

Federal-State Education Policy Chronology 1944-2002

This summary lists key events and developments in the history of federal education policy since the mid-twentieth century. It has been created for the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, a national initiative led by the New York State Archives and funded by The New York Community Trust – Wallace Foundation Special Projects Fund.

On the project's website (www.sifepp.nysed.gov), you will find this chronology, a list of key federal education policymakers, a historical overview essay, and other background materials on education policy, as well as access to archival materials nationwide related to education policy.

1944-1959

- 1944 **Servicemen's Adjustment Act (GI Bill)** provides education to 7.8 million veterans (2.2 million to higher education), breaking the link between income and educational opportunity.
- 1944-1959 In 1940s, **progressive educational philosophy**, influenced by John Dewey, and New Deal liberalism predominant among educators, but new emphasis on science and technology emerges after 1957.
- Life Adjustment Movement**, embraced by U.S. Office of Education. Calls for curriculum to educate all students to meet the problems of living, rather than separate curricula for college, vocations, general skills. This surge of progressivism fades by end of 1950s, opposed by academically oriented educators and policy makers.
- Interest in federal aid to education** focuses on (1) unequal educational opportunity, (2) disparities between North and South, urban and rural, (3) inequalities between black and white segregated schools, (4) inadequate physical plants, (5) teacher shortages, and (6) outdated curriculum. But controversy over aid to sectarian schools, segregation, and local control prevent enactment of federal programs.
- 1947 **Educational Testing Service (ETS)** sets foundation for standardized testing as the basis for admission to higher education, favors academic learning over progressive goals.
- 1948 **New York—Boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES)** established to "get people working together across district lines" and provide shared educational services in rural areas.
- 1949 **Anti-subversion laws** passed by many states, including New York's Feinberg Law, require loyalty oaths and aim to remove from schools employees accused of "treasonable or seditious" words or acts.

Federal-State Education Policy Chronology

- 1953 **Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)** established. Includes the U.S. Office of Education.
- 1954 **Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Board of Education***, rules that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. This case preceded by cases in Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas.
- 1957 **Arkansas—Little Rock desegregation crisis** forces first federal intervention to enforce *Brown*.
- 1958 **National Defense Education Act (NDEA)**, in response to Cold War and *Sputnik*, provides federal aid for science, math, foreign language, and guidance, and establishes forgivable loans for higher education costs for prospective elementary and secondary teachers. Reasserts emphasis on academic fundamentals.
-

1960-1969

- 1960 ***The Process of Active Learning***, NSF-sponsored conference report supports “activity learning” (versus passive students and active teachers). Led to Jerome Bruner’s *Man: A Course of Study (MACOS)* in 1962, calling for research-based curriculum stressing critical thinking, collaboration, and questioning of traditional thought and values. Met strong resistance and was never implemented.
- Vice President Johnson develops education agenda**, later the core of the “Great Society” program.
- 1962 **Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA)**
- 1963 **Vocational Education Act**
- Bilingual Education** established in Dade County, Florida, to serve Cuban immigrant community.
- 1964 **Civil Rights Act, Title VI**, links federal funds to non-discrimination, supports desegregation activities. U.S. Office of Education releases *Compensatory Education for Cultural Deprivation*.
- 1965 **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title 1**. Most money allocated to meet needs of educationally deprived children in public and non-public schools. Funds go through states to school districts and must meet federal and state guidelines.
- Title III funds “innovative projects”** (open classrooms, team teaching, alternative schools, etc.)

Title V provides direct federal aid to strengthen state education agencies.

Operation Head Start established.

“Compensatory education” gains currency, emphasizing that to attain the Sputnik-inspired academic objectives of the late 1950s for poor, urban, minority students, additional financial aid is essential.

- 1966 **Coleman Report (*Equality of Educational Opportunity*)**, commissioned under Civil Rights Act of 1964, finds that academic achievement is more related to the student's family background than to the quality of the school.
- 1968-1971 **Supreme Court on desegregation.** The court, in *Green v. New Kent County School Board*, requires local boards to develop workable desegregation plans; in *U. S. v. Montgomery County* rules that a federal judge can order integration of school staffs; and in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* affirms constitutionality of mandatory desegregation.
- 1968 **Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Title VII of ESEA).** It left open whether its purpose was to maintain the language and culture of non-English-speaking children or provide a transition to English-speaking classes. The 1978 amendment to the act emphasized the latter intent. Amended also in 1974, 1984, 1988, 1994 and 2001 as part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).
- 1969 **President Nixon administration** opposed Great Society emphasis on social functions of schools and the needs of disadvantaged groups, emphasized reduced federal role, state and local control, and improvements in academic education. Nixon and Ford administrations try unsuccessfully to eliminate the categorical approach to federal funding in favor of block grants.

School busing . President Nixon distinguishes de jure segregation from de facto segregation. Commits to fight de jure segregation while preserving neighborhood schools. School busing to end segregation and achieve integration becomes volatile national issue.

Basic education movement begins to emerge in the late 1970s.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) federally funded to carry out periodic sample surveys of student academic achievement. Results are to be reported by the nation and regions, but not by individual states, districts, or students.

1970-1979

- 1970 **Experimental Schools Program (ESP) and the National Institute of Education (NIE)** launched by President Nixon to link educational research and practice. (NIE absorbed into OERI in 1985, below.)
- 1972 **Title IX of the Civil Rights Act bans sex discrimination** in all education programs and activities receiving federal funds.
- 1974 **Supreme Court on Limited English Proficient education.** In *Lau v. Nichols* the court rules that school districts must provide remedies for non-English-speaking children so that they can have access to meaningful education.
- Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974** provides that no state shall deny equal educational opportunity on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin.
- ASPIRA Consent Decree** in New York City requires that limited-English-proficient (LEP) students be taught at least partly in their native language.
- 1975 **Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975** (PL 94-142) mandates that each handicapped child have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and be educated in the least restrictive environment.
- 1979-1983 **New York Regents Action Plan for Improvement of Elementary and Secondary Education** developed and approved. The nation's first comprehensive reform plan based on standards for student achievement and school and teacher accountability.
- 1979 **Department of Education Organization Act**, signed by President Carter, established the cabinet-level department. A coalition of national organizations supported this effort, passed by narrow margins in both houses.
- Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI)** established, but never attained funding or stature commensurate with research agencies in other fields, such as health, science, and transportation.
-

1980-1989

- 1980s-present **Standards and Accountability Movement**, responding to perceived decline of education and building on basic education movement, calls for and establishes standards to be assessed by standardized tests. Most states establish content and skill standards. The effectiveness of schools and educators at all levels are assessed by standardized tests.
- 1981 **Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act**, revision of ESEA, addresses concerns about waste, inefficiency, and bureaucracy. Some federal funds consolidated into block grants to the states, assuring greater state control over spending.
- 1983 ***A Nation at Risk: The Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education***. President Reagan's Department of Education report finds inadequate or declining achievement scores, graduation rates, expectations of students, and focus on academics. Criticizes absence of standards and calls for major reforms.
- 1985-present **Charter schools movement**, begun in 1985, grows through the 1990s, with 40 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia having passed charter school legislation by 2004.
- 1986 ***A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century***, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation, calls for national teacher standards, restructuring of schools, increased teacher salaries, and aid for minorities becoming teachers.
- 1988 **NAEP revised** to authorize state-by-state samples and reporting of results.
- 1989 **National Education Summit** convened by President Bush and the National Governors' Association at Charlottesville, VA. First statement of National Goals for Education approved.
-

1990-1999

1991 **America 2000.** Bush administration proposal for national standards, national standardized testing, and involvement of researchers, business, and labor in curriculum development. America 2000 Act not passed, but funds authorized for supporting voluntary national curriculum standards.

1993, 1995 **Sandia Report** and **The Manufactured Crisis**, two major reports, challenge the conclusions of *A Nation at Risk*.

1994 **Educate America Act: Goals 2000.** Clinton administration adds two goals to the National Educational Goals: increased parental involvement and professional development for teachers. Provides support to states to develop standards and assessments.

Reauthorization of ESEA. Title I revised to require that economically disadvantaged students be assessed using the same state tests given to all other students; schools with low performance are to be identified and provided extra assistance as schools "in need of improvement."

Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of ESEA) amended.

1996-1997 **New York Learning Standards** approved in 1996 and phased in beginning in 1997. Plan aims to set high standards and revise assessment, build the capacity of schools to support learning, and develop institutional accountability with public reporting.

1998 **Perkins Career and Technical Assistance Act**

Workforce Investment Act

California Proposition 227 dismantles bilingual education in California public schools.

2000-present

- 2000 **Supreme Court on aid to private/religious education**, in *Mitchell v. Helms*, rules 6-3 to uphold the provision of federal aid to religious schools in the form of computers and library books.
- 2001 **National Education Summit**. Governors, business leaders, and educators commit to continuing emphasis on standards, paying experienced teachers more to teach in low-performing schools, creating high standards for prospective teachers, and increasing resources for education.
- No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**, a reauthorization of ESEA, enacted with bi-partisan support. Requires: All students to be “proficient” in reading, mathematics, and science by 2014, with Adequate Yearly Progress measures to determine school success; annual standardized tests (developed by the states) in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics; reports from all schools by disaggregated groups of students; sanctions on schools not meeting AYP requirements; school plans to close achievement gaps. Opponents (including NSBA, AASA, NEA, National Conference of State Legislatures) claim that low funding and high costs will create financial crisis for state and local governments.
- English Language Acquisition Act** (part of NCLB) replaces Bilingual Education Act; requires that LEP students be tested in English after three years in the U.S.
- 2002 **Supreme Court on aid to private/religious education**, upholds Cleveland's school choice program allowing the use of public funds to provide vouchers for children to attend private and religious schools.