schools. However, despite the civil rights significance of this decision, education of black students still suffered. Resistance to the ruling in the South was widespread. In the North continued white flight to the suburbs contributed to the deterioration of public schools.

Educational researcher Kenneth Clark, whose work was a key factor in demonstrating the harmful effects of segregation in the *Brown* case, advocated an emphasis on raising standards in the now notoriously underachieving larger urban schools, most of which had a high concentration of blacks. Such calls were largely drowned out by the din of political struggles and crises that engulfed the nation and its public schools throughout the 1960s, although the standards debate would emerge a generation later.

The role of the federal government in education reform took a giant step forward in 1965 with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This legislation, providing the largest infusion of federal funding for public schools ever, was a key component of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program. The law's Title I provision of approximately $1 billion to help improve education in the nation's poorest areas represented an unprecedented and to many unwelcome commitment of federal government in local schools. While among many there was enormous optimism that poverty and its related ills, such as inadequate education, could actually be overcome, the late 1960s were a time of great discord and criticism for public education, creating fertile ground for the proposition of sometimes radical reforms.

In 1964, private school teacher John Holt published *Why Children Fail*, ripping tests, grades, curricula, and other aspects of the schooling experience. His work is often credited with providing an articulation of the philosophical foundation for the homeschooling movement. Another important pen of reform was provided by teacher Jonathan Kozol, whose 1967 book, *Death at an Early Age*, won the National Book Award for its portrayal of the appalling conditions, including insensitive and unresponsive bureaucracy and incompetent and indifferent teachers, in the Boston public schools.

One proposed solution to the problems of urban schools and to the malaise of other public schools was the open education movement. The movement grew in popularity following the 1967 publication in *The New*

Republic of a series of articles by American social critic Joseph Featherstone that described open education in Britain, in which the routine of the day "is left completely up to the teacher and the teacher, in turn leaves options open to the students." Partly as a result of this movement, multiage groups, activity centers, and other aspects similar to the child-centered movement of the 1930s became more common. Journalist Charles Silberman's popular book *Crisis in the Classroom* helped propel the movement and by the early 1970s many schools had been modified to fit the tenets of open education. However, this movement fizzled almost as quickly as it grew. Many ambitious but poorly planned open education experiments failed miserably, as depicted in Massachusetts principal Roland Barth's book *Open Education and the American School.*

In 1969, a Gallup poll of Americans listed "lack of discipline" as the school's leading problem.[21] The real and perceived problems that resulted from the late 1960s and early 1970s, namely the easing of graduation requirements, bilingual education programs, dress codes, and disciplinary rules, led to a groundswell of support for a back-to-basics movement in education. This growing contingent of citizens who believed that schools had lost their focus of teaching young people in a morass of ill-conceived programs, services, and curricular trends would find hospitable terrain in the more conservative political environment of the early 1980s.

Seeking Security in a Nation at Risk

In 1983, the debate over education reform was redefined with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. The controversial report issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, whose members had been appointed by President Ronald Reagan's secretary of education, Terrell Bell, warned of the dire consequences of U.S. educational decline. It charged that lax academic standards in American schools were clearly related to the drop in behavioral standards and that the failure to address these conditions could result in educational catastrophe. The report stated, "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."[22]

A Nation at Risk asserted that four aspects of schooling needed to change: content, expectations, time, and teaching. The report claimed that high school content had been, "homogenized, diluted, and diffused" to the point that it was a "cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses." *A Nation at Risk* continued to claim that expectations had been unacceptably watered down by grade inflation and weak promotion policies such as those found in the majority of states requiring only one year of math and science for high school graduation.

The report also compared the length of the school day and the school year in the United States and other industrialized nations and found that American students spent an insufficient amount of time pursuing academic study. In addition, the report argued that standards for teachers were in need of significant improvement by criticizing the relatively low academic achievement of teacher candidates and the heavy methods orientation of teacher education programs. Among the report's recommendations were the standardization of high school graduation criteria, including the requirement of successful completion of the "new basics": four years of English, three years of math, science, and social studies, and a half year of computer science.

Intense and ideologically diverse debate over the best ways to address the deficiencies of U.S. public schools followed the highly publicized release of *A Nation at Risk*. A first wave of reform resulted in top-down types of measures, including state legislation enacting higher graduation requirements, standardized curriculum mandates, increased testing of students and teachers, raised certification requirements for teachers, minimum standards for participation in athletics, and in some cases the lengthening of the school day and school year. A second wave of reform focused on bottom-up changes, such as increased local control of schools and site-based management, teacher empowerment, parental involvement, and various forms of school choice.

Two significant curricular schools of thought during this period were the modern tradition of progressive education of Ted Sizer and the academic curriculum emphasis of E. D. Hirsch. Sizer, former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, published *Horace's Compromise* in 1983. In it, he melded traditional progressive education principles while shedding some of the more discredited notions of the movement. The book decried the low expectations and dull routine of most U.S. high schools. To counter this, Sizer advocated for increased authority for the teachers, administrators, and parents at local schools. For students, he recommended a greater emphasis on demonstrations of mastery rather than reliance on standardized tests. He created the Coalition of Essential Schools to advance reform ideas.[23] Among these schools was Central Park East School in Harlem, led by prominent education reformer Deborah Meier. By 2000, more than 1,200 schools were part of this coalition.

In the early 1980s, E. D. Hirsch was an English professor at the University of Virginia, and was not particularly well known outside Charlottesville. However, in 1987 his book *Cultural Literacy* was published and quickly became an education reform lightning rod. Supporters of the book lauded its purpose of transmitting "the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world" and backed Hirsch's claim that the understanding of a common,

explicit curriculum was "the only way of combating the social determinism that condemns [students] to remain in the same social and educational condition as their parents."[24] Critics disparaged Hirsch's dictionary-like collection of information as trivia, but well over 1 million purchasers of the book found it to be relevant.

One common thread running through the major education reforms of the 1980s was a focus on academic standards. Increased economic globalization and rapidly advancing technology led many, particularly in the business community, to worry that American students would not be sufficiently prepared to lead the U.S. economy in a more competitive environment. Critical input from within the education community on the standards debate was provided by American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker. As the leader of the nation's largest teachers' union, Shanker exerted his considerable influence through regular newspaper op-ed pieces advocating clear standards and assessments that would strengthen the meaning and consequences of schooling for students. Soon elected officials were promoting standards as well, leading to President George H.W. Bush's 1989 Education Summit with the nation's governors to promote national education goals. This culminated in 1994 with President Bill Clinton signing the GOALS 2000: Educate America Act.

Despite the apparent middle ground consensus on curriculum standards, battles, particularly relating to U.S. history, raged. In 1994, University of California Los Angeles's Center for History in the Schools prepared a federally funded project of National History Standards. Even before the release, they were the focus of severe criticism. Lynne Cheney, former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, attacked them for political bias, noting how the standards mentioned such shameful figures as Joseph McCarthy 19 times and the Ku Klux Klan 17 times yet omitted figures generally regarded as heroic, such as Paul Revere and Thomas Edison.[25] Although many, including the editorial boards of the *New York Times* and Los Angeles Times, endorsed the standards and their reflection of a multicultural curriculum emphasis, public sentiment was largely opposed to them. The U.S. Senate passed a resolution condemning them 99–1 (the one opponent wanted a harsher condemnation). President Clinton's secretary of education, Richard Riley, distanced the administration from them saying, "this is not my view of how history should be taught in America's classrooms . . . our schools should teach our students to be proud of the Americans."[26] The National History Standards were eventually revised but also largely ignored by states and districts, highlighting the historic difficulty of reaching a meaningful consensus in education reform in light of consistently deep ideological divisions.

CURRENT ISSUES IN EDUCATION REFORM

The impact and implications of education reform's history have merged with key current issues since the 1990s and into the 21st century. Following is an examination of the most prominent present-day issues in education reform, including choice, vouchers, and charter schools; privatization; homeschooling; accountability, standards, and assessments; teacher quality, school environment, and school financing.

CHOICE

School choice initiatives are based on the premise that allowing parents to choose which schools their children attend is not only the fair thing to do but also an important strategy for improving public education. Instead of a one-size-fits-all model, choice programs are designed to offer parents various alternatives from which to pick the educational settings that they believe work best for their children.

The earliest expression of this critical and increasingly prominent aspect of education reform is often credited to the free-market champion author of the 1776 book *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith. In that book, Smith argued that parents are in the best position to decide how their children should be educated and that the state should give parents the money to hire suitable teachers. The view that the state should provide funding for poor families to secure a basic education for their children was also endorsed by famous patriot and writer Thomas Paine toward the end of the 18th century.

However, circumstances in 19th-century America would lead to a general consensus against the embryonic notions of school or education vouchers. Especially damaging was the prevalent anti-Catholic bias that existed in the United States following the large influx of largely Catholic immigrant groups. Because of what he viewed as the intolerable resistance of non-Catholics, New York City bishop John Hughes asked the Public School Society of New York for state aid for Catholic schools in 1840. After his request was denied, Hughes built his own system with private funds. Three decades later, President Ulysses Grant helped certify the United States's educational separation of church and state by explaining, "Not one dollar . . . shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian schools."[27]

Vouchers

The push for vouchers remained essentially dormant for almost a century. Despite support for voucher programs from advocates such as economist Milton

Friedman, who first proposed vouchers in 1955, popular and legal opposition to the practice of using public funds for private religious education was formidable. The period of the 1960s and 1970s were witness to a series of Supreme Court cases, including 1971's *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, that struck down attempts to provide state aid to religious schools in the form of teachers' salaries and instructional materials. During this time different forms of school choice began to emerge, including public school choice, in which students were able to attend schools outside their neighborhood but within their public school district.

Like many other education reforms, the choice movement owes a debt of gratitude to the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*. This highly critical evaluation of U.S. public schools both reflected and initiated concern about the failure of schools and helped create an environment in which more radical approaches could be encouraged. A new openness to vouchers for private schools was evident in the 1983 Supreme Court case *Mueller v. Allen*. In a 5-4 decision, the Court supported the concept of tuition tax credits, holding that a state government (in this case Minnesota) could allow taxpayers to deduct expenses incurred due to "tuition, textbooks, and transportation" at religious, elementary, and secondary schools.[28]

Momentum for vouchers also grew in 1990 following the release of John Chubb and Terry Moe's book *Politics, Markets, and American Schools*, in which they claimed that "choice, all by itself, has the capacity to bring about a transformation in public education." A dramatic expansion then took place throughout the 1990s in the use of public school choice and in the more controversial private and religious school choice programs based on vouchers. The most renowned and contested of these programs were the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the Cleveland Scholarship Program, and the Florida A+ Plan.

There are three different types of options that fit the umbrella term of *school choice*. The least disputed and most common of these is intradistrict choice. This is the kind of public choice that allows parents to select among schools within their home district. Magnet schools, which typically focus on a specialization, such as technology or fine arts, are examples of intradistrict choice, as much or all of their enrollment is made up of students from all parts of the district and admission is based on lottery and/or the demonstration of academic achievement.

A less frequent but similarly oriented choice plan is statewide or interdistrict choice. Under these programs, students are allowed to attend public schools outside their home district. Minnesota has led the way for such initiatives with 13 other states creating similar legislation. The majority of states without interdistrict laws are currently considering them.

The issue of vouchers is most associated with private school choice. These programs, which usually are at the center of arguments about choice,

permit parents to use public funds to send their children to private schools and, in many cases, religious schools.

Few issues in education, if any, are as intensely debated as private school vouchers. Supporters of the practice often argue that private school vouchers encourage equity by enabling students from families of low socioeconomic status, like their wealthier peers, to escape the troubled and inadequate public schools. In addition, these proponents also claim that private school vouchers will create competition that will spur innovation, accountability, and improvement in a public school system that serves as a monopoly providing poor services to its most vulnerable clients.

Opponents of private school vouchers generally contend these programs endanger the ideal of offering every student access to high-quality education by treating learning as a commodity rather than a public good. They point out how this competitive conception does not always work in the interest of the consumer. At best, they claim, private school vouchers are a kind of lifeboat that may help the fortunate few while leaving the majority of others stranded in a public system with depleted resources. In addition, voucher foes assert that allowing private schools to take public money with little oversight may lead to mismanagement or corruption.

Although the ideological divisions in the voucher debate are clear, they often do not fall along the common political or demographic lines. Vouchers are generally presented as something that conservatives and business types support and liberals and teachers' unions oppose. While that is often true, some of the strongest support for vouchers has come from individuals and groups that rarely endorse policies considered conservative. For instance, many recent studies have indicated that African Americans have posted higher levels of support for some form of private school vouchers than the general public.[29]

So how does the American public view private school vouchers, an issue almost completely off the radar less than 25 years ago? According to the 2002 Phi Beta Kappa/Gallup Poll on the Public's Attitudes Towards the Public Schools, the general public is split but increasingly supportive of the notion. In the poll, 52 percent of those surveyed said that they oppose allowing students to attend private school at "public expense." However, support for private school vouchers jumped 12 percentage points in just one year—from 34 to 46 percent. When this same question dropped the phrase "public expense," instead stating "the government would pay all or part of the tuition," 52 percent of respondents supported private school vouchers, an increase from 44 percent in 2001.[30]

Reasons for this increase of support may include the Supreme Court's provoucher decision in the 2002 case *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* and a high approval rating at the time of the survey for President George W. Bush,

who has publicly endorsed private school vouchers. However, when school voucher programs have been decided at the ballot box, the voters have usually defeated them by significant margins, as they did in Michigan and California initiatives during the 1990s.

The key questions of the voucher debate involve a wide range of legal, fiscal, social, and practical issues with potentially far-reaching implications: Are vouchers constitutional? Do they work? Do vouchers drain money from public schools? And, is there capacity to handle potentially expanded voucher programs?

The most vigorous arguments about vouchers often revolve around their constitutionality, specifically whether they infringe on church-state separation. Supporters of vouchers, who often draw comparisons between these programs and the enormously popular 1944 GI Bill, which provided educational support for veterans, claim the government has allowed public money in the past to go to private religious education and continues to do so, when, for instance, a student attending Notre Dame receives financial aid.[31] Proponents also point to recent state and Supreme Court rulings that have allowed more lenience in the application of public funds toward religious institutions.

Opponents of vouchers consistently assert that such mingling of public money and sectarian groups is a clear violation of the First Amendment's establishment clause, prohibiting government establishment or endorsement of religion. They often counter arguments that parents, not the government, actually would pay religious schools under voucher plans as legally irrelevant because public funds could still be used for religious instruction. As for claims that voucher funding would only pay for secular subjects, opponents argue that this would be impossible to enforce and further, that the public funds could actually violate discrimination laws in schools that make personnel decisions based on such factors as religious faith and sexual orientation.

The academic effectiveness of voucher programs is a particularly muddled aspect of the voucher debate. Despite the growing national dialogue about vouchers, many education reform experts explain that there are few studies about them that have been conducted by objective researchers with sound methodology. In addition, because there have been so few voucher programs, and those that exist have been in place for a relatively brief amount of time, reliable statistics demonstrating whether students and schools actually benefit from these programs are in short supply. Not surprisingly, many of the studies that are referenced point out that voucher programs are either great saviors or horrific failures.

Advocates on both sides of the voucher issue also argue about whether these programs are fiscally fair. Supporters believe that they are because they enable students from poor families to gain resources that can help them

attend better and safer schools. They claim that voucher programs are designed to provide additional money for educational support so that they do not poach already determined spending allocations. Regarding charges that broader voucher plans would unfairly deplete funding available to public schools, supporters explain that if public schools receive the same amount of money per pupil they will not suffer.

Opponents argue that even the most ambitious and supportive voucher plans usually are not able to cover a student's entire tuition, making such plans useful for the wealthy and perhaps the middle class but not for the poor, whom the programs are ostensibly designed to help. They usually believe that money that could go toward the establishment and maintenance of a voucher program would be more wisely spent on measures designed to improve instruction in struggling public schools, such as initiatives to reduce class size and to improve reading instruction.

Voucher combatants also disagree on the fundamental question of whether voucher programs are socially practical. Supporters assert that they are, pointing out that vouchers will lead to public school improvement, and over time, fewer transfers to private schools. This will help allow private schools to absorb more easily incoming students, and if there are too many students leaving public schools, more private schools will be created.

Those opposed to voucher programs argue that such plans undermine society's commitment to public education by establishing an unfair framework in which public schools will be required to accept all students while private schools will be free to reject students for a variety of reasons, including the ability to provide special education services and student noncompliance with often stricter codes of conduct.

Until recently, voucher opponents held the upper hand in this education reform battle, as there were few and isolated private school voucher programs across the United States. But the course of this issue, and perhaps the nature of public education in the United States, changed on the morning of June 27, 2002, when the U.S. Supreme Court delivered its decision for *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, allowing the Cleveland voucher program to continue and calling it "true public choice . . . [providing] benefits to a wide spectrum of individuals, defined only by financial need and residence in a particular district."[32]

Just days after this decision, state legislators in California, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and elsewhere organized plans for what they believe will be a new era of school choice. However, despite the crucial Supreme Court victory, voucher programs are by no means a fait accompli. Thirty-seven state constitutions contain language that prohibits state aid from going to religious schools. Even if such provisions are not insurmountable, they are at least likely to stall voucher plans.[33]

Forces opposing vouchers also can take some comfort in the fact that provoucher state ballot initiatives have failed six times since 1972, and numerous legislative efforts have suffered the same fate. The recent downturn in the economy has many states fighting just to maintain current levels of education spending, leading to the possibility that vouchers may enjoy their best prospects during economic boom times such as the 1990s. Furthermore, teachers' unions, which have led the effort to halt vouchers, appear not the least bit discouraged in the face of the legal setback from *Zelman.* Less than one week after the ruling, NEA president Bob Chase said, "And to the voucher ideologues we make this promise: we will expose your false promises. We will lay bare your lies . . . we will defeat you!"[34]

Charter Schools

Another form of choice that exploded in popularity during the 1990s and into the 21st century was charter schools. Under the charter school concept, a group of teachers or other would-be educators applied for permission from their local education authority to open a public school, operating with taxpayer dollars just like a regular public school. The difference is that charter schools are freed from many of the rules and regulations governing regular public schools that many feel cripple learning and stifle innovation. The schools operate under a contract, or "charter," with a local school board, state, or university(ies). In exchange for exemption from most state and local regulations, the schools, usually with a smaller, limited enrollment designed to enhance attention to student needs, must educate students according to an agreed-upon standard and must prove their success in order to gain renewal of the charter.

The rise of charter schools has been rapid and influential. At the beginning of 1991 there was not a single charter school in the United States. Ten years later there were almost 2,500 serving more than one-half million students.[35] One key reason for the rapid growth of charter schools is that they are a form of school choice that most stakeholders generally embrace in a broad, bipartisan fashion. Most Republicans like the emphasis on choice, competition, and deregulation, and most Democrats appreciate the fact that they are public schools, open to all, nonreligious, and accountable to public authorities. Political disputes over charter schools usually focus on which candidate is most committed to them, rather than which candidate supports them.

Charter schools do have their critics, however. One common charge against charter schools is that they create a kind of educational balkanization by usually serving students concentrated in low socioeconomic areas. Charter boosters often respond to this by explaining that they serve the same demographic characteristics as exist in the public school community in

which they are located. Further, they assert that the disproportionate percentage of minorities enrolled in charter schools is a reflection of the traditional public schools' failure to meet the needs of these groups.

Charter opponents also claim that, even after 10 years of existence, they have not demonstrably improved the achievement of their students or the performance of other public schools. Along with this, many believe that the innovations promised in charter school applications are often not delivered. Charter supporters answer this by pointing to studies that provide evidence that students and schools are improving because of the competition and accountability encouraged by charter schools. They also explain that charter schools respond to local conditions, meaning that what may be considered innovative in one area (such as block scheduling of classes, year-round schooling) may be common in another area.

Perhaps the most serious criticism of charter schools is that they need to be more accountable to the taxpayer, whose money supports their creation and maintenance. In defense of charter schools, advocates explain that in the rare cases when charter schools fail to meet their detailed goals, they can be sanctioned or even closed. Regular public schools, they argue, are the ones lacking accountability because if they fail to meet goals, which often are not articulated, they can and do remain open, continuing to poorly serve their students.

Although charter school advocates enjoy the overwhelming support of parents, businesspeople, and politicians, they often feel that teachers' unions are uncertain allies. The NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which staunchly oppose private school vouchers, state their support of charter schools, albeit with a number of conditions. The NEA, for instance, insists that charter schools should have no negative impact on the regular public school program, hire only licensed teachers, and not contribute to racial or ethnic segregation. Both unions also favor state caps on the number of charter schools. AFT president Sandra Feldman explains, "I'm in favor of charter schools that are accountable and adhere to the same standards as all public schools. We're not for charter schools that can just go off and do their own thing."[36] Charter proponents have also charged some union leadership with seeking to weaken state charter legislation through what they view as excessive restrictions on their number, authorizer eligibility, and regulatory independence.

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, included provisions for both public school choice and charter schools, further signaling the prominence of choice in current education reform. Although private school vouchers were not supported in the act, legal momentum and planned state legislation have elevated this avenue of choice to similarly high importance. Events of the

near future will likely be critical in determining whether choice becomes a cornerstone or footnote in the history of education reform.

PRIVATIZATION

Closely related to aspects of school choice is the issue of privatization in public education. The notion of turning the operation of public schools over to private companies is a controversial idea based on the widely accepted premise that what makes improving public schools so hard is that they are bogged down in a bureaucratic mire.

Advocates of privatization in public schools see the move as being an opportunity to provide the best of government and business. They contend that government's oversight function and its responsiveness to the needs of its citizens can be retained while taking advantage of private enterprise's ability to be more efficient, cut costs, and maximize production—in this case, student achievement. Advocates also point out that, like other major public services such as health care and defense, public schools have been and will always be partly about business.

Opponents of privatization and public education argue that, while this appears good on paper, it will not work efficiently in reality. Through privatization they see the individual needs of students, particularly those with special and often costly requirements, being sacrificed for the needs of corporate shareholders. They worry that the pressure for profit will replace student achievement as the driving force within schools. Many skeptics also do not accept the premise upon which the privatization plans are based, pointing out that private managers can be as inefficient or incompetent as public managers, if not more so.

Privatization efforts have had the most conspicuous impact on charter schools, as entrepreneurs recognized the business opportunity in working with the teachers and community activists who founded charter schools and were running an enterprise for the first time. Data varies on the proportion of the nation's charter schools that are run by for-profit companies, though estimates are usually placed at about 10 percent.

The most prominent for-profit school management company is Edison Schools (originally named the Edison Project). It was started in 1992 by entrepreneur Christopher Whittle, whose goal was to demonstrate how the market can improve the outcomes and efficiency of the public schools. The conditions for this venture were promising, coming at the beginning of a simultaneous wave of economic prosperity and education reform activity. Whittle proceeded to raise tens of millions of dollars and hired a well-respected team, including former Yale president Benno Schmidt, to design an exemplary school model.

When the first four Edison-managed schools opened at the beginning of the 1995–96 school year, the company began implementation of "the Edison design." This 10 point framework, still used today, emphasizes fundamentals such as varied instructional programs (including project-based learning and direct instruction), a longer school day and longer school year (198 days as opposed to the standard 180 days), a focus on technology integration (including providing every teacher with their own laptop computer), and a detailed standards-based, academically oriented curriculum. By the 1999–2000 school year, Edison was managing 79 schools and could boast that it had never lost a contract. Although still controversial and opposed by many traditional educators and teachers unions, Edison was enjoying mainly favorable media coverage and looked forward to an even greater academic and fiscal future.

Some of the same market factors that led to Edison's early success, however, contributed to its recent struggles. Precipitous drops in the stock market have witnessed a plunge in Edison's stock price from $36 a share in early 2001 to as low as 14¢ a share in mid-2002, and as of December 2002, it was selling at approximately $1.70 a share.[37] Edison did demonstrate success in its mission of delivering effective education and improving academic achievement in its schools, which were overwhelmingly located in impoverished areas, but these results often did not meet initial claims of Edison's boosters. This, as well as highly publicized failures in Edison-managed schools in New York City and Philadelphia, which resulted in lost contracts, has led to a decline in Edison's impact and an increase in the questioning of the market's ability to effectively run public schools. The complaints from school districts and charter school boards lodged against Edison are familiar ones often heaped upon traditional public school management—low test scores, high teacher turnover, and unsatisfactory "bang for the buck."

Edison Schools carries on, seeking to apply lessons learned in the still lucrative and potentially expanding market of public education management. Edison and others are now involved in "cyber charters," which are typically organized around an online curriculum, often targeting homeschooling families. A key issue to watch with cyber charters is the legislative fight regarding whether such schools should receive the same per-pupil funding as "brick-and-mortar schools."

HOMESCHOOLING

The ultimate form of school choice is the decision to educate one's own child at home. The homeschooling movement, like vouchers, charters, and privatization, has grown enormously over the past 30 years. Once generally considered to be the domain of highly religious parents and those from

counterculture, homeschooling has garnered steadily increasing measures of mainstream acceptance as a viable option for frustrated parents concerned that the public schools are not effectively educating or protecting their children.

Homeschooling in practice takes many different forms. For many it means duplicating school at home, complete with textbooks, report cards, and standardized tests. At the other end of the homeschooling spectrum is the practice of "unschooling," in which students pursue their studies according to their own interests and according to their own pace. Most homeschooling reflects a middle course in which parents mix methods and curricula.[38] Increasingly, homeschooling families are organizing co-ops to share resources and increase student socialization and are participating in Internet-based distance learning programs. The consensus among those who follow homeschooling is that there are at least 1 million U.S. students currently being educated at home. Reliable numbers are difficult to ascertain because states define and track homeschoolers in different ways and some parents do not comply with state rules requiring them to register their homeschooled children.

Homeschooling's appeal emanates from spiritual, financial, academic, and social concerns. Many of the earliest homeschooling families were seeking a way out from secularized public schools, which following legal and social development of the 1960s and 1970s were viewed as increasingly intolerant of religious expression. Enrollment in religious schools usually remained an option for such families, but many have decided that schooling their children at home makes too much financial sense to refuse, as the cost of supplies for a home school curriculum is consistently significantly less than the average cost of tuition at a private school.

Academic considerations also play a crucial role in homeschooling's growth. Many of the criticisms found in *A Nation at Risk* are echoed by homeschooling families: frustration with inefficient school bureaucracies, lack of time for quality academic instruction, and declining standards of achievement and discipline in schools.

Related to this is the well-established concern among homeschooling parents that schools are simply not a safe environment. This trend in thought spiked dramatically following a spate of school shootings by students, including the 1999 murder of 12 students and one teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

Despite the rising popularity of homeschooling, the movement has many critics. In the view of many professional educators and others, homeschooling remains a dangerously deregulated enterprise with an unacceptable lack of quality control. A resolution passed by the NEA argues that, "homeschooling programs cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience."[39]

Another concern is that some parents may be keeping their children out of school not because of the commonly stated reasons but rather because they do not want them to mix with children of other races or backgrounds or even so that they can work in a family business. In line with this argument is the contention that homeschooling seriously undermines the social development of a young person. Homeschooling supporters often counter that students too often develop poor and sometimes dangerous socialization traits in public schools. Critics respond however that the skills required to deal with the real world are rarely acquired within the walls of a home and that the sheltered isolation of homeschoolers may ultimately be detrimental to them and society.

The academic merits of homeschooling have received national attention following the victories of homeschooled students in recent national spelling bee competitions. In addition, most studies of homeschoolers' academic performance suggest that they generally achieve above national norms on standardized tests and in postsecondary academic endeavors. However, such studies cannot examine how those students would have performed had they stayed in public school, and they usually are unable to provide credible data regarding homeschoolers' social and emotional development.

By 1986, homeschooling had graduated from a fringe movement to a legally recognized activity practiced in all 50 states.[40] Disputes still often occur, nonetheless, between parents and state or local education officials about enforcement of homeschooling laws, which vary considerably across the country. Most states do not require parents to have specific qualifications for teaching their children at home, but most states do have provisions requiring that homeschooled students have regular evaluations or take standardized tests.

Recent trends in homeschooling have featured the evolution of the homeschooling industry, with the proliferation of for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations providing curricular materials specifically designed for homeschooling families. As the homeschooling movement has become larger and more accepted, relationships with public schools, such as homeschooled students' participation in public school extracurricular activities, have increased, seemingly benefiting both the homeschooled and the public school system. Whether such relationships also threaten these educational stakeholders remains to be seen.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability—the concept of holding schools, districts, teachers, and students responsible for academic achievement—has become the most essential element affecting the variety of current education reform efforts. Across the

United States, policymakers have moved decisively toward rewarding achievement and punishing failure in an effort to ensure that students receive a high-quality education and that the public's tax money is used efficiently.

All 50 states test students to determine what they have learned, and 45 states publish report cards on individual schools, based largely on test scores. More than half of the states publicly rate their schools, or at least identify low-performing ones, and 15 states have the legal authority to close, take over, or replace the staff and schools that have been identified as failing.[41]

This recent push for accountability is a modern manifestation of the history of education reform battles, in this case specifically seeking to prove what needs to be taught and how to measure whether this material has been effectively learned. This pursuit, combined with the back-to-basics sensibility of *A Nation at Risk*, has led to the formation and influence of accountability measures, the two most relevant of which are standards and assessments.

Standards

The underlying assumption of standards-based reform is one that harkens back to the early 20th-century conception of the educational ladder that offered all students the opportunity to meet high goals. For many supporters of standards, they represent the most effective means by which glaring gaps in student performance and expectations can be addressed, leading to a foundation of excellence and equity throughout the public school system.

Within this framework are different types of standards. Academic standards describe what students should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects at each grade level. Content standards describe basic agreement about the body of education knowledge that all students should know. Performance standards describe what level of demonstrated skill is sufficient for students to be ranked advanced, proficient, or below basic.

Public support for standards are strong, although an *Education Week* survey conducted in 2000 found higher levels of approval for the adaptation of standards among business leaders than among teachers. This popular support of academic standards has led states to put them into place. Every state but Iowa has some form of formal academic standards and 48 states have academic standards in the core subjects of English/language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Despite this widespread setting of academic standards, significant obstacles stand in the way of making them effective tools for educational progress. Standards advocates and critics often worry that standards are too vague to be truly meaningful. Many are also concerned about a "Goldilocks

phenomenon," which often finds educators thinking that standards are set properly while many parents, business leaders, policymakers, and others find them to be either too easy or too difficult.

Assessments (Testing)

The role of standards and the accountability discussion is inexorably linked to the more controversial issue of assessments. The testing policies established in every state are designed largely to find an accurate way to measure students' success as well as to hold schools accountable for results. The implementation and far-reaching implications of these tests are at the heart of accountability, and they have become an increasingly essential feature of education reform.

Assessment advocates often view statewide testing as a way to raise expectations and to help guarantee that students are held to the same high standards. Critics respond that testing too often narrows student learning to what is tested, leading instructors to "teach to the test" and cover only a sample of what students should know. In addition, they lament how tests tend to focus on what is easiest to measure rather than assessing the critical thinking skills students need to develop.

One of the key issues in the assessment debate concerns alignment, or how well state tests match state standards. Developing a clear and meaningful alignment between state standards and state assessments requires time, expertise, and money. Some states have invested in developing tests designed for alignment, while others have opted for partial alignment or "off the shelf" tests that do not necessarily reflect state standards. Since 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has administered periodic national tests in reading, math, science, writing, history, and geography, providing data on the achievement of students over time and across the country.

Another area of concern is the quality of state assessments. Many reform-minded testing experts are aiming to create assessments that elicit higher order critical-thinking, problem-solving, and communications skills rather than or in addition to the traditional multiple-choice approach that is considered effective at measuring more basic content knowledge. Assessments that measure the higher order skills are typically more open ended, with teachers judging students on written essays, on the process they used to solve a problem, and in some cases on a portfolio of their work over the course of the school year. Currently, almost all states include multiple-choice items in their assessments, most states include short answer items, approximately one-third include performance-based assessments in subjects other than English, and only two use portfolio assessments.

State assessments, particularly following the increased reliance on them in recent years, have brought to the surface another contentious aspect that has been associated with testing for years—bias. Although African Americans and most other minorities have recently demonstrated relative and absolute gains in standardized test scores, they still score much lower than whites as a group. Many educators and parents believe that it is partially, if not largely because the embedded cultural bias of standardized tests that draw primarily upon the experiences and sensibilities of middle-class white students. Critics also question what they consider to be the emphasis on these tests and the high stakes attached to them.

Social Promotion

State assessments are increasingly being applied to determine whether students advance to the next grade, attend summer school, and in some cases graduate. Led by reform efforts in the Chicago public schools during the mid-1990s, many school systems and states are implementing policies designed to restrict or end the practice of social promotion, instead basing student advancement to the next grade on whether he or she meets predetermined assessment benchmarks. Supporters of such policies argue that this is a way to raise expectations and convey the importance of academic achievement. Detractors claim that these policies are unfair because the schools implementing them often do not provide the held-back students with the tools they need to succeed, such as high-quality instruction, a strong curriculum, and support services. Further, they argue that retention, while perhaps successful in sending a message, does not actually help the student grow academically or socially.

Reconstitution

Procedures are also in place for schools that fail to meet collective assessment goals. One such method growing in frequency is reconstitution, in which a governing authority, usually a state, though sometimes a district, can replace any or all of a low-performing schools' staff. This drastic strategy to improve persistently failing schools has been explicitly endorsed in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.[42] Under this law, districts must implement corrective actions, such as replacing staff members if a school fails to make adequate progress for four consecutive years. After five consecutive years of inadequate progress, a district would be required to set up an alternative governance structure, such as reopening the school as a charter school or turning operation of a failing school over to the state.

Supporters of reconstitution hail its intolerance for the culture of failure within many schools and its recognition of the inability of such schools to

help themselves without severe intervention. Opponents of reconstitution worry that the approach wrongly blames teachers and school staff for conditions largely out of their control. Further, they argue that deficiencies in some school communities are so endemic that changing the staff in an attempt to improve a school will do little good and may in fact cause harm.

Because reconstitution is such a recent measure, it is unclear whether it has been an effective approach to strengthening the weakest of America's public schools. What is clear is that reconstitution represents another of the dramatically increased efforts to ensure accountability that have taken hold over the past 20 years.

Bilingual Education Programs

Adding to the complexity of this issue is the issue of how to properly address standards and assessments for students enrolled in bilingual education programs. The original objective of bilingual education was to ensure that students would not fall behind academically because of a poor command of the English language and to gradually teach them English as a second language. Proponents claimed that if language minority students were taught some subjects in their native tongue, they potentially could learn English without sacrificing content knowledge. The bilingual education's critics disagreed, arguing that this approach keeps students in a cycle of native language dependency and inhibits their progress toward English-language mastery.

Bilingual education programs gained traction in the 1970s and expanded into the 1990s. However, public sentiment against bilingual education has been growing and may threaten its existence as previously practiced. In 1998, California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 227 (Organized by software entrepreneur Ron Unz), which largely eliminated bilingual education from the public schools. Similar campaigns have also succeeded in Arizona and Massachusetts, and more are planned.

TEACHER QUALITY

In the final analysis, any effective education reform will need to positively influence the instruction that occurs inside a classroom. With this in mind, many recent education reform efforts have been focused on strengthening the background, training, and professional development of teachers.

Research consistently shows that teachers who have been trained in the subjects they teach perform better than teachers who lack subject-matter preparation. Yet on average, about one-third of teachers in public schools are assigned at least one class a day for which they have not been trained. This occurs even more frequently in low-performing schools. In addition, most

research also demonstrates that teachers are more effective when they possess at least a few years of classroom experience, yet more than 20 percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years. This high rate of turnover has had a destabilizing effect on schools and the profession as a whole.

The rise in demand for effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies that has occurred over the past 15 years is reaching a critical stage. Enrollment in public schools is expected to steadily rise until 2009, with a projected student figure reaching 48 million. Meanwhile, the average public school teacher at that time is expected to be in his or her mid 40s. Because of these projections, many districts are bracing for a wave of classroom vacancies over the course of the next 10 years.[43]

To address high attrition rates, many districts have introduced induction and mentoring programs for new teachers, and as of 2001, 10 states funded and required such programs. Many states and districts are also attempting to raise teacher compensation to make the profession more attractive to new workers and experienced educators. Experiments with such practices as forgiving student loans for future teachers have not been widespread but have demonstrated some success as an incentive to attract potential teachers.

Another way that states and districts have sought to improve teacher quality is by establishing stronger minimum requirements for initial licensure. Part of this approach has included increasing student teaching experience for prospective teachers. Currently, more than 20 states require a least 12 weeks of student teaching prior to the completion of a teacher preparation program. States have also turned to testing as a measure to ensure teacher quality. As of 2001, 37 states require prospective teachers to pass a basic skills test, 29 states require candidates to master a test of subject knowledge, and 24 states require passing a subject-specific pedagogy exam in order to be able to teach.[44]

Among all the teacher-quality reforms, none is more controversial within the education community as alternative certification, which allows teachers into the classroom without the traditional teacher training usually required. Proponents of alternative certification explain that Albert Einstein would not have been able to teach a high school physics class in a U.S. public school because he had not completed the pedagogical coursework required by state certification agencies. This mindset, they assert, is not only foolish but also a luxury that schools cannot afford, particularly in light of the anticipated teacher shortage.

One program leading the way in alternative certification has been Teach for America (TFA). Founded in 1990 by recent Princeton graduate Wendy Kopp and based on the Peace Corps model, TFA is a national corps of recent college graduates from a variety of academic backgrounds who commit to two years of teaching in public schools in low-income communities struggling with persistent teaching shortages. TFA, a largely privately sup-

ported organization, narrowly survived fiscal crises in the mid 1990s and as of 2002 had placed more than 8,000 teachers in U.S. classrooms where they have taught more than 1 million students.[45]

The federal government has recently become more vocal in advocating alternative certification programs as well as speaking out in favor of a de-emphasis on pedagogy in traditional teacher training programs. Commenting on his 2002 *Annual Report on Teacher Quality*, Secretary of Education Rod Paige stated:

> *Many schools of education have continued business as usual, focusing heavily on pedagogy . . . when the evidence cries out that what future teachers need most is a deeper understanding of the subject of the teaching, of how to monitor student progress, and how to help students who are falling behind.*[46]

The report also complained that while 45 states have set up alternative routes into the profession, many do not allow prospective teachers to skip "burdensome" education courses or student teaching, leading Paige to insist that, "we must tear down barriers preventing talented men and women from entering the teaching profession."

Representatives of teachers and teacher preparation programs took exception to the secretary's comments, claiming that his plans would lower the quality of teachers without addressing the root causes of existing teacher shortages, such as inadequate salaries and unappealing working conditions. The NEA's director of teacher quality, Gayla Hudson, said, "We see this as an insult to the teaching profession. . . . we have a nursing shortage, and nowhere is there any recommendation for six week courses for nurses."[47]

The coming years promise to be active ones in the teacher-quality debate, particularly regarding teacher-related provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act that require certification and demonstration of subject-matter competence for all new teachers in Title I programs receiving federal compensatory money. This reform, and many others, will likely go a long way in determining what kind of teachers will be working in tomorrow's classrooms.

SCHOOL FINANCING

It is often said that schools would function more effectively and improve more consistently if only they had access to more money. This common notion has led to a recent emphasis in the education reform field of school financing.

The manner in which school budgets are financed varies from state to state. Although the federal government has had an increasingly influential role in public schools over the past 40 years, it accounts for less than 10 percent of the more than $600 billion spent on public schools annually. States generally use a combination of income taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, and fees to provide

about half of public schools' budgets. Local districts typically contribute between 40 to 55 percent, drawn mostly from local property taxes, and the remaining portion of the budget comes from the federal government. However, every state creates school budgets slightly differently, and the amount of funding tends to vary dramatically, depending on fluctuating property values.

Critics of the commonly applied property tax–based system of school financing argue that it is inherently inequitable, saddling the poorest areas with the fewest financial resources. Supporters contend that it is fair as wealthier residents pay more for higher-quality public schools and that even in states with the greatest funding gaps the difference accounts for only about a $10 a day difference in per-pupil spending.

However, attacks on the funding gap are accelerating. In 1993, Michigan replaced a property tax–based system with one financed largely by an increase in state sales taxes. Currently, there are more than 20 lawsuits seeking reform of state financing of public education. Among these is the closely watched *Williams v. State of California*, in which the plaintiffs cite the deplorable conditions in school districts across the state and ask the court to require the state to ensure the provision of certain educational basics such as qualified teachers, safe facilities, and textbooks.[46]

Related to the reform of school financing is the issue of school construction. This is the focus of many educational reformers because of the burden shouldered by local districts to pay for repairs to and construction of school buildings, particularly in this era of rising student enrollment.

Advocates in this discussion often argue for a greater state role in contributing to much-needed repairs and construction of schools. They point to a 2000 NEA report placing a whopping $268 billion price tag on the cost of needed school repairs and construction. In the mid- to late 1990s the number of bills passed by state legislatures increased significantly as did the number of states making meaningful changes to their school construction financing system toward equalized funding.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A great deal of recent education reform activity has focused on factors affecting the culture of learning. In an effort to create schools in which students' academic, emotional, and social needs are respected and nurtured, many policies have been implemented to reduce class size and ensure safety.

Class-size Reduction

In recent years, reducing class size has become a leading school improvement strategy. More than 40 states now have class-size reduction initiatives

in place. The reasoning behind such initiatives is rather direct: With fewer students, teachers will be able to provide each of them with more individual attention that will result in greater interest in achievement in school.

Class-size reduction has a wide range of supporters including teachers' unions and the federal government, which in 2000 created a federal class-size reduction program, giving states funding to recruit, hire, and train new teachers. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, that program was consolidated into a more general teacher-quality block grant program funded by almost $3 billion for 2002.

Research has tended to find consistent benefits of small class size, particularly for students living in poverty. However, reducing class size is more expensive than many other school improvement ideas. Another concern is that, with many districts already facing shortages of qualified teachers, the additional classes created will be filled by unprepared teachers.

Such a situation was experienced in California following its class-size reduction initiative, which began in 1996. In the first year of implementation, more than 20 percent of the new teachers hired in that state had only emergency credentials. Hit especially hard were schools serving predominantly poor and minority students. To further complicate matters, the ensuing search for new instructional space led administrators to carve classrooms out of closets and to erect portable classrooms on playgrounds.

California's experience has led some researchers to investigate other potentially more cost-effective strategies, such as improved professional development for teachers. An ominous note for class-size reduction advocates was sounded by the economic downturn of 2001 and 2002, which has led several California districts facing budget shortfalls to consider eliminating part or all of these programs.

School Safety Policies

Another set of reforms intended to improve the school environment has focused on ensuring students' protection from violence and threats of violence. Installing metal detectors, practicing hostage drills, and conducting anger management training were certainly not imagined by Horace Mann or John Dewey when they helped build the U.S. public school system, but they are often a reality in the public schools of today.

The tragic rash of school shootings across the United States during the 1990s led to a public perception that school violence was on the rise. An April 2000 Gallup poll found 63 percent of parents with children in school believing that it was very likely or somewhat likely that a Columbine-style shooting could occur in their community. Although recent studies by the U.S. Department of Education and Justice indicate that overall violent

crime rates in schools actually dropped throughout the 1990s from their peak in 1993, many schools and districts have added policies designed to ensure students' safety.

Among these measures are zero-tolerance policies for students who engage in violent acts, students found with weapons on school grounds, or students who have made threats of violence against teachers or other students. Supporters of such policies appreciate the straight, no-nonsense approach that conveys the seriousness of infractions. However, several cases of zero-tolerance policy implementation have struck many in the public as clearly running counter to common sense.

An example is a 2002 Texas case in which a 16-year-old honors student with no disciplinary record was found with a bread knife in the back of his truck. His explanation that it belonged to his grandmother and must have fallen out when he was transporting boxes for her was vouched for by his parents and believed by school administrators. Nevertheless, under the zero-tolerance policy, the student was expelled for one year and ordered to attend a juvenile education program for one year. Although the student's penalty was later reduced to a five-day suspension, the case illustrated the complex intersection of confusing legal mandates, fear of liability, and fair and effective means of protecting students.[49]

Many educators, administrators, and students feel that preventive measures can be effective in creating a healthier learning environment. Among the methods often implemented are service learning and character education curriculum, conflict resolution programs, and other support systems that seek to address the root causes of school violence including student isolation, disengagement from learning, and home stress.

A highly publicized approach to create secure and orderly learning environments centers on the implementation of dress codes, often requiring school uniforms. In 1996, President Bill Clinton endorsed the idea in his State of the Union address, and the popularity of such policies jumped. School uniforms appeal to many because they bring to mind visions of more orderly public schools of the past, and in areas of high gang activity, they may help avoid conflicts that arise over opposing colors or symbols. School uniform advocates cite reports from Long Beach, California, the first large urban school district in the nation to institute a mandatory uniform policy. Studies there indicate that between 1994, when uniforms were first required for all students up to ninth grade, and 1998, there was a significant drop in school crime, assaults committed on school property, and incidents of school vandalism, and a surge in average attendance to an all-time district high. Critics decry the way that school uniform policies repress freedom of expression and dispute data, including findings from studies of Long Beach's policy in the 1990s, linking these policies to a reduction in school violence.

They claim that such data is overblown in significance and may be the result of many other factors.

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION REFORM

The era of education reform sparked by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* shows few signs of retreating in activity. In fact, recent events suggest that the debates about the future of education reform will continue to be contentious and increasingly influential in determining the scope and nature of elementary and secondary schooling in the United States.

The 2002 Supreme Court decision in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* has definitively moved the issue of vouchers into the center of current education reform issues. The Court's 5-4 decision allowing the use of public money for private schools was described by President George W. Bush as "just as historic" as the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* ending legalized segregation in public schools.[50] The ruling has mobilized advocates on each side of the issue nationally and will likely lead to a significant increase in activity in state legislatures to implement and restrict voucher programs. Voucher advocates have already initiated lawsuits in Maine and Washington challenging the Blaine Amendments and compelled-support clauses of state constitutions, which have served as legal barriers to state support of religious institutions. Voucher supporters are encouraged that the prejudicial history of the Blaine Amendments leave them especially vulnerable to legal attack. Many antivoucher strategists, including teacher union leaders, maintain that the legal issue involving vouchers is no longer salient, indicating that voters and elected officials will ultimately decide whether voucher programs will be enacted.

Another emerging issue in the voucher movement is whether state funds earmarked for disabled children should be able to be used by parents to enroll those children in any school. This is one recommendation of the 2002 President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education. If accepted by the Bush administration, the proposal, which does not require congressional approval, would, according to Stanford political science professor Terry Moe,

- Use federal special education funds to help support services in public charter schools and private schools in districts that offer the same services in the traditional public schools, so long as the charter or private schools are held to the same accountability and standards.
- Use special education funds to pay for private services such as speech therapy when parents of traditional public school special education students are not satisfied with the academic progress of their children.[51]

Critics warn that the commission's recommendation may divert funding from current special education programs offered by traditional public schools. But popular and legal momentum currently and clearly suggests that implementation of such policies will be enacted.

The voucher movement is also moving ahead with advocacy of giving parents tax credits to compensate them for private school tuition (and perhaps books, transportation, and other expenses). A few states, such as Minnesota and Illinois, have adopted such measures. Moe notes the more recent development of allowing tax credits to business firms for allocating money toward specially constituted scholarship foundations, which would then distribute vouchers to qualified children on the basis of need. Pennsylvania and Florida have already adopted such programs; business firms, often preferring to earmark their money for deserving education programs rather than see it dumped into the general fund, have responded by pouring many millions of dollars into their states' scholarship funds.[52]

It will also be interesting to observe whether the voucher debate continues to forge uncommon alliances and perhaps unintended consequences. Political champions of vouchers are usually Republicans, often with a very conservative orientation. Many of their greatest allies in this debate have been the poor families in struggling urban schools who otherwise generally overwhelmingly reject them in the voting booth. In addition, many expect that if future voucher programs propose to extend into more suburban and white areas with broader, more expensive, and increasingly religious educational options, support for the movement will dwindle.

The 2004 presidential election may also provide a great deal of insight into the relevance and potential impact of school vouchers as a political issue. President Bush, a strong advocate of vouchers, will likely run against one of the current field of declared and expected Democrat candidates, all whom have declared varying degrees of opposition to school vouchers that allow the use of public funds at private and religious schools.

One area of education reform that generally has had bipartisan support is charter schools. The dramatic and consistent growth in charter schools since their inception in the early 1990s, received a significant federal boost with provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act. However, battles in state legislatures are increasing and could potentially obstruct or even derail charter school growth.

A key issue of contention at the center of much state level charter school discussion is how much money is spent and how this money is spent. In March 2002, the California State Board of Education reduced funding to 46 charter schools after an audit found the schools failed to follow state spending guidelines. Charters that contract with private educational maintenance organizations, such as Edison Schools, also have come under in-

creased scrutiny because of concerns about their financial future and academic achievement.

In addition, California policymakers are also looking at the proliferation of nonclassroom-based charter schools, including home study schools, independent study programs, and distance learning schools (sometimes labeled "cyber charters") to ensure that financial concerns are being addressed. Other states, including Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, have experienced legal battles involving cyber charters, with opponents claiming that because such schools do not physically enroll students, they are ineligible for state funding. Legislative and legal outcomes of these cases will be examined across the United States as cyber charters develop and perhaps grow in prominence.

Like the charter school movement, homeschooling exploded in popularity during the 1990s and also faces hurdles to potential growth. The slumping U.S. economy since 2000 may make parents of homeschoolers unable to stay home and may cause the financial commitment to educating their own children at home to become prohibitive. Recent legislative challenges to homeschooling, particularly on grounds of accountability, have also popped up in California and Illinois, though they have not developed much political traction. A more daunting challenge to homeschooling may be the result of the movement's success, namely the growth in overall school choice, including vouchers and charter schools, that could lead many families to keep their children in or return their children to the public schools.

Accountability has established strong footing on the education reform landscape and will likely continue to grow in importance, particularly in the wake of mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act that allow children in schools deemed to be failing an option to attend better-performing ones. Among the recent accountability measures that will attract attention, particularly in large urban districts, is New York City's new transfer policy announced in December 2002. This new transfer process will feature letters describing transfer options mailed to parents of students in failing schools in the early spring of 2003, a May 2003 deadline for parents to request transfers, and notification to parents of new school assignments for children whose transfers have been approved effective for the 2003–4 school year. The Department of Education of New York City plans to address the widespread ignorance of and confusion surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act's transfer options by launching an advertising campaign via local newspapers, posters, and the Internet describing parents' rights and options.[53]

Some school officials have circumvented these transfer provisions claiming that a lack of space in good schools and a dearth of qualified teachers hamper implementation. In July 2002, Chicago unveiled a plan in which

pupils in 50 of the federally identified 179 failing elementary in the district would be allowed to move into higher-performing schools. But they could choose from a list of only 90 schools and could not pick a school more than three miles away. Chicago public schools CEO Arne Duncan explained that, "We fully support the spirit of the law, but there is a practical reality here that we have to deal with. If every student in every school exercised choice, there would be a great deal of chaos in the system. We simply don't have enough space for the students, and we do not think busing kids across the city is the answer to better schools."[54] Such attitudes concern the federal government and portend conflict. In November 2002, Undersecretary of Education Eugene Hickok addressed the failure of states and school systems to implement provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act by stating, "Watch us. We are going to get pretty aggressive. . . . You will see much activity in pushing states to implement the law."[55]

Central to future discussions of accountability is how to define the term *failing school*, which has significant consequences. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, "failing schools" are those failing to make "adequate yearly progress" as defined by each state. To those who favor state and local control of school standards, leaving standards to each state is a welcome feature of the legislation, designed to prevent the federal bureaucracy from interfering in local schools. But to those who do not trust state and local school boards to properly administer effective intervention, allowing the states to set standards in effect allows them to evade the intent of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The *failing school* label is expected to become a pressing issue as more of the No Child Left Behind Act's provisions take effect, with stakeholders seeking to reach some consensus as to what a "failing school" actually is. Tied closely to this designation is the growing emphasis across the United States on standardized assessments. The increased reliance on these tests continues to attract criticism from opponents of policies seeking to end social promotion of students. The most prominent district with an anti-social-promotion policy, the Chicago public schools, released figures in September 2002 showing that of the 32,838 students in the third, sixth, and eighth grades who were required to attend summer school in 2002, 13,308—nearly 41 percent—did not qualify for promotion to the next grade. Most of those children failed the end-of-summer test; some never showed up to take it or never enrolled in summer school as required. The numbers were the highest since the inception of the program in 1997 and represented a sharp upward spike from 2001.[56]

District leaders defend the program, saying the higher retention rates were produced by raising the bar that students must meet to move on to the next grade. That bar combines standardized-test scores with factors such as

grades, classroom tests, homework completion, and attendance. But opponents counter that the figures show that this and similar policies do not achieve their goal and in fact harm those who are being held back. How Chicago deals with this issue will be closely watched in cities with similar programs, such as Baltimore and Boston, as well as many other districts and states around the nation.

The trend toward the dismantling of bilingual education programs established in ballot initiatives in California in 1998 and Arizona in 2000 experienced mixed results in two key state measures during the 2002 elections. Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly approved a measure making it more difficult for a child to receive a waiver of exemption from mandatory bilingual education and also giving English-learning students only one year in English immersion, after which they are to be placed in a mainstream classroom. A similar ballot measure in Colorado was decisively defeated. Advocates on each side of this issue are mobilizing for future state ballot initiatives, though momentum appears to be on the side of those wishing to increase English immersion programs, who take heart in surveys such as the 2003 report published by the nonpartisan opinion-research group Public Agenda that indicate that immigrants are no more likely than the general public to support bilingual education in public schools.

The attention given to school choice, homeschooling, and accountability over the past decade has somewhat overshadowed a critical and simmering struggle over ensuring teacher quality. This issue will likely rise in prominence with the expected departure of a high percentage of experienced teachers nationally over the next five to 15 years. Although teacher certification is primarily the responsibility of the states, the George W. Bush administration has recently increased the federal voice in the matter through portions of the No Child Left Behind Act that require all teachers in core academic subjects be "highly qualified," defined in the act as having full state certification and possessing solid content knowledge of the subjects taught, by the end of the 2005–6 school year. This provision has many critics worried that an anticipated teacher shortage will worsen if this part of the law is strictly enforced. Additionally, the Bush administration's outspoken support of alternative certification programs designed to increase the quantity and diversity of the teacher candidate pool could also grow in relevance and opposition, particularly if the 2004 presidential election features President Bush against a Democrat candidate with strong backing from the generally anti–alternative certification teachers' unions.

Voucher proponents argue that teacher quality will be enhanced through changes induced by competition, including better salary, teaching freedom, strengthened classroom discipline and control, and innovative

methods that could give teachers increased stature and compensation as skilled and respected professionals. However, in the limited voucher programs that do currently exist, significant changes in these areas have not been prominent.

The most significant education reform developments over the next few years may occur in the field of school financing. On December 11, 2002, the Supreme Court of Ohio declared the way the state funds its education system as unconstitutional. The court's ruling in *DeRolph v. State* found that the current school funding system violates Ohio's constitution, a complete systematic overhaul of school funding is needed, and the General Assembly of Ohio must enact a new school funding system that is thorough and efficient. Other states have had similar rulings in the recent past, and others, including California, have lawsuits challenging various aspects of state funding polices pending.

The finance-related education reform issue of class-size reduction will also likely be a focus of increased scrutiny, as reports begin to trickle in relating to class-size reduction initiatives of the 1990s. While some reports, such as the 2002 California Class Size Reduction Research Consortium report, indicate that there is not a strong association between student achievement and class-size reduction, class-size reduction advocates are encouraged by a major victory in November 2002's Amendment 9 ballot initiative of Florida that will provide $20–$27.5 billion of state money over nine years for the construction of classrooms. Provisions of Amendment 9 require that there will be no more than 18 students in kindergarten to third-grade classrooms, 22 students for grades 4 through 8, and 25 students for grades 9 through 12.[57]

Two other strategies intended to improve the school safety environment popular during the 1990s have slowed in recent years. District adoption of zero-tolerance measures appear to have plateaued, partially as a response to the numerous local stories of what many feel are their unfair and illogical implementation. However, another highly publicized violent school tragedy would likely increase calls for stricter and more indiscriminate treatment of discipline offenses. Policies requiring students to wear school uniforms or to adhere to dress codes, while still in place in many schools and districts around the country, also have diminished in frequency, and there is little evidence that such policies will soon regain the popularity they enjoyed in their heyday of the mid-1990s.

The movements of education reform's past and present have reflected a steadfast hope and faith in public schools' ability to ensure promises of equity, opportunity, prosperity, and excellence. Perhaps the most secure prediction that can be made about the future of education reform is that the outcomes resulting from the current debates will, in the final analysis, pro-

foundly affect the educational experience for future generations and will determine whether that hope and faith in public schools will be redeemed.

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