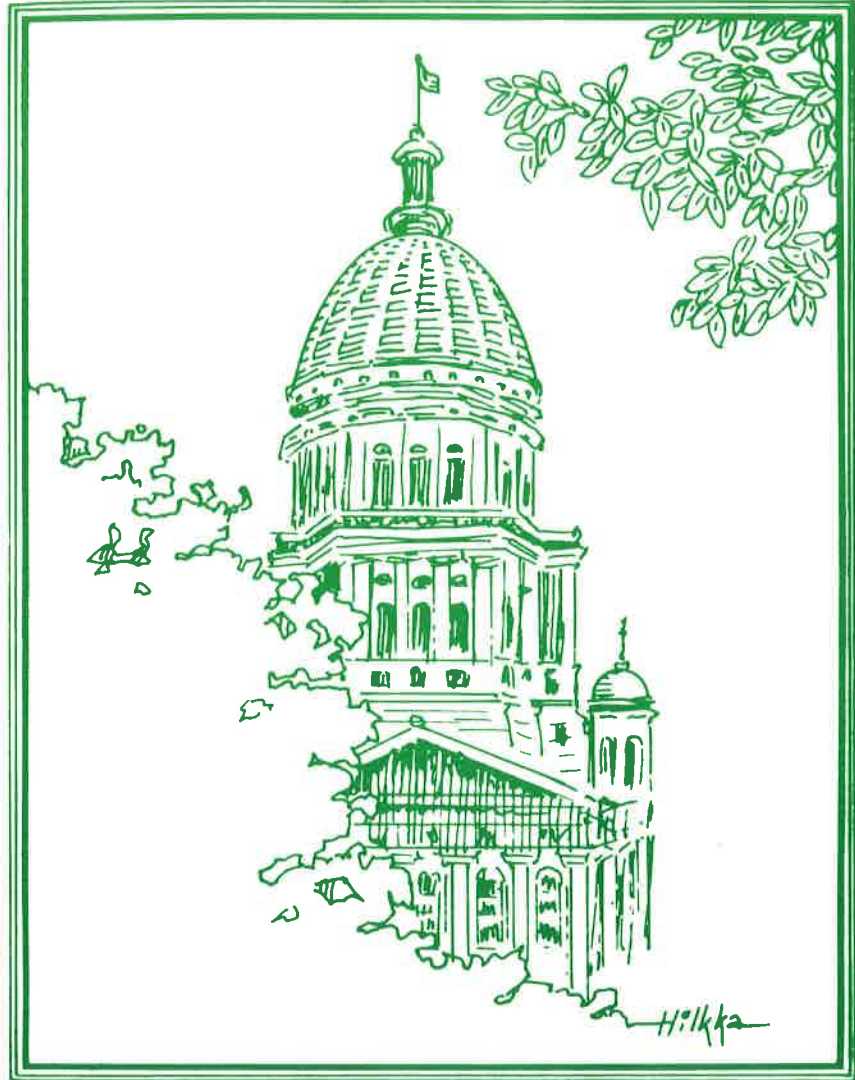


VOL XI, No.2  
MAY, 1985

# FRESHBLOODS

IN EDUCATION



## STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES: Leadership and Challenge

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Burnes  
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Glenn  
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The *Publications Manual* of the American Psychological Association (Sec. Ed. 1974) should be followed in preparing manuscripts.

Advertising rates: 1 page \$200; half page ads \$110.00; classified ads: up to 50 words, \$8.00, 51-100 words, \$15.00. Address: Business Manager *Thresholds in Education*, P.O. Box 771, DeKalb, IL 60115.

*Thresholds* is entered as Third Class Mail at the Post Office in DeKalb, Illinois under permit number 120.

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**Subscription Information.** Subscription rates are as follows: one year \$12.00, two years \$23.00, three years, \$33.00. For foreign subscriptions other than Canadian add \$3.50 more per year. Send to Editor, *Thresholds in Education*, P.O. Box 771, DeKalb, IL 60115.

*Thresholds* is a refereed journal published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

# An Historical Examination of State Educational Agencies

By Patricia F. First

The state education agency is the state's technical, professional, and managerial department for education. Although their history is long, state education agencies (SEAs) have had only small professional staffs for most of their existence. As late as 1900, there were only 177 professionals in all state departments of education combined (Beach and Gibbs, 1952). Today there are more than 13,000 professional staff in fifty SEAs (CCSSO, 1983).

Because of the intertwining of their governance roles, the history of these three entities--state education agencies, the state boards of education and the chief state school officers--is examined together. The purpose of this article is to describe the emergence of state control of education, the conflicting relationships with other state entities of education, and the evolution of various functions of the state education agencies.

## Emergence of State Control

The US Constitution made no mention of education and left that function to the respective states. Most states provided that common schools were to be established in each town or district, with most of the support coming from local taxes, a practice that led to the strong tradition of local control of schools. As concern for the welfare of students to be served by public schools increased, separate structures for their governance were created. At the local level, this led to separating school committees from town councils. At the state level, it led to the creation of the state agency education (Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976). The first special structure for education governance at the state level was the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, in 1784. At that time, the Regents had jurisdiction only over academies and colleges. Supervision of the public schools was added to their responsibilities in 1904 (Cubberly, 1927). The Michigan SEA, established in 1829, was the first SEA to be established which has continued to the present.

The most significant move toward establishing a state board of education for the public was the creation of the Massachusetts State Board of Education in 1837. The governor, the lieutenant-governor, and eight citizens appointed by the governor for eight-year staggered terms, comprised the board. Horace Mann, the first secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, made the state board of education and the state superintendency respected and necessary

agencies for education and for government (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1985).

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By 1900, thirty-four states had established state boards of education (Keesecker, 1950). Originally, many of these boards were composed completely, or in part, of ex officio members. Ex officio members were generally heads of various state departments and were selected by the Governor to coordinate the provision of state services. However, turn of the century reformers called for the separation of education and partisan politics (Wirt and Kirst, 1982). Most states eventually removed all or most ex officio members and provided state board membership for lay citizen involvement in educational policy making. Today, 21 states have one to three ex officio members on their state boards of education. Among these, the chief state school officer is an ex officio member in 15 states, the governor in two states, with other state officials and representatives of higher education institutions serving in other instances (CCSSO, 1983). While the provision for lay citizen involvement in educational policy making was primarily to "take the politics out of education," in retrospect, such involvement provided for a broader base of perspectives and expertise on which to formulate policy and programs as well as to ensure representation and responsiveness to the educational needs of special interest groups.

The creation of the office of chief state school officer in some cases preceded and in some cases occurred concurrently with the establishment of state boards of education. In 1812, New York was the first state to establish the post of chief state school officer, but the office was displaced for a time. Therefore, the post of superintendent of common schools, established by Michigan in 1829, was the first such state office created which has continued to the present time. Between 1830 and 1850, the office of chief state school officer was established in most states. These chiefs were elected to office. The role of these early chiefs was describing the condition of education in the state and proposing solutions. Their staffs were chiefly engaged in the collection of statistics. (The annual reports from these chiefs often described problems not unlike educational problems identified today--the

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need for better trained teachers, higher student achievement, and a greater number of students completing school.) All SEAs today are, of course, administered by a chief. The most common titles today are Superintendent of Public Instruction or Commissioner. Of the chiefs, 18 are elected to office, six are appointed by the governor, and the remaining 26 are appointed by State Boards of Education (CCSSO, 1985). (See Tables I and II at end of article).

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**All states except Wisconsin have established state boards of education with jurisdiction over elementary and secondary schools.**

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### Expansion of State Control and Functions

During the twentieth century there have been many changes in the state governance of education. All states except Wisconsin have established state boards of education with jurisdiction over elementary and secondary schools. The structural arrangements of the state boards vary. There are eleven different governance models when methods of selecting boards and chiefs are combined. (These are additional small variations depending upon the existence and number of ex officio members.) In 1983 board members in thirty-three states were appointed by the governor; in twelve states they were elected by the people; and in five states they acquired office in other ways. (See Table 1.)

The number of board members varies from three to twenty-seven and terms of office range from four to nine years. All state boards of education are responsible for the general supervision of elementary and secondary education and most are additionally charged with the responsibility for vocational education and vocational rehabilitation. A few are responsible for higher education.

Selection of the chief state school officer also varies. In twenty-six states, the chief state school officer is selected by the state board of education and serves as its executive officer. In the remaining states, the relationship of the chief officer to the state board of education is less well defined and there is more possibility of role confusion (Campbell et al., 1985). (See Tables 1 and 2.)

From about 1900 to 1930, SEAs became engaged in the inspection of schools or school programs or the enforcement of standards (Beach and Gibbs, 1982). The number of staff, therefore, grew in size because the inspection of practices in local school districts required more SEA personnel than did the collection of simple statistics from those districts.

About 1930, state departments of education entered a leadership phase and began providing service in the form of technical and consultative services to individual school districts. Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) state that although the extent to which state education agencies have provided leadership in education over the past several decades may be in question, there is no denying that the agencies have taken on additional functions, greatly increasing the size of the professional staff in the process. These

additional functions include (1) overseeing and influencing the distribution of educational funding, (2) administering state and federal categorical programs, (3) providing technical services to local school districts which include staff training, planning, and curriculum development, (4) regulating the basic conditions of schools--facilities, curriculum, etc., primarily through a minimal state standard approval process, and (5) regulating those entering the profession, through the credentialing or certification of personnel, and to some extent, regulation of those remaining in the profession. More recently, states are trying to regulate the quality of schooling through requirements like minimal competency testing (CCSO, 1983).

Most of the impetus for staff increases came from sources external to the SEA, such as demands for school finance reform and accountability, thereby increasing the need for more information and better analyses; and federal aid to states for categorical programs, beginning with vocational education in 1917 and rapidly expanding during the 1960s with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Bailey and Mosher, 1968). Title V of that Act was designed to improve SEAs and to encourage many departments to do more than they once did in planning, research and evaluation.

Twenty years ago SEAs were perceived to be mismanaged organizations staffed by soon to retire school superintendents (Murphy, 1981). The impetus from Title V resulted in modernization, expansion and improved professional standards. State education agencies have generally become more progressive and their managerial capacity has been markedly improved (Sherman, Kutner and Small, 1982). The long range effects on state education agencies Title V's consolidation under Chapter 2 of Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) remain to be seen.

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**State education agencies today serve two major functions. One role is administrative and the other is that of policy formulation.**

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### Conflicting Relationships with Other State Entities

State education agencies today serve two major functions. One role is administrative and the other is that of policy formulation. Like their histories, the policy-making role of a state education agency is entwined with the policy-making role of the state board of education and the chief state school officer, and is exercised through relationships with the governor and the legislature, as well as through actual formulation of policy.

During the 1980s, other state entities, particularly the governors and state legislatures have become more actively involved in educational policy making. The actual powers of the various educational entities are dependent upon constitutional, statutory, and regulatory authority. No matter which form the balance of power has taken, the state education agencies, state boards of education and chief state school officers are still dependent on the actions taken by the legislature. Campbell (1985) said:

The state legislature retains plenary power for education. The legislature may create special machinery, may charge state boards and state superintendents with particular functions, as it has done, but it may also alter the machinery and call back the functions.

If the state education agencies are to increasingly affect policy and rise to the leadership challenge, the governors and the legislators must be influenced (First, 1979). Since the SEAs are now primarily non-partisan, this influence must take a different direction than that taken in the past.

Interest groups also have an impact upon the policy development systems and thus they provide leadership in education. The most common groups represent the teachers, the school administrators, and the local school boards. However, more special education groups, e.g., various parent groups, and noneducation interest groups such as those representing business, labor, agriculture, ethnic groups, and the like, also take positions on education policy and legislation. These groups, although vocal, have a limited sphere of interest within the entire education arena, but they can have disproportionate impact, if highly visible and well organized.

In recent years, state level educational governance has become the focal point of educational reform. A wide variety of political, economic and social forces have been responsible for shifting the initiative in education policy formation away from local and federal actors to the state level policy system (Mitchell & Encarnation, 1984). These forces include the need for more state money for education, concern for student achievement, the demand for accountability, growing teacher power and the deliberate decrease in the federal role which was debated during the Nixon and Carter years and swiftly implemented by the Reagan administration.

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**Amidst the dangers of inappropriate measures being passed into law, there is a unique leadership role for state education agencies.**

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There is currently an abundance of action at the state level. Governors are directly involved in educational policy making and legislators are seeking quick solutions to problems in schooling. Amidst the dangers of inappropriate measures being passed into law, there is a unique leadership role for state education agencies. There are functions which only state education agencies have the potential to perform.

These leadership functions are: (1) serving as a clearinghouse for information on the conditions of the schools; (2) identifying progressive educational proposals which balance the interest of special groups but which, more importantly, respond to the state's specific role in meeting the educational needs of school children beyond the special interest of other groups; (3) advocating with intensity an appropriate share of the state's resources for education; and (4) being the focal point for coalition building among the various groups

concerned with education. As the most non-partisan entity in a political arena, state education agencies through their boards and chiefs, are uniquely positioned for the focal point role. These are new and emerging roles which will formulate the future direction of the state education agencies.

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Table I

Description of Governance Models*		
Model	Description	# of States
I	Board elected in partisan election Chief appointed by the board	6
II	Board elected in non-partisan election Chief appointed by the board	5
III	Board elected in partisan election Chief elected in partisan election	1
IV	Board elected by joint session of the state legislature Chief appointed by the board	1
V	Board elected by state legislative delegation (plus 1 governor's appointee) Chief elected in partisan election	1
VI	Board elected by local district boards Chief elected in partisan election	1
VII	Board appointed by the governor Chief appointed by the board	14
VIII	Board appointed by the governor Chief elected in partisan election	13
IX	Board appointed by the governor Chief appointed by the governor	6
X	Ex Officio Board Chief elected in partisan election	1
XI	No state board Chief elected in partisan election	1

\*Models I, III, VII, and VIII could be further divided into state boards which have 1 to 3 ex officio members and those that have none.

Table II Governance Models, Designations and Terms

State	Governance Model	State Board of Education			Chief State School Officer		State Ed. Agency
		Designation	Number of Members (+ ex officio)	Length of Term (years)	Designation	Length of Term (when elected)	Designation
Alabama	I	State Bd. of Ed.	8 +1	4	State Supt of Ed		State Dept of Ed
Alaska	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	7	5	Commissioner		State Dept of Ed
Arizona	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	8 +1	4	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Ed
Arkansas	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	9 +1	9	Director		State Dept of Ed
California	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	10	4	Supt of Public Instruc	4	State Dept of Ed
Colorado	I	State Bd. of Ed.	7	6	Commissioner of Ed		State Dept of Ed
Connecticut	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	9 +1	4	Commissioner of Ed		State Dept of Ed
Delaware	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	7	6	State Supt. of Public Instruction		State Dept of Pub. Instruction
Florida	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	7	4	Commissioner of Ed	4	Department of Ed
Georgia	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	10	7	State Supt of Schools	4	State Dept of Ed
Hawaii	II	State Bd. of Ed.	13	4	Supt. of Education		State Dept of Ed
Idaho	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	7 +1	5	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Ed
Illinois	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	17	6	State Supt of Ed		Illinois State Bd of Education
Indiana	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	18 +1	4	Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Pub. Instruction
Iowa	VII	State Bd of Public Instruction	9 +1	6	State Supt.		State Dept of Pub. Instruction
Kansas	I	State Bd. of Ed.	10	4	Commissioner of Education		State Dept of Ed
Kentucky	VIII	State Bd. of Ed	13 +1	4	State Supt of Pub. Instruction	4	State Dept of Ed
Louisiana	III	State Bd of Elementary and Secondary Ed.	11 +1	4	State Supt. of Ed.	4	State Dept of Ed

(Continued on next page)

**Table II (Cont.) Governance Models, Designations and Terms**

State	Governance Model	State Board of Education			Chief State School Officer		State Ed. Agency
		Designation	Number of Members (+ ex officio)	Length of Term (years)	Designation	Length of Term (when elected)	Designation
Maine	IX	State Bd. of Ed.	9	5	Commissioner		Dept of Education and Cultural Services
Maryland	VII	State Bd of Ed	9	5	State Superintendent of Schools		State Dept of Ed
Massachusetts	VII	Boa.rd of Ed	12 +1	5	Commissioner of Ed		State Dept of Ed
Michigan	I	State Bd. of Ed.	8 +2	8	State Supt. of Public Instruction		State Dept of Ed
Minnesota	IX	State Bd. of Ed.	9	4	Commissioner of Ed.		State Dept of Ed
Mississippi	X	State Bd. of Ed.	3	4	State Supt. of Ed.	4	State Dept of Ed
Missouri	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	8	8	Commissioner of Ed		Dept of Elemen. & Secondary Ed
Montana	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	8 +3	8	Superintendent of Public Instruction	4	Office of the Superintendent of Public Inst.
Nebraska	II	State Bd. of Ed.	8	4	Commissioner of Ed.		State Dept of Ed
Nevada	II	State Bd of Ed	9	4	Superintendent of Public Instruction		State Dept of Ed
New Hampshire	VII	State Bd of Ed.	7	5	Commissioner of Ed		State Dept of Ed
New Jersey	IX	State Bd. of Ed.	12 +2	6	Commissioner of Ed		State Dept of Ed
New Mexico	I	State Bd. of Ed.	10	6	State Supt of Public Instruction		State Dept of Ed
New York	IV	New York State Board of Regents	15	7	Commissioner of Ed		State Dept of Ed
N. Carolina	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	11 +2	8	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	Dept of Public Education
N. Dakota	VIII	State Bd. of Public School Education	6 +1	6	Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Pub. Instruction
Ohio	II	State Bd. of Ed.	21	6	Supt of Public Inst.		State Dept of Ed
Oklahoma	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	6 +2	6	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Ed
Oregon	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	7	7	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Ed
Pennsylvania	IX	State Bd. of Ed.	17	6	Secretary of Ed.		State Dept of Ed
Rhode Island	VII	Board of Regents	9	4	Commissioner of Ed		Dept of Ed
South Carolina	V	State Bd. of Ed.	17	4	State Supt. of Ed.	4	State Dept of Ed
South Dakota	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	7	5	State Supt. of Public Instruction		Division of Elem. & Sec. Ed.
Tennessee	IX	State Bd. of Ed.	12 +3	9	State Commissioner of Education		State Dept of Ed
Texas	I	State Bd. of Ed.	27	6	Commissioner of Education		State Dept of Ed
Utah	II	State Bd. of Ed.	9	4	State Supt of Public Inst.		State Office of Education
Vermont	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	7	6	Commissioner		State Dept of Ed
Virginia	IX	State Bd. of Ed.	9	4	State Supt of Public Instruction		State Dept of Ed
Washington	VI	State Bd. of Ed.	16 +1	6	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	Office of the Supt of Public Instruction
West Virginia	VII	State Bd. of Ed.	9 +2	9	State Supt of Schools		State Dept of Ed
Wisconsin	XI	no state board			State Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Public Inst.
Wyoming	VIII	State Bd. of Ed.	9 +1	6	State Supt of Public Instruction	4	State Dept of Ed

\*

# The New Federalism: Boon or Bane to the State Education Agency

C. Philip Kearney

One of the avowed purposes of the Reagan Administration's New Federalism, particularly the block grant program established under Chapter 2 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, is to lessen federal control and return to state and local agencies a good deal of decision-making authority over how federal dollars will be spent. At first blush, this would seem a worthy purpose, particularly to many local educators who often have bemoaned what they perceive as unwarranted intrusions into local decisionmaking by a federal education agency having little appreciation of the diverse needs and strengths of the several states and their myriad local school districts.

While local educators may view the New Federalism as a boon, the loosening of federal controls may be more of a bane to state education agencies, institutions which owe much of their present powers and capabilities to the growth during the past twenty years of the comprehensive and sizeable program of federal categorical supports first signalled by passage of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1975). Rather than restore programmatic power and authority to the state education agency, the New Federalism may succeed in restoring many state agencies to the position of relative impotency which they held prior to 1965.

With the advent of the block grant and recent Congressional calls for "capping" the state education agency share at 10% rather than the 20% they now enjoy (or can choose to enjoy under the legislation), we appear to have come full circle from 1965 when then US Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel argued convincingly that the state education agency had to be included in ESEA, under Title V, if the other four Titles were to work (Kearney, 1967). Keppel contended, and successfully, that most state agencies were not staffed nor equipped to administer effectively the massive new program of federal education aid envisioned in ESEA. To get them so staffed and equipped would require a substantial federal subsidy and Title V, in Keppel's view could do that. Consequently most state agencies, in the years immediately following the passage of ESEA in April of 1965, experienced a substantial influx of federal dollars and a concomitant increase in their annual operating budgets--most of which went to support the salaries of a host of new professionals and support staff hired "to strengthen the agencies" generally and administer the ESEA Titles specifically (see for example, Murphy, 1981).

Subsequent years saw the level and proportion of federal support increase even further as the Congress added Titles to ESEA and passed a plethora of additional categorical programs, most of which were channeled through the state agencies. As one observer of federal education policy put it, "The state agencies became federal outposts, regional offices for conducting not state but federal business." In many instances, the agencies drew on federal revenue sources for well over half of their operating budgets. They became increasingly dependent on the federal government not only for the dollars needed to administer the specific categoricals, but also for the dollars needed to support their general operations, for Title V monies by and large were used, and used successfully, to this end. These monies, many contend, virtually became general purpose monies used in a variety of ways to upgrade the overall operation of the agencies. Keppel's aim was achieved; state education agencies took on a professional character through the addition of entire new cadres of bright, well-trained, activist staffs. The agencies became more able, better staffed institutions and better equipped to provide direction and leadership in K-12 education in their respective state systems (see, for example, Murphy, 1981).

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Unfortunately, the legislatures in the several states seldom saw the need to contribute state dollars to what many observers contend has been a generally successful nationwide effort to upgrade the overall expertise and capabilities of state education agencies.

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Unfortunately, the legislatures in the several states seldom saw the need to contribute state dollars to what many observers contend has been a generally successful nationwide effort to upgrade the overall expertise and capabilities of state education agencies. As Halperin (1976) put it, legislatures have allowed state education agencies "to be only a little stronger than Washington is willing to fund." And now the Congress, as it reviews the experiences of the first two years of the new federal education block grant, seems to be questioning the appropriateness of this arrangement. It is asking why should federal dollars be going to support the general operations of state agencies? Why shouldn't the current 20% "cap" on the percentage of block grant funds that the state agencies are free to keep for administrative and other purposes be lowered to 10%.

Thus, the agencies find themselves in something of a Catch-22 situation. The federal dollars have led to growth in personnel and

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capacity; but the state dollars needed to replace the federal "seed money" have never materialized, or at least not in sufficient quantity to allay the federal dependency. Now the federal government, in keeping with the underlying dictates of the New Federalism, wants to lessen substantially--and perhaps even withdraw--its commitment. If it does, many state education agencies may find themselves in dire circumstances, at least in the short run.

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**...the central programmatic functions of the agency, for all intents and purposes, would be cut drastically if not eliminated.**

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Michigan offers a prime example of such a circumstance. Some 74 positions in the Michigan Department of Education, costing \$3,252,000, were funded in fiscal year 1983 using revenues from the agency's 20% share of the state's \$18.3 million Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) Chapter 2 allocation (Kearney, 1983). In fiscal year 1984, the picture was almost identical. The agency used \$3,244,000 of its Chapter 2 funds to cover 65.5 positions (Kearney, 1984). The Department, in effect, used the bulk of its 20% monies to cover the personnel and related costs of programs, then faced the prospect of drastic cuts because of the loss of the prior categorical monies--particularly those agency programs funded under Title VB, the present-day incarnation of Frank Keppel's successful efforts to direct federal dollars toward the upgrading of state education agencies. The funded activities encompass a broad range of functions throughout the Department, functions that appear integral and necessary to the effective operation of the agency. The loss of funding for any single component might not seriously inhibit the functioning of the agency. But to lose the bulk of the funds, or to be forced to expend them in substantially different ways, would result in a near-catastrophic situation. We say near-catastrophic, not so much because 60 or more persons would be without jobs, but because the central programmatic functions of the agency, for all intents and purposes, would be cut drastically if not eliminated. Without question, the loss of its Chapter 2 funding, or any substantial part of it, would have serious consequences for the Michigan Department of Education--and, we suspect, for a good many other state education agencies.

Thus, the New Federalism, along with its loosening of federal controls, brings the very real possibility of significant fiscal and personnel reductions for state education agencies and a resultant demise in their powers and capabilities. At least, this appears to be a likely short term result. In the long run, the agencies may weather such a storm and come out for the better particularly if, as McDonnell and McLaughlin (1982) argue, the agencies are able to mount successful efforts to finally convince general state government of the importance of their missions and the necessity of providing adequate appropriations to carry out those missions:

In sum, SEAs (State Educational Agencies) need general government

support if they are to meet local district needs; that support will only be forthcoming if SEAs can sell themselves to general government on either economic efficiency grounds or as a way of responding to the demands of broad-based and politically active constituencies.

But even without the prospect of imminent fiscal and personnel reductions, there appears to be considerable evidence, at least from our work in Michigan (Kearney, 1983 & 1984), that the advent of the Chapter 2 block grant already has led to a diminution of the state education agency's powers and capacities. One of the consequences of the new federal education block grant has been a substantial reshuffling of local-state-federal relationships--at least in the program areas covered under the grant. The reshuffling has taken one of two forms. First, there has been a demise if not a total elimination of the relatively strong sets of relationships that grew out of the prior categoricals. Neither the federal program officers nor the state program officers who administered those grants are in evidence. The influence that they exerted is gone. The strong ties between local district staff and federal level staff established under the Emergency School Assistance Act (ESAA) grants are gone. Also gone are the ties between local district staff and state agency staff which evolved from the Title IVC program, as well as the state-federal tie that was an inherent part of that program (Kearney, 1984).

Second, not only are the old ties gone but no new ties have been established. Chapter 2 generally has not resulted in building new relationships among the local, state, and federal levels. If anything, Chapter 2 is marked by an absence of intergovernmental relationships, except for the bare minimums required to administer the program. This is true in terms of local-state relationships, as well as state-federal relationships. As far as Chapter 2 is concerned, it appears that the Administration has been quite successful in achieving one of the goals identified in the education plank of the 1980 Republican Party Platform, namely, "...deregulation by the Federal Government of public education."

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**From a position of considerable control and influence over how the particular federal dollars would be spent by local districts, there now is little if any control by the state agency over those decisions.**

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Thus, we find in Michigan a situation where the state education agency, in the program areas incorporated into the block grant, has had to pull back almost entirely from the position of program leadership and advocacy it was wont to take in its relationships with local districts. From a position of considerable control and influence over how the particular federal dollars would be spent by local districts, there now is little if any control by the state agency over those decisions. For the local school district, that may be a desirable outcome; for the state agency,

irrespective on one's view on the matter, it represents a considerable diminution of influence.

The lessening of state control and influence is further exacerbated by the lack of overall programmatic direction coming from the US Department of Education as a result of its stance on "non-regulatory guidance," and the lack of specific guidance and direction from the federal level regarding evaluation activities. Both of these issues are of substantial concern to state education agency officials. For even though the legislation has led to the situation described above, namely the absence of a formal programmatic role for the state agency, many local districts still look to the agency for program guidance and direction. Yet, the agency is not able to deliver, not because it doesn't want to but rather because it is unable; the agency itself has been almost totally unsuccessful in its own attempts to receive guidance and direction from the federal level. In spite of the oft-heard lament of past years, spoken by both state and local officials, to "get the Feds off of our backs," one gets the impression that state agency personnel in particular feel the Feds have gone too far in getting off the backs of state and local practitioners. A state agency official described the frustration that comes from the US Department of Education's stance on nonregulatory guidance:

...[We] have not had a meeting called by the US Department of Education since the acceptance of this thing. There was one called and cancelled...We cannot get anything in writing, really. They respond over the phone as much as possible but I think there is a reluctance on their part to be specific. And I think they are under constraints...I have decided it's [an] executive decision that there will not be a lot of guidance...You don't get answers in writing (Kearney, 1984).

The staff member with overall responsibility for Michigan's Chapter 2 program corroborated this view:

Very little direction, very little support. This is both good and bad. There are some areas where we would like some direction, particularly with the Chapter 2 evaluation. There aren't very many people that you can contact in Washington and get a straight answer about the program (Kearney, 1984).

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**By far, the greatest frustration felt at the state level comes from the lack of federal guidance and direction in the area of evaluation.**

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By far, the greatest frustration felt at the state level comes from the lack of federal guidance and direction in the area of evaluation. A member of the Michigan Department of Education's evaluation staff described a feeling that had grown up during a regional meeting in Chicago--a meeting called not by the US Department of Education, but by the Illinois Department of Education:

...[At] the regional meeting we had in December,...people said, "Yeah, we need

some direction. We could collect some standard information so that we can report it a year from now, so that Congress can have a picture of what's going on..." Maybe I was a little bit more aggressive, but I think most people agreed with it, that the feeling was, and the thing that I pushed was that I really felt like it was a setup. We're required to do evaluation, we're not given any guidelines, and somewhere down the road they're going to do a very poor evaluation which amounts to a couple of case studies which is very similar to what the Heritage Foundation did when they said, "Well, some of these programs are absolutely wasted money." ...There's not much money, there's no direction, and yet there's a requirement to do evaluation, and when it's all done and the state's can't do it, we'll be in, I think, a position...where they'll say, "Well there isn't any evidence that this thing works and so let's wipe this program out." ...I really think it's a set up and I think that the states are saying, "We're not going to let that happen" (Kearney, 1984).

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**...we do hope that the several state legislatures will see that the importance of state education agencies principally lies not in the conduct of federal business but rather in the conduct of state business, and then fund the agencies accordingly.**

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The staff member went on to express his disappointment with the federal response at the Chicago meeting. Noting that there were present two US Department of Education officials, a program person and a person from planning and evaluation, he expressed dismay that "...the program person simply didn't say anything and, when he was asked, he said that he wasn't authorized to [say anything]" (Kearney, 1984). On the other hand, he viewed the planning and evaluation person as competent and articulate, but limited in what she could say or do:

...[It] was very clear that she was limited in terms of what she could do. She could answer a question that you had but she did not have the authority, in fact my impression was that she had been directed not to come up with a guideline or a recommendation of how to do the evaluation (Kearney, 1984).

Thus we see an agency in which its considerable leadership role of former years under the antecedent categorical programs has been considerably restricted if not rendered totally impotent. As McDonnell and McLaughlin (1982) suggest, the state agency role in the programs covered by the federal block grant has become "...defined primarily in terms of check-writing and mandated reporting and auditing responsibilities."

Whether Michigan's current experiences with Chapter 2 are a harbinger of things to come, leading ultimately to a much-weakened role for the

state education agency, or simply a passage to a new and stronger role buttressed by increased support from general state government, remains to be seen. There are those, of course, who would argue for a weakened state agency role. While we are not among them, we do hope that the several state legislatures will see that the importance of state education agencies principally lies not in the conduct of federal business but rather in the conduct of state business, and then fund the agencies accordingly. If that transpires, then a short-term bane may turn into a long-term boon.

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# School Reform and the Changing Role of State Education Agencies

By Lorraine M. McDonnell

In a recent commentary on the condition of American education, Denis Doyle and Chester Finn argue:

...state education departments are notoriously sluggish and formalistic bureaucracies, hardly the kinds of public agencies one would happily entrust with responsibility for sustaining a reform movement or for administering anything so unpredictable as a school or so loosely-coupled as a school system (Doyle & Finn, 1984).

To anyone familiar with the range of SEAs in this country, such a statement appears exaggerated, having limited application to most state agencies. Still, Doyle and Finn are correct in assuming that state policymakers, at least implicitly, expect state education agencies to implement new school improvement programs and maintain the educational reform momentum begun by governors, legislators, and state boards of education.

These expectations raise serious questions about what new responsibilities SEAs will be expected to assume and whether most currently have the capacity to perform in a very different environment. This article addresses these issues by first examining the new or expanded SEA functions that emerge from recent state school reform policies, and then by assessing how consistent these new activities are with traditional SEA functions.

## The Need for Expanded SEA Functions

In addition to the rapidity with which school reform has swept across the United States over the past two years, its other striking characteristic is its broad scope. In the expectation that educational outcomes can be significantly improved, state policymakers have intervened in every aspect of schooling from the level and kind of resources that support it to the instructional process itself. Student standards, school calendar and attendance, new or expanded instructional programs, teacher recruitment, training, certification, and compensation, administrator selection and compensation, and technology in the schools have each been the subject of either new legislation or state board of education regulation in at least half the states. The cumulative effect of all these new initiatives has been to place significant new responsibilities on SEAs, particularly in the areas of assessment and technical assistance.

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Many SEAs are now charged with moving beyond simply "counting things" and testing students, to assessing the schooling process itself and measuring educational quality in all its complexity.

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## New Assessment Responsibilities

Largely in response to various state and federal mandates, SEAs have traditionally collected data on different input factors--per pupil spending, the distribution of resources across schools and types of students, pupil-teacher ratios, library size, and program offerings. As states have expanded their testing programs, SEAs have also increased the amount and kinds of student outcome data they collect. Nevertheless, the assumptions underlying many new school improvement initiatives demand that SEAs both expand their current data collection efforts and increase the sophistication with which they assess local district performance. Implicit in the current reform movement is a model of schooling which assumes not just that a given level of inputs or resources should be associated with greater student achievement, but that the way these resources are used is equally important in increasing the likelihood of improved student performance. Consequently, many SEAs are now charged with moving beyond simply "counting things" and testing students, to assessing the schooling process itself and measuring educational quality in all its complexity.

For example, new school improvement and school-based incentive programs mean that SEAs will need to design data systems that include not only input variables and student achievement information, but also process variables like individual teacher performance, student and teacher attitudes, and the quality of principal leadership. Increased attention by state legislatures to the need for linking state policy and local practice more effectively also means that SEAs will have to monitor local program implementation in greater depth than their traditional certification that a program was in place, at least "on paper." Actual program operations will need to be assessed for possible modification or assistance to local districts.

The need to expand and improve data collection by SEAs stems not just from forces within individual states, but also from national-level ones. One outgrowth of the attention accorded education by the Reagan administration and the national media has been a concern about the overall condition of public education in this country and an attempt to compare states with one another on a variety of educational indicators. The wall charts published by the US Department of

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Education for 1984 and 1985 were designed to make such comparisons. Unfortunately, the only measures of student achievement available for all states were SAT and ACT college entrance examination scores. These scores neither represent the quality of state educational systems, nor do they reflect the diversity of students and programs. At best, they represent an assessment of the aptitude of college-going, twelfth graders (the Council of Chief State School Officers 1984).

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**Despite what many view as the inadvisability of comparing across states with different resource levels, programs, student populations, and educational goals, a variety of factors now make such comparisons inevitable.**

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Despite what many view as the inadvisability of comparing across states with different resource levels, programs, student populations, and educational goals, a variety of factors now make such comparisons inevitable. Recognizing this fact, the Council of Chief State School Officers has decided to work to ensure that such comparisons are as valid and fair as possible. One aspect of this effort will be encouraging the states to work with one another and with CCSSO in developing a core set of input and outcome indicators that will permit across-state comparisons. It is too early to know exactly how this activity will be implemented, but it is clear that SEAs will need to play a critical role in defining such indicators. Consequently, the data collection and assessment capabilities of all SEAs are likely to require upgrading and expansion in order that the American public and policymakers at all governmental levels can obtain systematic and valid information on the health of public education across the country.

#### New Technical Assistance Responsibilities

The rapidity and scope of recent school reforms mean that local districts now need a lot more assistance than in the past. One can easily imagine that a local superintendent who must establish school-based improvement programs, implement a number of new student standards, and at the same time, make certain that teachers, principals, and schools are evaluated in ways never done before, will need more extensive technical assistance than SEAs have traditionally been able to provide. In addition to these demands, many districts face requirements to introduce various kinds of computer-based instruction and offer greater numbers of advanced courses. In an effort to train school administrators to become more effective instructional leaders, a number of states have established principal academies and new procedures for selecting school managers. Staff development for teachers has also become an increasingly important priority in many states. All these initiatives assume that either the SEA can provide technical assistance in implementing new programs or that it can broker needed resources from other institutions like colleges and universities.

The kind of technical assistance services SEAs will need to provide or obtain from other sources include:

- Dissemination networks to help local districts avoid "reinventing the wheel." This component includes assistance in: identifying successful practices developed elsewhere, adapting them to the local setting, and training staff to implement them.
- Face-to-face technical assistance on a regular basis. This can be effectively offered by generalists who broker more specialized expertise from other sources. These staffs can help in identifying local needs and appropriate program models; obtaining needed information; and providing general implementation assistance. Such an approach differs from the traditional SEA technical assistance model that relies on guidelines formulation, periodic regional meetings, and information distributed from a central location.
- Improved staff development for both teachers and principals that consists of more than one session, pays particular attention to follow-through, and uses the individual school as the inservice site.

Local demand for technical assistance by all types of districts is likely to grow, but it will be greatest for districts with traditionally fewer resources and greater numbers of underachieving students. This is particularly true now because over the past two years the most comprehensive school reforms have been enacted in Southern states like Arkansas, South Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee where local districts vary significantly in their capacity. Although districts in each of these states differ greatly in their size, degree of local leadership, management capacity, teaching force, and student composition, all must be prepared to implement very comprehensive new programs--some parts of which (e.g., various teacher and school incentive programs) constitute a radical departure from past practice. The obvious source of assistance for these districts will be the state education agency.

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**...the wave of school reforms now sweeping across the country place major new responsibilities on SEAs, particularly in the assessment and technical assistance areas. However, it is unclear whether most state agencies currently have the capacity to provide these additional services.**

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For several states like Arkansas, Kentucky, and South Carolina, the responsibility of the SEA is even greater. New state laws there require the Chief State School Officer to intervene in local districts if the quality of education is seriously impaired. Clearly, this signals an important increase in the regulatory authority of these SEAs, but it also means their technical assistance functions have to be expanded significantly. Before any sanctions can be imposed, the SEA is required to help a troubled district diagnose its problems and then work with it to remedy them.

Long-term, well-focused technical assistance is assumed to be an integral part of improving educational quality in these districts.

In sum, the wave of school reforms now sweeping across the country places major new responsibilities on SEAs, particularly in the assessment and technical assistance areas. However, it is unclear whether most state agencies currently have the capacity to provide these additional services.

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The major issue facing SEAs today is whether these agencies, whose growth over the past fifteen years was largely a response to monitoring requirements for federal categorical programs, can now reshape themselves to support local districts as they implement various quality improvement initiatives.

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#### Can SEAs Meet the Challenge of School Reform?

The major issue facing SEAs today is whether these agencies, whose growth over the past fifteen years was largely a response to monitoring requirements for federal categorical programs, can now reshape themselves to support local districts as they implement various quality improvement initiatives. This question has two dimensions: does the current role orientation and staffing patterns of SEAs support these new functions, and do state agencies have the fiscal resources to play a major role in sustaining the school reform movement?

The answer to the first question is a tentative yes. There is no question that most SEAs traditionally emphasized their monitoring responsibilities, simply because federal and state requirements demanded it. Largely because of the nature of their legislative mandates and the resources provided them by federal and state funding, most state agencies typically confined their technical assistance role to helping districts comply with federal and state regulations, and to providing limited assistance by SEA content specialists when districts requested it.

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...as local implementation of various school improvement initiatives continues, the demand for appropriate technical assistance and for valid data on educational indicators can only grow. The challenge for SEAs, then, will be to demonstrate that they are the most effective institutions to provide these services.

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However, over the past ten years, many SEAs have greatly expanded their technical assistance capacity, making it the most impressive area of SEA improvement (McDonnell & McLaughlin, 1982). Many states now have some form of intermediate unit, whether it be a branch office of the SEA or a locally governed one, and as a result, mechanisms now exist to provide more and better services to local districts. Similarly, the expertise gained in evaluating state and federal

programs and in developing statewide achievement tests has often resulted in SEA assessment and evaluation units that are now staffed by experienced, well-trained specialists. Nevertheless, this growth in SEA capacity came at a time when states were beginning to face serious fiscal retrenchment, and it was often superimposed on an organizational structure still constrained by the staffing requirements of various categorical programs. Consequently, the transition from a regulatory to a service mode and to a more sophisticated assessment capacity was far from complete in most SEAs when the current school reform movement began. In other words, the direction of SEA change was appropriate, but the extent was insufficient.

The answer to the second question about whether SEAs have the necessary fiscal resources to continue their transition to a new role is unclear at this point. On the one hand, continued reductions in federal program spending and a consequent decrease in the administrative funds available to SEAs have resulted in major contractions in many state agencies. Similarly, the traditional reluctance of state legislatures to spend state funds on administration has meant that many new reform initiatives have not been accompanied by a proportionate increase in SEA funding. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that in many states the impetus for reform legislation came from outside the educational establishment and the SEA was perceived as representing "business as unusual." In fact, in several states, efforts were made to minimize the SEA role in implementing reform programs. On the other hand, as local implementation of various school improvement initiatives continues, the demand for appropriate technical assistance and for valid data on educational indicators can only grow. The challenge for SEAs, then, will be to demonstrate that they are the most effective institutions to provide these services. For some that have long been viewed as critical partners in local district efforts, the task will be easy. For others, however, overcoming a legalistic, regulatory image, or worse yet, one of irrelevance, will be a difficult challenge. Yet, the ultimate success of the current school reform movement may very well rest on how well state education agencies can meet this challenge.

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# Educational Politics and Policies: Governors, Legislators, and SEAs

By Jon Peterson

The purpose of this article is to review relevant activities and characteristics of governors, legislatures and state education agencies (SEAs) with regards to education politics and policies. On one hand, the 50 states have evolved unique relationships regarding the balance of state-local control of K-12 educational programs, and on the other hand, the federal government has had varying degrees of involvement with state and local educational policies. However, there are significant actors and activities outside the scope of this discussion. Also, there is tremendous variety among the states in the patterns of selection of chief state school officers (CSSOs), state boards of education (SBE) and functional relationships among the state agencies.

From the perspective of the state agencies, the last two decades have been extremely dynamic. The advent of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act marked the beginning of widespread and deep incursions of federal programs into state and local education policy-making. Courts were also vigorous actors in these policies with decisions that called for the reassignment of pupils to non-neighborhood schools and the recasting of traditional school finance mechanisms. Not to be outdone, local citizens contributed to the dynamics with restrictions on the amount of revenues available for schools. In addition, there were public expressions from various groups for more effective schools, different teacher credentialing programs, local innovations, programs for special need pupils, and more rigorous textbooks. This ebb and flow of laws, court decisions, demands of consumers, and aspirations of politicians complicates the ability to make meaningful generalizations about either actors or issues.

## Literature on Educational Policymaking

The literature of the last two decades can be grouped into at least three classifications: those that examine all actors in multiple states; those that narrow their focus to some of the actors in multiple states, and those that are single-state efforts with a variety of actors under consideration (some of these are preliminary efforts for multi-state works). An example of the first category would be State Policy Making for the Public Schools by Campbell and Mazzone which provides an excellent comprehensive treatment of state policy dynamics up to the date of publication, 1976. The work covers multiple actors, both state boards of education and chief state school officers, as well as governors, interest groups and legislatures. More

importantly, it applies political systems theory as a means of viewing the activities of the various actors and contains a wealth of data from a number of surveys (Campbell, 1976).

A more recent comprehensive treatment is the Education Commission of the State's State Governance of Education which identifies some of the factors that appear to be influencing changes in state policy-making--governors, legislatures, and SEAs as well as the useful policy development roles that can be played by "blue ribbon" committees (Burns, 1983).

State legislatures have received extensive treatment in the literature. Shaping Educational Policy in the States uses a six state sample to... "map the structure of legislative leadership in terms of both the characteristics of influential legislators and staff and the nature of influence structures in state legislatures" (Furhman, 1981). Other studies have reviewed the impact of the efforts for school finance reform on state legislation (Palaich, 1983; Campbell, 1976); the role of interest groups (Mazzone, 1982) and the recent rise of multi-state networks of interest groups working to bring about policy change in several states (Kirst, 1983).

Examples of works addressing SEA dynamics are Education Policy and the Role of the States which gives an excellent description of the varieties of SEA long-term study of the impact of federal programs (McDonnell, 1982); Appropriate Roles for SEAs in the '70s (Friedman, 1971) and State Education Policy and the Proposition 13 Movement: An Overview of Policy Issues (Hansen, 1979).

The role of governors has not seen as extensive coverage with The Governor's Role in Education: An Information Overview providing basic information about statutory duties of governors in the various states (Muller, 1979). Some of the single-state studies include a detailed, quantified analysis of voting patterns on education measures over a period of time of the California Legislature (Dyke, 1970), and series of structured interviews of New York legislators and leaders of educational organizations pertaining to perceptions of the educational policy-making process (Milstein, 1971).

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Within the last two decades of intensive dynamics for state-level actors, governors, legislatures and most especially SEAs, have spent a large portion of that time playing defense, fashioning responses to external initiatives rather than proceeding with programs of their own choosing.

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## State-Level Education Actors on the Defensive

Within the last two decades of intensive dynamics for state-level actors, governors, legislatures and most especially SEAs, have spent a large portion of that time playing defense, fashioning responses to external initiatives rather than proceeding with programs of their own choosing. The mid-sixties saw the rapid rise of federal programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with corresponding challenge to SEAs to obtain the technical and administrative staff resources necessary to meet the federal mandates. Chronologically, the next externality was the series of court cases involving school finance reform, funded principally by the Ford Foundation (Palich, Kirst). The state-level response in most cases was, again, a scramble to acquire the relevant technical and legal expertise in order to respond effectively to litigation, or the threat thereof. Public Law 94-142 was the next externality to arrive on the state-level agency scene with its federal programs for special needs students. In order to cope with these externalities and such demands as greater accountability, different teacher certification methods, state programs for special needs students, and more rigorous textbooks, SEAs had to increase the levels of their staff capabilities and expertise.

However, this brought about an imbalance of capabilities among the state-level agencies. Legislators in states with fiscally diverse school districts quickly became aware of the need to be informed of the relative impact of new finance proposals on their constituent school districts. If the state did not have enough funds to level up, there were going to be "losers" in any new arrangement. Similarly, PL 94-142 brought about the need for "counter advocates" in the legislature and governor's office who were familiar with technicalities of the statute and regulations but were committed to maintaining some sort of fiscal or programmatic integrity *vis a vis* available resources and existing programs. By acquiring their own "in house" technical capabilities, the legislature and the governors office (particularly the state's fiscal agency) were able to deal with the new education programs with a full set of technical capabilities.

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**Because of the need for high levels of technical expertise in the new program areas, many of the new staff were highly educated.**

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## The Professionalization of Staff

As a result of the external factors noted above, the staffs of the perspective agencies underwent expansion and professionalization. As Kirst (1982) noted,

By 1972, three-fourths of SEA staffs had been in their jobs less than three years. All the expansion of the California SEA from 1964 to 1970 was with federal funds. In 1972, 70% of the Texas SEA funding came from federal funds.

Because of the need for high levels of technical expertise in the new program areas, many of the new staff were highly educated. As Campbell noted, of the top staff in his 12 state study, about 40% possessed doctorates (Campbell, 1976).

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**Tax expenditure limitations of state funds and reduction via consolidation of federal funds, particularly Title V, are placing SEAs in a retrenched position of having to do more with less, but do it better.**

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The following is an example to illustrate the extent of professionalization of the education staffs of the California state agencies. On occasion, such as the discussion of a major school finance or reform proposal, staff representing several offices or agencies would be in attendance. Representing the Senate would be the Education Committee Consultant, Minority Leader's representative, Finance Committee Consultant and Minority Finance Committee Consultant. From the Assembly would be two Education Committee consultants and two Ways and Means Committee Consultants (one each for majority and minority parties). Others in attendance would be staff from the SEA and the Department of Finance. The average age of those in attendance would be in the late 30s and some have worked for four or five of the offices at different times. The average tenure would approximate eight years and at least two would possess doctorates from major schools of education in interest-group representation. The usual task of such a group is the creation of a staff compromise and there is a vested interest in confidentiality so that the outcome can be checked with members/supervisors.

To the extent that "professionalization" can be associated with a relatively high degree of technical capability, then professionalism has application to this group. This professionalization and expansion of staff helped the state-level agencies achieve technical-expertise to deal effectively with these emerging policies.

## The Future

The next decade may be a little less dynamic for the state level agencies with regards to programmatic externalities. Most jurisdictions have absorbed sufficient technical expertise to deal with all but reductions in their own staff. Tax expenditure limitations of state funds and reduction via consolidation of federal funds, particularly Title V, are placing SEAs in a retrenched position of having to do more with less, but do it better. A major unknown factor is the health of the country's economy and that of certain states heavily involved in agriculture. Hopefully, economic and political forces will not bring further diminutions of hard-won capabilities. However, such forces might bring about serious consideration of some of the alternative governance models proposed by Campbell, out of economic necessity.



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### FUTURE ISSUES OF THRESHOLDS IN EDUCATION

AUGUST, 1985	EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL THEORISTS: IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR IDEAS FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION
NOVEMBER, 1985	STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: THE EDUCATOR'S IMPERATIVE
FEBRUARY, 1986	STAFF DEVELOPMENT
MAY, 1986	PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION

# The Leadership Role of the State Education Agency: Exercising Power by Giving it Away

By Michael J. Bakalis

The Reagan presidency has stimulated a spirited national debate on the proper role of government in our lives. Not since Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal have Americans engaged in such serious discussions of philosophical questions regarding the relationship of the federal and state government to societal problems.

The issue of educational reform has not been immune from that debate. Though he campaigned on a 1980 platform to abolish the U.S. Department of Education, the President has ironically used that department to foster a national school improvement movement that may well be the most significant educational reform effort of the century. President Reagan has reaffirmed what every government textbook reiterates--that the Founding Fathers did not view education as a federal responsibility but rather one delegated to the states. Given the fact that states are once again being thrust into the center of educational policy, what should be their proper role in giving leadership to the public schools?

The spotlight now directed at the states in reality only highlights trends that have evolved for at least the past two decades. The period since the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 has witnessed the continual movement of educational decision-making to the state and federal level and away from local school boards. State legislators, governors, state and federal courts, and state departments of education have in various ways taken the authority for school decisions away from local people. The erosion of local control has not been the result of some conspiratorial plan, but rather the cumulative effort of a variety of well-intentioned parties who believed their actions were in the best interests of education.

Such a transformation in the exercise of education power did not, however, necessarily make for better public schools. Certainly the social issues surrounding the schools were dealt with more forcefully than they would have been had the higher levels of authority not intervened. The record of most local school districts on issues such as school desegregation, sex discrimination, bi-lingual education, student rights, and special education was not particularly good. Only when the state offices of education, legislature, and courts pressed did local school districts respond.

It is more difficult, however, to make a similar case when we consider the academic-learning-achievement side of schooling. Here, gradual diminishing of local district decision-making not only failed to result in dramatic improvements in student performance, but the case might be made that as the erosion of local control

escalated, academic standards and performance fell (Husen, 1979). Thus if one equates leadership with increased state activism in education, the results of that leadership are at best mixed and at worst actually detrimental to school improvement.

Arthur Wise, in his book *Legislated Learning*, views this change in educational decision-making with alarm. Wise says that federal and state governments are now making policy in areas formerly reserved to local school boards, general government is making policy previously made by educational governing bodies, and as other levels of government make educational policy, the schools have become overly bureaucratized. Local control has been threatened, Wise says and he concludes that the result will be a standardization of education which is not necessarily followed by school improvement (Wise, 1979).

Viewing the current educational reform movements in the country, a scholar of the politics of education, Professor Michael Kirst of Stanford University is also troubled by the increased state activity. Kirst says,

Discontent about the effectiveness of schools has led states to prescribe stricter, more uniform standards for teachers and students. Yet the literature on effective schools suggests that the most important changes take place when those responsible for each school are given more responsibility rather than less (Wise, 1984).

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**Given the debatable record of state activity in terms of school improvement, the question surely now must be, is that path the correct one and if not, what are the alternatives?**

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While the roles of SEAs have varied in the school reform movement of the 1980's, in most states they have played active and prominent parts in conjunction with legislators and governors, thus continuing and expanding upon the direction they have been traveling for the past twenty years. Given the debatable record of state activity in terms of school improvement, the question surely now must be, is that path the correct one and if not, what are the alternatives?

The answer must be sought in the context of that larger philosophical debate concerning the proper role of government triggered by President Reagan in 1980. The Reagan promise was to check government and disengage it from our lives. Only by freeing people from government's hold, he said, could initiative be restored and the time-honored ideals of America be realized.

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Such an approach, when applied to a school governance setting, might disengage SEAs and state legislatures from involvement in local school matters. This retreat, however, is neither likely nor desirable. The impact of the Serrano decision in the 1970's was to stimulate or compel states to play larger roles in school finance. The parallel call for accountability, which grew as state resources shrank, assured that few state policymakers would be likely to authorize large percentages of state funds without commensurate attempts to influence educational policy. The wholesale disengagement of SEAs and other state policymakers from education would also eliminate individuals with the broader perspective necessary to define, encourage, and protect those aspects of education which are for the good of the individual in the context of their future participation in the larger society. To cite an extreme example, who should intervene if a local district decides that reading is unnecessary for children? Clearly, the concept of the state as a protector of the public good is operational in this instance. Thus while the current trend toward the erosion of local control is undesirable, so too is the repeal and repudiation of the state's educational role.

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...a growing number of scholars are exploring approaches to public policy in another way. They advocate using government to "empower" people to solve problems through vehicles called "mediating structures"

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Developments in other sectors of American society are presenting options for a third alternative that has relevance for educational governance and policy making. Arguing that the large and direct governmental role in addressing social problems that has been the hallmark of the Democratic party has been repudiated, and that the dismantling of government philosophy of the Republicans is in the long-run also unlikely to address the problems of a complex society, a growing number of scholars are exploring approaches to public policy in another way. They advocate using government to "empower" people to solve problems through vehicles called "mediating structures" (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Seeley, 1981).

Mediating structures are those private institutions which stand between the individual and large governmental bureaucracies. Society's mediating structures--the voluntary associations, churches, families and neighborhoods are viewed as key elements in the battle against social problems. Unlike bureaucratic government agencies, these structures are seen as the entities which can formulate sound policy and administer it efficiently and effectively. This approach stresses the need to simplify and relax government regulations and define a new role for government as a "catalyst, a leader, and a provider of incentives instead of a rigid, bureaucratic, and often ineffective service deliverer" (Meyer, 1982). Such a philosophy maintains an activist government without making government the major agency for establishing policy or for administering and managing social programs. The principle followed is that activism

must be used to empower individuals through local agencies to achieve their own independence. Author Michael Novak believes that an activist government must remove impediments, lend assistance and through positive action release the energies of the private sector to address public problems. As Novak says, "A do-nothing political system would fail to promote the general welfare. A do-everything political system smothers it" (Novak, 1982).

The concept of "empowerment" is one also important to a number of significant explorations of how human potential can be developed and productivity increased in the corporate sector. Social scientist Daniel Yankelovich (1982) identifies control over ones own destiny and participation in decision making as key elements in the motivation of contemporary Americans. Thomas J. Peters and Robert Waterman's (1984) best selling analysis of America's best run corporations, In Search of Excellence, and Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1983) study of the conditions which encourage corporate innovation and creativity entitled, The Change Masters, both explore similar sets of ideas--people's talents are best unleashed when high level administrative structures act with energy to set not only the tone and direction of the company, but also to develop vehicles and opportunities for workers to creatively participate in all levels of the organization. And Michael Maccoby's (1981) book, which explores the traits of leadership required for our time, identifies the key ones as encompassing a respectful, responsible, and caring attitude, flexibility regarding people and organizational structure, and "the willingness to share power." Thus in the approach to both public and private policy, similar sets of ideas are surfacing. Within that complex of ideas a new role for the state education agency can be developed.

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Conceivably, the state education agency might one day not only work through schools, but also use private day-care centers, civic organizations, churches, television stations, park districts, hospitals, and corporations to oversee and administer the delivery of educational services.

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The concept of educating people through a variety of "mediating structures" is itself an interesting prospect and one that may well become more prominent in future years. Conceivably, the state education agency might one day not only work through schools, but also use private day-care centers, civic organizations, churches, television stations, park districts, hospitals, and corporations to oversee and administer the delivery of educational services. Through state empowerment and guidelines, these entities would be given authority and responsibility to provide some or all aspects of education. They would then carry-out a fundamental responsibility of the state without overbearing state administrative control. Full-fledged voucher systems might also be a variation on the "empowerment" theme.

Such approaches are, however, not likely to occur in the immediate future. Yet this new educational leadership role for the state also

offers exciting opportunities for school improvement in more traditional settings. We must...halt the trend toward the involvement of SEA's and state legislatures in every aspect of schooling and forge a new relationship between the state and the schools.

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Through 16,000 democratically elected boards in America, in theory, we "empower" people to direct their schools. Thus the proper role of the state should be to create the conditions, opportunities, and vehicles which allow individuals at the local level to do so.

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Since in most cases the state agency does not directly deliver educational services to children, it already deals with a "mediating" entity with a long and unique history in our nation--the local school district. Through 16,000 democratically elected boards in America, in theory, we "empower" people to direct their schools. Thus the proper role of the state should be to create the conditions, opportunities, and vehicles which allow individuals at the local level to do so. Rather than acting primarily as a monitor, guard, or political power, the state office of education should provide districts with the help and technical assistance they need to work out solutions for their own problems and policies. Such an approach does not eliminate the need for a state agency since every constitution defines education as a state responsibility. What is needed, however, are new ways of defining how that responsibility is to be met. The most promising approach attempts to strike a reasonable balance between a laissez-faire do-nothing state educational presence, and one that is so deeply involved in school matters that it becomes oppressive and snuffs-out the risk-taking, creative instincts that could be developed among local teachers, board members, and administrators.

State agencies' policymakers are often faced with the dilemma of addressing a given educational issue in a manner that is equitable to every school district in the state. To exempt certain districts from a given policy may be viewed as discriminatory, while universal application may be unwise and the source of new problems that were not present prior to the enactment of the policy itself. Allowing for differences and encouraging options without having that flexibility turn into arbitrary oversight or even administrative chaos is a central need of state education agencies. The empowerment of local districts to fulfill, in their own way, the educational direction deemed desirable by the state presents a way for the state to fulfill its responsibilities through local districts. Under such an approach, the state agency does not do things to or for districts, but rather offers carrots and sticks to direct people to develop their own educational program.

Thus, rather than continuing on the road to state testing of students, the state agency should require testing, but allow local districts the discretion as to what approach to use. Rather than legislating curricular mandates, the state should require local districts to submit locally constructed curriculum plans which may be different throughout the state. The SEA's role

would be to establish the broad guidelines of what schools should be striving for, but would allow local districts the freedom to achieve those goals in any educationally sound manner approved by the state education office. Such an approach might allow one district to construct a core curriculum, another to submit a proposal for a competency-based curriculum, and still another to creatively construct an interdisciplinary approach. All plans would be directed toward the general framework established by the state agency, but would be the product of the creative participating efforts of teachers, administrators, and school boards at the local level.

In a like manner, the state could empower local districts to deal with issues such as teacher and administrator evaluation and be the stimulus to action in these important areas without being prescriptive about the exact way such evaluations should be accomplished. Once again the SEA would require that each district submit a plan jointly arrived at through the participation of teachers, administrators, and school boards detailing the criteria and the process by which personnel would be evaluated. Each district would detail how good teachers would be identified and rewarded, how poorer ones would be helped, and how bad teachers would be terminated (Illinois Project for School Reform, 1985).

These are but a few of the numerous ways the state could forge a new leadership role. The assumptions of such an approach are, of course, that local people when given the opportunity, information, and resources are capable of self-government and are capable of striving for that which is best for their children and society. Whether local districts would back-track in areas such as desegregation and bi-lingual education cannot be predicted. Federal and state statutes and court rulings would make that less likely than in the past, but the strong presence of state offices of education is probably more necessary in these areas. Even here, however, there is much room for the same empowerment principles to be followed--the state requires that local districts address the issue, but the local districts approach the problem in whatever way they believe makes sense rather than through the specific rules and regulations promulgated by state agencies.

In such a relationship between the state education agency and the intermediate or local district, the state agency maintains its leadership role. That leadership may take several forms: being an advocate in the legislature for more school funding, working with local educators to forge a vision for the long range planning of the state and its educational system, working with other state agencies to coordinate the educational delivery systems among various levels of education, and coordinating the increasingly important ties between public education and the private sector in the states' efforts in economic development. These can and should be among the important leadership roles of the state education agency.

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Perhaps the state agency's most important and most difficult leadership role, however, is its empowerment function.

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Perhaps the state agency's most important and most difficult leadership role, however, is its empowerment function. The tendency of all bureaucracies toward sameness, regularity, and predictability is very strong. The ultimate values of any bureaucratic organization are efficiency and control. There are some people, Thomas Jefferson reminded us, who prefer the "calm seas of despotism to the stormy seas of liberty." The iron hand of a single authority is no doubt tidy and orderly. It also crushes the human spirit. Everything we know about achievement, motivation and creativity tells us that while those more turbulent environments of liberty might sometimes be less tightly controlled, the resulting levels of people's performance are worth the risk. The lesson for state education agencies is that they can exercise true leadership today not when they seek to centralize power and authority, but rather when they are prepared to responsibly give it away.

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# Assessing and Promoting Quality: What Do States Need to Know?

By Judy Burnes

This paper discusses the necessary ingredients of a state-level system to assess and promote educational quality. It is argued that in order to provide an adequate information base about educational quality, three components are needed: an ongoing system for monitoring or tracking current quality, projections of future trends that will affect the educational system, and studies of the effectiveness quality. Also needed is a strategy for effectively presenting information to state-level policy makers.

One of the results of the recent debate over educational excellence in our country is a national recognition of the poor quality of information available to support or refute the multitude of allegations and charges that have filled our newspapers for the last year and a half. Confronted with increasing questions from legislators and the public and frustrated by their current inability to provide convincing information in response, many organizations and groups, including the Council of Chief State School Officers, the U.S. Department of Education and some state agencies, have undertaken projects and activities designed to improve education's information base. Typically, these projects have taken the form of the definition of a set of indicators, or educational statistics, that can be used to judge the health or quality of the public school system. Once established, these indicators will be monitored over a several-year period so that changes indicating an increase or decrease in quality will quickly surface and can be addressed.

These efforts have been accompanied by considerable discussion and debate over which indicators best constitute a measure of quality, which reflect legitimate state-level interests (as opposed to local interests) and what are the best ways of gathering, summarizing and reporting particular educational statistics.

State plans to assess and report on the quality of education are designed to serve several objectives or purposes. Examples of typical objectives include: to provide information necessary for state level policy decisions (such as setting teacher certification requirements, establishing graduation requirements, etc.); to be publicly accountable for educational progress (an increasingly important function, given the close public scrutiny of education budgets and bond issues); and to stimulate public discussion about the most effective educational strategies and policies. Underlying these and other purposes offered for our state data collection activities is the assumption that in attempting to achieve these objectives, we are not only trying to measure and report on the overall quality of the

system, but, in so doing, we are also trying to improve that quality. This added dimension has two important implications for the design of our assessment systems: (1) if the data we are reporting do not assist policy makers in their efforts to improve the system, then perhaps we need to rethink data collection and reporting efforts so that they will have that effect, and (2) in order to provide the information needed to improve educational quality, we need to ask a very broad range of questions, including not only questions about current student achievement in various areas, but also questions related to likely future trends that will significantly impact the public education system in the state.

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**...an adequate system for assessing educational quality will have three components: an ongoing system for monitoring or tracking current quality; projections of future trends and needs that will affect the educational system; and careful analysis of the effectiveness of previous and current strategies (or reform efforts) designed to improve some aspect of the educational system.**

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## Three Components of a System to Assess Quality

Viewed from this broader perspective, our assessment question now becomes: "What do we need to know not only to take the current temperature of our educational system, but also to promote its future health?" This paper will argue that an adequate system for assessing educational quality will have three components: an ongoing system for monitoring or tracking current quality; projections of future trends and needs that will affect the educational system; and careful analysis of the effectiveness of previous and current strategies (or reform efforts) designed to improve some aspect of the educational system.

### Monitoring Current Quality

Developing a stable and credible set of educational indicators to provide basic information about educational quality on an ongoing basis is an important first step in establishing an adequate assessment system. In attempting to identify such indicators, some have argued that all that is really needed is to provide information about student achievement which is, after all, the bottom line. In Colorado, we also feel that assessing student achievement is a top priority, and our legislature is currently debating several versions of student testing bills, despite considerable opposition and anxiety that state assessment will erode our long tradition of local control of education. However, we consider student achievement to be just one

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aspect of a monitoring system for educational quality. In the system we are developing, we will have indicators in each of several areas we believe to be related to educational quality: student outcomes, (academic, social and vocational), teacher quality, educational program quality, and parent and community involvement and support.

There are at least three reasons for having multiple indicators to assess educational quality at the state level.

(1) The use of multiple indicators provides important information for interpreting student achievement results. For example, our existing Colorado student achievement data indicates that our average performance as a state is well above the national average. This is supported by our ACT and SAT scores as well as by the results of district-administered achievement tests (Colorado Department of Education, 1984). Although these results are often cited by our educators as evidence that Colorado schools are doing well, our general public is not so easily impressed. In a statewide public opinion poll conducted this fall, the Department of Education found that Colorado residents generally rate their schools no higher than schools are rated nationwide (DeLarber, 1985). Whether the disparity between the views of our educators and our general public is due to lack of information on the part of the public or to differing expectations, these findings indicate a clear need for substantial public discussion and dialogue regarding the quality of our schools.

(2) Education has multiple goals. Student achievement is a basic, but not exclusive, goal of our educational system, and we need to provide information related to all of our basic goals. One goal of substantial significance in Colorado is keeping students in school so that they attain a high school diploma. Our graduation rate, while above the national average, declined by 5% between 1973 and 1980, although it has risen slightly for the last three years (Colorado Department of Education, 1984). During the same years that the graduation rate declined, the number of people taking the GED increased dramatically. Nearly half of these people were between the ages of 17 and 19. What do these statistics tell us? One interpretation is that part of our population was, to quote our President, "voting with their feet," electing to abandon our high schools, get their GED and get on with their lives. This trend is an important statement to our high schools about their effectiveness in meeting the needs of some of their students. It delivers a message that should not be ignored.

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**...despite our considerable progress, we have a long road to travel to achieve our goal of citizen participation in public education.**

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Another goal in Colorado education is the meaningful involvement of parents and community members in the public education process. Since 1971, Colorado has had an accountability law which mandates such participation, and has prided itself on the extent of its citizen participation in local district and individual school

accountability committees. Yet, in the same survey cited earlier, nearly half of the persons polled said they did not feel that they could influence the direction of education in their local school district. Clearly, despite our considerable progress, we have a long road to travel to achieve our goal of citizen participation in public education.

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**Public discussion at the local level is needed to resolve the discrepancy and establish consensus regarding appropriate standards for our schools.**

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(3) Some indicators provide information about factors that are believed to be closely related to student outcomes and are directly influence by state and local policy. Teacher quality is one such area. Another is educational standards, as indicated by high school graduation requirements. Referring once again to our opinion poll, most Colorado residents indicated that they felt that graduation requirements should be higher than they typically are (graduation requirements are established at the local level in Colorado). Note that this information does not tell us whether current standards are, in fact, appropriate for our students. It simply indicates that there is a discrepancy between what the public thinks and what the requirements are. Public discussion at the local level is needed to resolve the discrepancy and establish consensus regarding appropriate standards for our schools. To deal with these complex issues, the Colorado Department of Education is trying to develop indicators in each of the four major areas listed above. In some areas, indicators are readily available and have been collected for years. In other areas such as the use of school time, the development of statistics which will provide useful policy information does not seem feasible. In areas such as these, if information is needed, it will be necessary to rely on smaller, in-depth studies for guidance.

#### Projecting Future Needs

The third component of a system to assess quality is rarely mentioned in the current debate over educational indicators. Yet it relates directly to our ability to prepare adequately for future challenges in our public education system. The development and utilization of projections of future trends that will affect public education is absolutely essential if we are to successfully prepare for the needs of tomorrow. Population trends are particularly critical, especially for states with changing populations. Analysis of Census projections for Colorado indicates that the number of Hispanic students attending public schools will increase dramatically in the next 15-20 years (McNett, 1983). We need to be planning for this increase now by activities such as ensuring that teacher preparation programs are adequately preparing future teachers to work with a culturally diverse population. Yet working with cultural diversity is one of the lower-rated items on a 31-item survey of beginning teachers conducted on an annual basis by the Department of

Education (Burnes, 1985a). Clearly, some changes need to be made to prepare our future teachers for the schools of tomorrow.

Other population trends also have important implications for the quality of education in our schools. The increase in single-parent families and in families with two working parents is dramatically affecting home-school relations; much needs to be done to help schools find new ways of relating to parents. That the traditional ways are no longer adequate can be seen in the decrease (approximately 25%) in parent volunteers in our Chapter 1 and Migrant programs during the last few years (Burnes, 1984, 1985b).

Other kinds of trends also need to be followed. What kinds of economic factors will affect future job markets, and what are the implications of these for our educational system? Will enrollments go up or down, and how should we prepare for this? Will our teacher supply be adequate, or do we need to start planning now for attracting students into the teaching profession? If so, we have some work to do as half of the residents polled in our survey would not want a child of theirs to take up teaching in the public schools as a career.

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In the final analysis, the contribution of any assessment system to improving educational quality depends not only on the technical quality of the data provided, but also on the effectiveness of our presentations and explanations of that information to our fellow educators, the press, the legislature and the general public.

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#### Putting It Together

Obviously, a case can be made for collecting considerable data about our schools to provide information for policy decisions. Yet our need for information must be balanced by a careful consideration of the cost, in time and money, at both the state and local levels of providing that information. Not all information needs to be collected annually. Not all schools and districts need to be included in every data collection activity. Not all data will really be used. In the final analysis, the contribution of any assessment system to improving educational quality depends not only on the technical quality of the data provided, but also on the effectiveness of our presentations and explanations of that information to our fellow educators, the press, the legislature and the general public. Even if our policy makers could profit from the information we have, if we can't get them to listen, we are wasting our time.

So the final requirements for an effective assessment system for educational quality are that we make careful decisions about what information is needed and likely to be used, and that we present our information effectively, so that it does, indeed, contribute to improving educational quality.

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MAY 16, 17, 18, 1986



# Something Old, Something New:

## The State Role in Educational Equity

By Charles L. Glenn

The equity agenda in education consists primarily of two concerns: opportunity for poor or excluded children to receive a preparation which will make a difference in their later lives, and experiences for all children which will contribute to subsequent social and national unity. Assuring real equal access and achieving desegregation which leads to real integration are the primary goals of this equity agenda.

These goals were revitalized by the Freedom Movement of the sixties and by legislation and court decisions of more recent years, but they have a much older heritage. It was for the sake of the equity agenda that the state first became involved with popular education. It was at the state level and in the interest of an expanded state role in shaping society with respect to opportunity and to social cohesion that the mission of public schooling as we know it was developed. This early articulation of a social and political mission of schooling made the equity agenda a part of the public education enterprise from the start.

### The Common School as Nation Building

For Horace Mann in Massachusetts, Calvin Stowe in Ohio, Henry Barnard in Connecticut and Rhode Island and their fellow reformers in the decades before the Civil War, the creation of 'common schools' was a great crusade which would save the United States from the curse of the Old World. Their concern was not primarily to teach literacy--New England had achieved nearly universal literacy under the old system of district schools--which Mann attacked so scornfully--or vocational skills, but to form citizens and to do so in a way which would integrate the diverse elements of society into a single social and political order. They saw ominous signs of breakdown of such an order in the popularity of private academies to educate the children of the middle class and in the growing immigration of Irish and other foreigners. The common school would assure that all children received an equal start and also a shared exposure to the values which were deemed (by the reformers) most conducive to a prosperous and ordered society. These concerns for social integration and equal opportunity were not unique to the United States. The education reformers drew many of their ideas from European examples, and most of them made visits to the schools of Prussia, France and the Netherlands, where nation-building through popular schooling was already a priority.

In the American context, it was inevitable that the aspiration for equal opportunity should become associated with social and national unity,

though the education reformers made no apologies for the fact that social and economic differences would persist despite universal schooling. The virtue of the common school, as now seen, was that students would have the same opportunity to gain advancement through talent and industry; unequal outcomes were taken for granted.

It was assumed, by the American education reformers of the 1840s, that schools could be operated by local elected officials as they always had been, but that the state would have to intervene in the interest of social integration and equal opportunity. Local efforts without such state interference, they believed, would not produce truly 'common' schools in which poor or immigrant children would be assimilated to the social mainstream and enjoy equal opportunities; the result would be class, ethnic and religious division.

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America has never realized the reformers' vision of every child in a common school, receiving a common start in life and a shared set of values.

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### Educational Equity in the 1980s

America has never realized the reformers' vision of every child in a common school, receiving a common start in life and a shared set of values. In retrospect, it seems more a totalitarian dream than a realistic program in a society which values individual initiative and liberty of conscience.

Public education has had to tolerate the competition of schools whose purpose is to pass a vision of life which not all in the society share. Millions of American children have been educated in Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Jewish and other religious schools as well as in private schools with no religious affiliation. This fact is often deplored by advocates of educational equity as tending to create unequal opportunities and to undermine racial integration. It might be more realistic to recognize frankly that non-public schools are a part of the American educational scene, and to ask how they might contribute to realizing the equity agenda. Rather than waiting for some form of tuition tax credits to create a totally free market in education, should equity advocates not be pressing to enlist the cooperation of non-public schools in order to increase access for poor and minority children and social integration? Since Horace Mann and the others, our state role has been primarily to promote broad social objectives for education which are then carried out by local agencies. Is there any reason we should not seek to fill such a role in relation to schools which are not under the authority of local government?

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*Charles L. Glenn is the Director of Equal Educational Opportunity, Massachusetts Department of Education*

Most schools, of course, are operated by local government, and the great majority of poor children and of minority children attend such schools. What is the most appropriate and effective way of the state to fulfill its historic role of assuring that individual opportunity is assured and social integration achieved?

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**It is in assuring that an opportunity is provided to every child and that the effect of schooling is to unite rather than to divide our society that the state comes into its own and can presume to speak definitively.**

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The issues which an earlier generation of education reformers faced have not gone away; indeed they continue to define the primary role for the state in education, just as concerns about effective instruction and guidance define the role of local and school-level educators. Of course, education is all of a piece and Horace Mann worried about teaching methods and schoolroom furniture, but ultimately the state can only be an adviser on questions of instructional strategy. It is in assuring that an opportunity is provided to every child and that the effect of schooling is to unite rather than to divide our society that the state comes into its own and can presume to speak definitively. The issues have not gone away. Social class continues to determine educational opportunity, as education itself has an increasing power to determine economic opportunities. Ethnicity and race and migration from abroad and from rural areas have created the social divisions which Mann and others feared. Schooling seems, as it did in their day, to represent the best hope for fundamental but undistruptive and essentially conservative social improvement. However exaggerated this hope may be, it is a noble cause and one to which many are committed.

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**In recent years we in Massachusetts have employed two very distinct approaches to achieving the educational equity agenda of equal opportunity and social integration.**

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#### Strategies for State Equity Efforts

In recent years we in Massachusetts have employed two very distinct approaches to achieving the educational equity agenda of equal opportunity and social integration. The first approach consists of collecting standard information on school system practices, expenditures and enrollments, and drawing conclusions which then serve as the basis for a variety of enforcement measures. Thus Horace Mann entered into an acrimonious and very public debate with thirty-one Boston schoolmasters over their pedagogical and disciplinary practices, much as we are currently engaged in criticizing their successors.

The logic of this approach is to seek to standardize educational practices in the interest of assuring, to the extent possible, that vulnerable students (racial minorities, the handicapped, linguistic minorities, in certain instances female students) receive equal and thus presumptively fair treatment. At the same time, this approach makes it possible to monitor the concentration of such students in particular schools or programs in the interest of their maximum feasible integration.

This strategy (which might, without pejorative intention, be called 'bureaucratic') has the virtues of universal coverage with respect to students and of fairness to schools, since all are held to the same standard. It is relatively easy to implement within a hierarchical organization; indeed it may be made to appear to implement itself on the basis of the objective processing of statistics. In a sense it is to educational equity what the breathalyzer test is to sober driving, offering the prospect of enforcement without subjective judgments.

The only problem with this strategy is that it doesn't work very well, as we have learned through more than a decade of frustration. It does have its uses, to the extent that many schools and school systems will modify their behavior in order to avoid being found in violation of state stands, but it does not contribute significantly to solving the real problems of social division and unequal opportunity because it does not have the power to elicit energy and creative problem-solving at the local and especially the schoolhouse level.

There is another approach, fortunately, one which has produced significant progress in desegregation and equal opportunity in Massachusetts since 1974. This alternative strategy asks how the stimulation of local initiative can be reconciled with the state's responsibility to assure equal treatment of all children and to promote a sense of mutual respect and 'belonging together.'

#### An Example

The key to this approach, unlikely as it may seem, is an emphasis upon race desegregation. Although race desegregation is even more controversial--by a wide margin--than other equity measures, it has proved the one most likely to produce substantial and lasting change, and to do so in a way which strengthens the capacity of school systems to deal with all of their educational needs.

This was illustrated very recently, as I sat in the board room in Fall River, an economically-depressed city with few minority students but a heavily Portuguese enrollment. While we have no authority to prevent the segregation of Portuguese children (and thus have turned to Fall River only after completing desegregation in ten other cities), we have adopted an Emergency School Aid Act provision which allows us to count Portuguese (and Franco-American) students as 'minority' for the purpose of funding voluntary desegregation. In order to provide assistance to Fall River, we have encouraged the system to treat its students whose home language is Portuguese as though they were 'minority,' and to devise programs to reduce their isolation and to meet their educational needs beyond the bilingual program mandated by state law.

My last meeting in that room in Fall River, perhaps seven years ago, was a painful occasion. I was there to review the results of an intensive monitoring effort by more than a dozen state staff, in which we had identified nearly a hundred violations of our state anti-discrimination statute. Several of the top administrators were soon shouting at me, threatening libel charges, and denying the existence of any problems at all. Tempers were so high that it proved impossible to find any areas of remediation upon which we could agree, except to hold a single in-service session to explain to staff the requirements of sex and linguistic minority equity. This session itself, several months later, had to contend with a hostile attitude on the part of the staff, who had been told that we would be condemning their way of teaching. Other remedies were resisted and conceded only gradually and in part. In short, the Fall River compliance effort was not one of our brilliant successes; indeed only the fact that the key leadership had changed made it possible for us to make another attempt to promote equity in that urban system.

By contrast, my meeting in Fall River in 1985, though dealing with a potentially far more controversial subject than separating girls and boys for physical education and shop and the other concerns of our anti-discrimination enforcement years ago, was productive and cordial. Over the previous year the superintendent had been participating, at our suggestion, in meetings of the superintendents of desegregating cities, and had come to see them as a valuable peer group and source of support for significant educational change. He had heard a great deal about how positive it had been to work through the entire desegregation process, from the initial self-assessment of equity issues through the involvement of parents and staff and an open debate over the principles and goals on which desegregation would be based, to the sense of satisfaction when implementation had gone smoothly and well, with high morale in each of the schools affected. He had heard about this from his peers, and he knew that each of them had emerged from the process strengthened in his leadership in the community. And, equally important, he knew that the role of the state education agency in each case had been to advise, to support, and to provide resources, but never to condemn the schools or humiliate their leadership. Behind the scenes, he was aware, we had minced no words about what was necessary, but our public posture had been supportive.

In talking with the superintendent, I made it clear that any desegregation efforts should build upon what the system was already seeking to do to make education more effective for poor and vulnerable students. We could fund a process which would help to direct existing initiatives explicitly toward reducing isolation and strengthening instruction. For example, the process of developing a long-range facility plan should be closely tied to reducing present isolation of Portuguese-speaking students. The monthly seminars for all administrators in the system could be partially refocused to stress the development of a diversity among schools which would encourage voluntary transfers--and we would fund the cost of those in March and April, to make this possible. Developing a comprehensive database sensitive to equity concerns could help the superintendent to meet many of his objectives.

The strong bilingual programs could be made stronger by serving as the centerpiece of recruitment of English-dominant students to certain 'two-way bilingual schools,' a theme which we had just stressed at a statewide magnet school conference.

In these and other ways desegregation in Fall River could strengthen the positive aspects of the present system while giving them an explicit equity and desegregation agenda. Working through the process would of course also reveal aspects of the system which would have to be changed in the interest of poor and linguistic minority children. While such change is never easy, it is far less difficult for a school system which is moving forward with high morale than for a system (like Fall River a few years ago) on the defensive.

In support of such local efforts, my office is able to provide state funds under several programs which enjoy strong legislative support. Initially Fall River will receive a planning grant to begin the process of broad-based involvement, data collection, and development of alternatives. If one of these alternatives is to encourage several schools to attract student volunteers to fill available spaces, with the effect of reducing the isolation of minority students, funding will be available under the state magnet school program, funded at \$3.5 million in 1983-84 and \$4.1 million in 1984-85; Governor Dukakis is supporting our request of \$5.1 million for 1985-86. If other schools are desegregated through redistricting or other measures, funding to improve the quality and the integration of the education which they provide will be available from the state Equal Education Improvement Fund (\$7.3 million in 1984-85; the governor is supporting a funding level of \$8.4 million for 1985-86). Transportation which supports desegregation is eligible for 100% state reimbursement (though the transportation fund is chronically under-funded, so that it works out to less), and construction or renovation necessary to desegregation, and interest costs, are reimbursed by the state at 90%. Finally (though this would not be relevant to Fall River) all costs of the education of minority student volunteers from Boston and Springfield in forty participating suburban schools are paid under the state's Metco program; 3,100 students are enrolled each year.

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**Desegregation is the key. It is the only issue which is sufficiently broad to touch every school and to galvanize the energies of an entire community, to create a positive crisis through which real change can occur.**

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Sometimes my conscience troubles me. As an equity professional, I expect to be in the middle of controversy, to be in confrontations with school officials over the rights of children. My difficult meeting in Fall River a few years ago seems more heroic, somehow, than my very pleasant meeting last month. I recall Luke 6:26--"Woe to you when all men speak well of you" and ask: does my very cordial relations with a dozen urban superintendents indicate that I have sold out the equity agenda?

Not at all (I assure myself); we have simply developed a technique for pursuing that agenda which works and which creates more effective as well as more equitable education. Desegregation is the key. It is the only issue which is sufficiently broad to touch every school and to galvanize the energies of an entire community, to create a positive crisis through which real change can occur. This real change invariably includes dealing with problems of support for linguistic minority students, of sex equity, of high dropout levels, and other issues on the equity agenda.

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**Just as superintendents meet with superintendents, so principals are meeting with principals, teachers with teachers, parents with parents, in a networking effort which is building a strong constituency for urban education and for equity.**

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The fact that desegregation is strong medicine and has the potential for disaster assures that everyone gives it their full and careful attention, their best effort. Local elected leadership, in Massachusetts, have learned not to politicize desegregation, and we have sometimes asked School Committee members from a desegregated community to meet with their counterparts from another just entering the process to bring this message home. Just as superintendents meet with superintendents, so principals are meeting with principals, teachers with teachers, parents with parents, in a networking effort which is building a strong constituency for urban education and for equity.

What this suggests is that those of us for whom equity and the interests of poor and minority children are the first priority need to put more stress on problem-solving than on stoking our indignation. We need to operate more out of a vision of what 'just schools' would look and feel like than out of a sense of offended justice. As Michael Sandel points out in Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge University Press, 1982), an excessive emphasis on 'justice' reveals a breakdown in the cooperative pursuit of other goals. To accept ineffective schools so long as they fail minority and non-minority students equally would reflect a sadly deficient sense of our mission in public education.

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**The state role has become distorted, however, to the extent that it has sought to prescribe the manner in which education is provided, to impose a counter-productive uniformity on what should be a diversity of approaches to education.**

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### Conclusions

The equity agenda is not an after-thought for state education agencies; it was to respond to this agenda that the states first were drawn into providing leadership for what, up to that point, had been an enterprise of local leadership and

voluntary associations. For those who created the state role, it was of primary importance to break down barriers of class and nationality, and to assure the basic instruction essential to opportunity in an increasingly complex economy and society.

The state role has become distorted, however, to the extent that it has sought to prescribe the manner in which education is provided, to impose a counter-productive uniformity on what should be a diversity of approaches to education. Much of this interference has been in the name of the same concern with equity, and it is at least partially responsible for the timidity and stagnation which plagues too much of public education.

In Massachusetts we have been developing an approach to carrying out the equity agenda which produces significant results and at the same time encourages initiative, responsibility, problem-solving at the level of the individual school and of the school system. When we are asked by other state education agencies for a copy of our desegregation guidelines, we have to say that we have none. Our approach is to convince the leadership of a school system to provoke a benign crisis by undertaking to desegregate, and then to work with that leadership to tie the goals of desegregation and equity to everything which is strong and dynamic in the system. While it would be ideal to pretend that there is no implicit threat of state enforcement action, it has grown less and less necessary to stress such a threat as city after city goes through the process and finds it helpful and stimulating.

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**...each of our desegregation plans (which now affect about one student in five in the Commonwealth) actually increases parent and student choice and the differences among schools, rather than imposing an inappropriate uniformity in the name of equal education.**

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It is emblematic of this approach that each of our desegregation plans (which now affect about one student in five in the Commonwealth) actually increases parent and student choice and the differences among schools, rather than imposing an inappropriate uniformity in the name of equal education. As a result, the great challenge before all of us working together in Massachusetts urban education is to explore just how different and 'flavorful' public schools can be, to provide an effective and appropriate education to each one of our students.

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# Coalitions of State Education Agencies and National Associations

By William F. Pierce

Coalitions of state education agencies were established in the early 1900s to provide a collective representation of state interests at the federal level. The intent of these cooperative efforts was to exert a common influence on legislative and regulatory activities of the federal government, a role that increased over time with passage of the Vocational Education Act, the National Defense Education Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Education of the Handicapped Act. Each of these statutes increased the federal role in public education with a commensurate increase in the need for state input and representation in Washington. Most recently, however, this traditional role of Washington or national based special interest representation has become secondary. Today, the primary role of state-based education associations is support for their members as state educational leaders and the development of activities principally to support state efforts. This change in emphasis may be attributed to the emphasis on school reform and education improvement at the state and local level and an expressed desire on the part of constituents for information to determine how their colleagues are grappling with a mutually shared problem.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is one of a number of state-based education associations which has become increasingly involved in coalition development and consensus building. As Executive Director of the Council, it is relatively simple for me to describe our coalition efforts in terms of history, trends, and responses to the needs of our members. However, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Education Commission of the States (ECS), and other organizations whose members are concerned with education at the state and local level have created similar kinds of coalitions or alliances designed to obtain joint support and action among their own members. Each organization has demonstrated the importance of coalitions in serving a variety of members and in meeting the members needs both individually and collectively.

Increasingly, these national organizations, which are themselves a coalition of state agencies, are forming coalitions with other groups and organizations in order to more effectively and efficiently attain mutual goals and objectives. The thrust and direction of the Council of Chief State School Officers programs and activities changed more in 1984 than in any of the previous five years. Then, the bulk of the Council's time was spent reacting to federal initiatives or focusing on activities and/or issues generated by

groups or individuals outside the state interests. Last year's efforts, however, focused on state initiatives generated by state leaders in response to perceived state needs. CCSSO staff time and attention has been devoted much more to the dissemination of information about state efforts, supporting the role of chiefs and state staff as educational leaders, and engaging in developmental or fund raising activities primarily in support of these state efforts. What follows is a description of the Council of Chief State School Officers reflecting how one organization, itself a coalition, has served its constituency.

## History and Purpose

The Council of Chief State School Officers has functioned as an independent national council since 1927. However, chief state school officers have conferred with the federal government "to consider education interest common to all of their states..which might presumably be furthered by a free comparison of views" since 1908.

With the appointment of its first executive secretary in 1948, the Council established an office in Washington, D.C. In 1979, the Council moved into its current offices in the Hall of the States on Capitol Hill. This move was made expressly for the purpose of locating the operation in the same facility as that occupied by the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Governor's Association, the National Council of State Legislatures, approximately 24 other national organizations serving state purposes and numerous individual state offices. It was anticipated, and has proven to be the case, that this proximity with other similar organizations would improve and enhance the opportunity for effective communication and collaborative efforts and activities between the associations representing state education at the national level.

Recognizing the responsibility of the states for leadership in education, the Council of Chief State School Officers exists to help its members and their agencies fulfill their responsibilities as leaders in education. To accomplish this the Council:

- Provides service and a means of cooperative action among its members to strengthen education through the work of state education agencies.
- Seeks consensus of its members on major education issues and expresses their views of the public, civic and professional organizations, federal agencies and Congress.
- Conducts special projects which address problems of concern at the state level. Research and resources developed through the Council are targeted to improve educational opportunities for students.
- Coordinates seminars, educational travel, and special study programs which provide opportunities for the professional growth of chief

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state school officers and their top management teams.

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### Activities

One way the Council has historically been of service to its members is through national meetings focused on particular issues or topics. The Council meets in general session twice a year to conduct necessary business and to provide an opportunity for discussion of issues of common interest. The formal meetings provide an important forum for the discussion and collective decision on issues that have national implications or are of common interest to the states. For example, at the last annual meetings, two days of intense discussion and debate were directed toward the topic of roles and responsibilities for accurately and appropriately assessing and reporting on the health and productivity of the nation's schools.

In addition to the two general meetings, the Council conducts a Summer Institute as a professional development seminar for chief state school officers. The Summer Institute is an in-depth five-day discussion of the designated subject. The theme of the 1985 summer institute is "School/College Collaboration and Building an Integrated Teacher Education System Statewide." The Institute is not designed as a series of presentations, rather it is an action-oriented conference which gives the chiefs the necessary information to be more effective with their chancellor, governor, legislature and others who participate in the development of teacher education systems.

In addition to the meetings conducted for the chief state school officers, the Council has organized internal coalitions composed of other state agency staff to support education in the states, and assigned program and special project staffs at the Council to address areas of mutual concern. For example, the Study Commission is an action arm of the council established to study the roles and responsibilities of state and extra-state jurisdiction education agencies with a view to developing related recommended policies, resolutions and directions. The Study Commission is comprised of one high-level staff member, usually the deputy or chief assistant, from each state and extra-state jurisdiction. In addition to supporting the needs of the chief state school officers, the Study Commission is also a separate coalition that provides professional development and an opportunity for the exchange of experiences, information, and ideas among the deputy state superintendents.

The Council's Committee on Evaluation and Information Systems (CEIS) is comprised of state coordinators appointed by each chief state school officer, and supplemented by additional state and local education agency personnel to provide necessary expertise, experience, and support in

the area of data collection. The CEIS provides CCSO with a single coordinated effort in the review of federal, state and local research, evaluation and education information activities. In addition, the CEIS and the Council, under contract to the National Center for Education Statistics, operate a personnel exchange which provides a mechanism for states to share between and among themselves information management activities.

Both the study commission and the CEIS network are examples of established and on-going coalitions of SEA personnel formed to meet an expressed need of the Council's membership. The issues explored by the Study Commission and CEIS provide members the opportunity to share information, generate support, and take action in non-legislative issues.

The Council has also developed, in response to the members' needs, special projects to assist state departments of education in their educational leadership role. These projects are funded with federal grants and contracts, or by foundations, in areas designated by the chief state school officers. In order to ensure that the needs of the individual states are met by project activities, additional coalitions of SEA staff are formed to guide national activities and provide a resource and focus for carrying out similar activities at the state level for local districts. As a result, the special projects provide resources or training to networks of state education agency staff who in turn develop networks (or consortia) at the state and local level.

### CCSSO Resource Center on Educational Equity

The Center is the arm of the Council designed to provide specific information, training, and technical assistance to state education agencies as they strive to achieve equitable education for all the children of the nation. The Center has expanded its original sex equity focus to incorporate issues of race, national origin, and disability. Center staff work in a cooperative manner with other Council staff as well as those in state education agencies to promote equitable, bias-free education. Specific services offered by the Center include assistance in policy formulation, program development, workshop planning and training of trainers. Information and clearinghouse services and consultation are also provided on request.

### State Technology Leadership Project

This activity was developed cooperatively with the New York State Education Agency and was designed to develop a practicing network of SEA technology experts who can assist each other as they work with local districts in utilizing technology. It also supported a national conference (attended by representatives of 48 states) on technology concerns, and the construction of an information base for SEA practitioners.

### Community Education Project

The purpose of this three-year Project is to assist the chief state school officers in using community education problem-solving strategies to increase public confidence in education. Overall goals include increasing the awareness of chiefs of the potential of community education processes to help them address major educational issues; identifying and developing model state education agency projects where community education

processes are being used to increase public confidence; and developing strategies to increase the number and quality of positive experiences between schools and the community.

#### Arts and Humanities Projects

The purposes of these activities are to assess the policies of state education agencies toward the Arts and Humanities and to undertake efforts to improve instruction in these areas. In addition to analysis of state policies, the project has supported a national meeting on the Humanities addressing current knowledge and pedagogy associated with the humanities and a discussion by the chief state school officers on "State Education Agencies: Where do we go from there?" A similar meeting for education of the arts is currently being designed.

#### School/College Collaboration

The purpose of this activity is to foster state initiatives between elementary/secondary and postsecondary education. The project is a follow-up activity to the 1981 Council Summer Institute that was devoted to the exploration of common interests between college presidents and chief state school officers. As a result of that conference, and a similar conference at Yale University in February 1983, the Mellon Foundation provided a grant to award incentive grants to states to begin and organize school/college programs. The project has also developed an electronic data base clearinghouse consisting of over 200 nationwide school/college collaboration programs.

#### Education Resources Exchange Program

The U.S. Department of Education is providing funding to the Institute for Educational Leadership and the Council for a second year to operate an Exchange Program. The funding provides for up to 20 high-level administrators from state education agencies to participate in a program which includes a six-week assignment in the U.S. Department of Education seminars, and attendance at national meetings. The Education Resources Exchange Program is designed to increase communication between SEAs and U.S. Department of Education executives and staff; provide SEA executives with an intergovernmental professional development experience; encourage SEA executives to share information and develop networks with colleagues from other states; provide SEA executives with access to a wider network of national education leaders; and provide training in network-building, electronic communication systems, policy development, and public leadership.

#### International Education

The purpose of this activity is to increase the international dimension of the U.S. school system through broadening the knowledge and expertise of administrators, teachers, and students about the relationship between the United States and other nations.

#### Project on Textbooks and Instructional Materials

The Textbook and Instructional Materials Project is a collaborative effort of the Council and the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). The project's purpose is to assist states and local agencies to improve the instructional effectiveness of textbooks and

related materials. Since publishers response to market demands, particularly demands from adoption states with large market shares, there is a need for coordinated effort between large and small states and adoption and non-adoption states, so the publishers will be able to discern a clear call for better written, more coherent, more focused student texts; for more educative workbooks; and for more effective teacher guides. The textbook project will act as a clearinghouse for information and research on text quality; as a mobilizer of technical assistance to policymakers and state agency personnel; and as a catalyst in the growing movement around the country to upgrade teaching materials.

#### Consortia's of Organizations

In addition to the collective interaction and activities of the states in the associations and organizations themselves, there has been an increasing number of collaborative efforts to support common goals between the associations. Thus, each individual coalition becomes a member of a larger coalition. As an example, the American Educational Research Association's Special Interest Group for State Education Agencies (SIG/SEA) and the CCSSO have established a collaborative network to provide continuous support to the Chiefs in the area of research. The purposes of the network are to share information and to provide assistance to the CCSSO and collectively to each state. As the first activity of the network, states were asked to complete a survey which focused on each state's current and emerging priorities that require the attention of federal/state/local education agencies. The results of that survey have recently been compiled and a report will be distributed to each state. The network will permit routine information gathering activities to improve the knowledge base concerning research or research policy related questions from perspective of the states.

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**A unique relationship exists between the chief state school officers and the state boards of education.**

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A second example is the annual CCSSO/NASBE Legislative Conference. This conference provides the opportunity for a dialogue between chief state school officers and state board members concerning common issues. A unique relationship exists between the chief state school officers and the state boards of education. Common duties, trusts, and concerns make it necessary for them to work closely together. As a result, the presidents of the two organizations, and their executive directors, attend each other's meetings of their boards of directors.

A third example is the establishment of the State Education Policy Consortium. The Consortium is composed of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the National Governors' Association (NGA), and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). These

five organizations which serve virtually all groups responsible for state-level policy in the U.S., have been working together to document how state based organizations use research and information to respond to current and continuing state-level policy issues. The main areas of the project are to document procedures to identify policy issues of each association, policy issues facing the memberships, and anticipated sources of information. The project is also striving to document existing information needs and sources for state policy groups and to develop and implement new and/or revised dissemination practices within the participating organization. Finally, the project will document project activities and their consequences for the organizations and their constituencies and disseminate project information and outcomes to state level policy makers.

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**Another type of coalition-building occurs as a result of the fact that the CCSSO president-elect serves on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Board of Directors and AASA's president serves on the Council's Board.**

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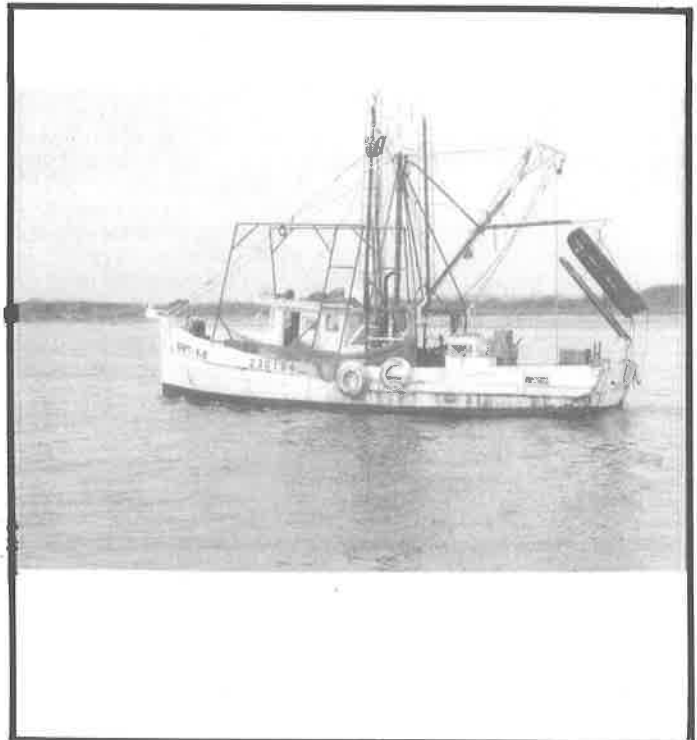
Another type of coalition-building occurs as a result of the fact that the CCSSO president-elect serves on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Board of Directors and AASA's president serves on the Council's Board. The CCSSO executive director is an Education Commissioner of the States non-voting advisory commissioner representing the Council. These arrangements ensure that appropriate expression of views and consideration of positions take place by the related associations.

CCSSO participates in the Education Leader's Consortium (ELC) which is comprised of 18 educational organizations whose majority of members are educational administrators or policymakers. The purposes of the consortium are to provide opportunities for the designated representatives of participating organizations to come together formally and regularly; have activities and programs of each organization presented to the group; identify areas of mutual interest; and coordinate efforts and resources.

CCSSO also participates in the Forum of Education Organization Leaders (FEOL is comprised of the President, President-Elect and Executive Secretary or Director of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AATE), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Council of Chief State School Officers (SSCO), the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (National PTA), the National Education Association (NEA), and the National School Boards Association (NSBA). The Forum had its origins with the U.S. Delegation to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Intergovernmental Conference on Teacher Policies meeting in Paris in 1974. The opportunity for comparing their experiences removed from political pressures led to the recognition of the need for continuing their

collective work. In May 1977 the group officially was established with the name of the Forum of Education Organization Leaders. The Forum works to promote discussion, communication, and understanding within the education community; gain understanding of each other's aims and imperatives, and identify grounds for common action, thus replacing inadvertent working at cross-purposes and needless confrontations; generate needed public awareness and enlightened support in attacking critical problems; promote improved services to elementary and secondary school children; and conduct self-educative discussions, and invite guest speakers to present to members new ideas and practices in the field.

In conclusion, the need for state education agency consortia was the driving force and motivation behind the establishment of organizations such as the Council of Chief State School Officers. As the federal role in education expanded and national needs emerged, these organizations provided a vital coalition of state policymakers in representing state interests to Congress and the U.S. Department of Education. While this role continues, it is now secondary to maintenance of support services that assist states to continue and expand their role as educational leaders and strive to construct new coalitions with those who can assist in this effort. The process of schooling is a complex, multidimensional activity that demands increasing cooperation among all those agencies, public and private, who can and should contribute to providing all individuals the necessary skills to live a fulfilling and satisfying life. The Council of Chief State School Officers recognize that this task is much too great for a single institution and will continue to actively promote those coalitions that can enhance the opportunity of everyone receiving a free and appropriate education.





# Guest Editorial -- A Summary

By C. Thomas Kerins

Dr. Gerald Holton, a key author of the National Commission on Excellence in Education Report, recently wrote that the Commission's most essential point was that qualitative and quantitative indicators of the state of education are poor, particularly at the high school level. As a result, former Secretary of Education Bell directed the development and dissemination of the 1984 and 1985 wall charts to describe the status of American education state by state. Several states have begun working on their own 'report cards.' In March, Governor James R. Thompson of Illinois proposed a report card in his "Better Schools Program" for 1986. The obvious concern is to understand how well students are achieving and to determine systematically what factors facilitate or inhibit performance. The goal is to have procedures to assess and monitor the health of the public schools.

Burnes notes in her article that regardless of the media tag used to describe the results (e.g., wall chart, report card), a well defined information base is needed to monitor the current quality of the schools and to project future needs. As Pierce reported in his article, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), as well as federal agencies such as the National Institute of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and National Science Foundation are actively involved with projects to develop and define a set of indicators or educational statistics that can be used to judge the health of our educational system over a period of time. Burnes notes that the results could be used to develop state education agency policy decisions, satisfy the need for public accountability, and stimulate public discussion about the strategies being used to improve the quality of education.

Of course, at some point these efforts need to be coordinated if an accurate national picture of education is to come into focus. The proposed CCSSO Center for the Improvement of Education Assessment, in cooperation with the National Center for Education Statistics, may well be the federal-state union that will coordinate the effort.

Burnes and McDonnell both agree that student achievement is the main component of a monitoring system for educational quality. However, as

Bakalis points out, arriving at a consensus about the student achievement measure without falling into an over bureaucratized system is a major challenge. If McDonnell is correct that comparisons across states are inevitable, then the states need to play a critical role in defining outcome indicators as well as input and process indicators which are fair and accurate.

As McDonnell notes, state education agencies have traditionally collected data on different input factors but the emphasis is changing to require more comprehensive assessment systems which require the analysis of student achievement in relation to a host of relevant student and school variables. Consequently, data collection and assessment capabilities of states are likely to require upgrading and expansion. However, in an era of fiscal restraint, the question is whether most state education agencies can modify their emphasis from a regulatory to a service role combined with the needed sophisticated assessment and information capacity.

McDonnell also notes that implicit in the current reform movement is a model of schooling which assumes that a given level of inputs or resources should be associated with greater achievement. The way these resources are used is equally important to increasing the likelihood of advancing student performance. Bakalis emphasizes that the local school representatives know best how to make individual student decisions and to allocate resources in making their curriculum decisions. While most educators agree with that statement, the question remains how does the state education agency decide to allocate its resources in the first place?

Bakalis emphasizes the role of the state education agency as a catalyst and leader. (This role could help the state enhance educational equity, as Glenn strongly urges.) But state staff can't begin to reach these goals by working from ignorance or guesswork. In the information age, the state must play a key role in identifying sound qualitative and quantitative indicators of the health of its education enterprise. The majority of the authors seem to agree that a reasonable level of reliable and valid data (including a way to look at achievement across schools in a state) is necessary.



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