This paper lists and discusses, in historical progression, books and other writings that are considered to cover the major developments of education in the United States in the 20th century. The paper is intended to help professional educators to know better the great ideas, themes, and books that laid the foundations of education in the United States. Discussion of the writings is organized into historical segments that begin with "Turn of the Century, 1893-1918," and end with "President Bush and America 2000."

The paper also describes annotated bibliographies, educational histories, and a number of resources that concern recent trends in education. An alphabetical list of the writings covered also is included. (DB)
Educational Foundations Best Writings (20th Century):
Biblio-Historical Essay

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Why This Educational Foundations Books List?

Francis Bacon in Of Studies wrote, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed; and some to be chewed and digested." The writings listed below in historical context cover the major developments of twentieth century U.S. education through events, books, and other writings important to professional educators who teach Educational Foundations (history, philosophy, and sociology of education). Concerned professional educators need to know the great ideas, themes, and books in their field. This is a list of writings to know about, perhaps to own, at least to seek out in libraries and book stores, to touch, handle, skim, read, reread and, perhaps in Francis Bacon's words, to "chew and digest."

Getting Started: Annotated Bibliographies


Turn of the Century, 1893-1918

The National Education Association (NEA) Committee of Ten report, The Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary Education, Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Education, 1893, confirmed the traditional conservative role of the high school as college preparatory for an elite. Chairman Charles W. Eliot, Harvard University president, and other members, represented higher education interests. Their elitist selective attitude long held sway, despite the more comprehensive,

**Progressive Education Era**


Useful, too, is Patricia A. Graham's (she was Harvard Graduate School of Education dean) *Progressive Education from Arcady to Academe: A History of the Progressive Education Association 1919-1955*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1967, which focused on PEA's leaders, ideological programs, and the progressive education legacy.

**The PEA's 8-Year Study, 1933-41**

The 8-year study, 1933-41, compared student academic attainment in 15 traditional and 15 progressive high schools and monitored their progress through four years of college. The study, meant to show the advantages of progressive child-centered schools, was criticized for being less than rigidly scientific. It found that (1) the more experimental the school, the greater the student success in college; and (2) college success did not depend on prescribed high school subjects. The study is described in Wilford M. Aikin, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study*, New York: Harper & Row, 1942. Ralph W. Tyler's reflections on the 8-year study (he was its research director) and on the later (1970s) National Assessment of Educational

**Social Reconstructionists: 1930s-50s**

Some Depression-era progressive educators urged teachers to become activists, discuss controversial problems with students, and help them take sides on socio-economic-political issues. George S. Counts began the movement in his *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, New York: John Day, 1932. He told the story in his autobiographical account in Robert J. Havighurst (ed.), *Leaders in American Education: The Seventieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, Chapter V. Counts (1889-1974) lived long enough to see federal education programs in the mid 1960s aggressively used to try to build the Great Society, an unsuccessful effort dissipated by anti-Vietnam war sentiment.


**Conant Reports, 1950s-60s**

James Bryant Conant (1893-1978), from his lofty position as president of Harvard University (1933-53) and backed by the Carnegie Corporation and other foundation aid, made significant school reform recommendations decades before the U.S. was ready to accept them.


While he was U.S. ambassador to West Germany (1955-57), Conant observed how the several West German states retained their decentralized state school systems but cooperated on national school problems and goals through continuous meetings. Conant's Shaping Educational Policy, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965, urged similar overall U.S. national school planning, while retaining state and locally controlled public education. Aided by the then North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford (later U.S. Senator), Conant’s book led to the Interstate Compact on Education (since February 18, 1966), whereby state governors and state legislative representatives meet regularly on national public education problems. The Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO, descendant of this Compact, administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (which Ralph W. Tyler helped design). Conant's book thus anticipated President Bush's America 2000 plan described below.

The New Learning, 1960s-70s

Jerome S. Bruner's The Process of Education, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, came from a 1959 Woods Hole, MA, National Academy of Sciences conference. Then as now, subject matter specialists blamed professional educators (and vice versa) for low U.S. student educational attainment. Bruner, Harvard psychologist who introduced Jean Piaget's books to the U.S., wrote what became an oft-quoted sentiment: that any subject can be taught to any child at any age if that subject is logically organized and sequentially arranged. He thus justified psychologically a Piagetian conceptual learning approach. The resulting new biology, new chemistry, new math, and new social studies were financed by the National Science Foundation (founded 1950) and the National Defense Education Act (passed in 1958, following Sputnik, October 5, 1957). These funds financed summer institutes where science and other teachers studied the new curriculum and textbooks. Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Jerrold Zacharias organized many such institutes. This then-called "new learning" waned because concept-oriented middle class students mainly benefited, but not the slower-learning average and below average students. It was curtailed further when funds were cut after the 1973 OPEC (Oil Producing Economic Countries) oil crisis.

Open Education, 1965-75 (Neo-Progressives)

Britain's A. S. Neill's Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, New York: Hart, 1960, was one influence that led to Open Education (or the Open Classroom). Another influence came from British primary schoolteachers, coping with rising enrollments in barely renovated World War II-bombed buildings. Because of space shortage, they used corridors for
small-group study projects. A third influence was Britain's Plowden Report, Children and Their Primary Schools. Redmond City, CA: Pendragon House, 1967, which endorsed a progressive child-centered primary school approach.


Influential, too, was a seemingly sudden awareness of poverty amid affluence in the U. S. In his crucial 1960 West Virginia Democratic Party primary campaign, John F. Kennedy saw at first hand severe Appalachian poverty. After becoming acquainted with Catholic social worker Michael Harrington's The Other America: Poverty in the U.S., 1962, he created Presidential Task Forces on Education and Poverty. The trauma of his November 1963 assassination, and his successor's (President Lyndon B. Johnson) determination to create a Great Society through educational renewal, led to quick congressional action. Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act, 1964 (creating the Job Corps and Project Head Start), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965 (ESEA 1965). ESEA Section I, now Chapter I, still gives funds to school districts on the basis of the number of families having incomes below the poverty line. Many school districts used federal aid to start Open Classrooms, before the Vietnam conflict drained away funds.


Similarly, George Dennison's *Lives of Children*, New York: Random House, 1969, told of trying to reach 23 children in a New York City slum school. Charles E. Silberman's Carnegie-Corporation financed *Crisis in the Classroom*, New York: Random House, 1970, marked a high point in the Open Education movement. It gave rise to collections such as his own *The Open Classroom Reader*, New York: Random House, 1973, whose 75 articles included advice about using materials in Open Education. The movement died because teachers were untrained in Open Education techniques and because of a shortage of funds brought on by the Vietnam War.

**Revisionists, Pro and Con**


**Lyndon B. Johnson, the "Eager Education President"**


He was motivated to promote education partly because of his teacher-mother; partly because he attended a teachers college (Southwest Texas State College, San Marcos); partly because he yearned for a place in history; but mainly because he saw mass public education (that meant compensatory effort for Blacks, other minorities, and poor whites) as the centerpiece toward achieving his heart's desired Great Society, unfortunately curtailed by anti Vietnam War demonstrations and lack of funds.

**Ronald Reagan, the "Reluctant Education President"**

President Reagan determined to end or at least reduce the status of the cabinet-level U.S. Department of Education, created by President Jimmy Carter. Reagan favored a lesser federal role and a greater state role in education; urging school prayer, tuition tax credit, and private education. His federal education budgets, proportionately less than those of his
predecessors, were regularly increased by Congress. It was his Education Secretary, Terrel H. Bell, who made Reagan a reluctant education president by issuing an unauthorized hard-hitting report.

Bell told in *The Thirteenth Man: A Reagan Cabinet Memoir*, New York: Free Press, 1988, how he first decided against accepting the Education Secretary's post when interviewed by President-elect Reagan's counselor, hardliner Edwin Meese. Bell changed his mind when he talked with Mr. Reagan. Believing Reagan to be less dogmatic, he thought he could convince him of education's crucial importance for national defense. Bell thus became the thirteenth, last, and (Republican diehards thought), least promising member of Reagan's first cabinet.

Wanting to jar the public to reform schools and to prod the President into educational leadership, Bell proposed a distinguished panel to urge educational improvement that would strengthen the U.S. in international competition. Reagan aides rebuffed him, saying that such federal reports had little impact and anyway that education was a state and not a federal responsibility. Bell, however, quietly commissioned and widely distributed *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 1983. Bristling with apocalyptic rhetoric and military analogies, it was more a political than a scholarly analysis. Yet it was the right report at the right time, published amid a flagging economy, foreign competition, Japanese technological advances, and growing deficits. The report dramatically blamed inadequate education for U.S. economic and world decline. The possibility of becoming a second rate power because of poor schools startled the public. Stunned after seeing the report's impact, Reagan reversed himself on abolishing the Education Department; muted his calls for school prayer, tuition tax credits, and vouchers; and used his office to promote education reform. *A Nation at Risk* triggered the 1980s "Excellence in Education" school reform movement and helped bring on President Bush's America 2000 school reform initiative.

Having irritated Reagan aides and believing they did not want to keep him, Bell resigned late in 1984. His successor, William J. Bennett, used his high-profile style to expand the rhetoric about the education excellence movement.

President Bush and America 2000

The Education Summit called by President Bush in September 1989 brought state governors together to set national education goals to be achieved by the year 2000. These 6 goals are: (1) all children to start school ready to learn; (2) a 90 percent high school graduation rate; (3) national competency tests in English, math, science, history, and geography in grades 4, 8, and 12; (4) U.S. students to be first in the world in science and math; (5) every adult to be a literate, responsible citizen, and to have knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy; and (6) schools that are drug-free and violence-free and that offer a disciplined learning environment.


A key ingredient in the Bush plan, parental choice (to select from among public schools and private schools), was stoutly defended in John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, Politics, Markets, and American Schools, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1990. This book, the legal acceptance of choice in Minnesota and elsewhere, and opinion polls show growing public support for choice.

Tying Ends Together


Keeping Up

To keep up, see the annual "Education" articles in encyclopedia yearbooks: Americana, Britannica, Collier's, World Book, and others. Articles on current education issues are in the biennial Annual Editions Education and in James W. Noll's frequently updated Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Educational Issues, 6th ed., 1991, both published by Dushkin, Guilford, CT. American Educational Research Association, The Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 5th ed., 4 vols., Washington, DC: AERA, 1982, presents expert reviews of research findings on 256 education topics. Previous editions were in 1941, 1950, 1960, and 1969. It is supplemented by the quarterly Review of Educational Research. Two well-known education journals are Education Week, P.O. Box 2083; and Chronicle of Higher Education, P.O. Box 1955, both Marion, OH 43305.

Alphabetical List of Writings


Counts, George S. *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* New York: John Day, 1932.


