

HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS BE RULED?

School Boards Executive

THOMAS A. SHANNON

From the perspective of people concerned about local school district governance and curriculum development, two events occurred in Washington, D.C., this summer that, if not corrected, bode ill.

The first was promulgation by the U.S. Department of Education of the proposed regulations on transitional English instruction for non-English speaking students. The second was approval by the House of Representatives of the President's Youth Act of 1980 in the form as reshaped by the House during a long journey through the labyrinth of Capitol Hill committee processes.

Despite the fact there is no real consensus among curriculum development experts on a single approach to transforming non-English speaking students into English-literate persons, the U.S. Department of Education effectively mandated one approach to instructing such students. If any other approach is used by a local school district, the district has the burden of proof to show that its different approach is superior to the federally mandated approach. This arrogant dictate clearly stifles local curriculum development creativity not only because effectiveness of courses simply does not lend itself to "proof" in any courtroom sense but also because of the severe toll in energy, time, and dollars to the local schools the

litigation would take. To add insult to injury, the proposed regulations also violate both the spirit and intent of the 1980 federal legislation establishing the U.S. Department of Education that prohibits the Department from establishing national curriculum.

There are three provisions offensive to school boards and school administrators in the President's Youth Act of 1980, as amended by the House of Representatives. First, the amount of money authorized is woefully inadequate and places local school districts in a "no-win" situation in view of the great expectations the Act has created. Second, the Act establishes citizen "advisory" committees who hold actual veto power on federal program funding over local school boards and school administrator curriculum program proposals. This is a subversion of representative governance of the public schools and misplaces the real power over federal funding into the hands of people who are accountable to nobody but themselves. Third, by granting state departments of education authority over curriculum programs devised by local school people for a federal grant (state departments of education do not hold such power over programs paid for by state and/or local funds), the Congress effectively has undermined the rightful authority of state constitutions and legislatures to decide how the public schools are to be governed and administered in particular states.

The dispute is *not* whether we need transitional English instructional programs or vocational/career education and job training programs. We clearly

do. The real issue is: Who is best fitted to design the curriculum and administer these programs? The Congress and the U.S. Department of Education don't believe that local communities are the answer. Of course, they're dead wrong. And it's up to all of us to teach them that.

Thomas A. Shannon is Executive Director, National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C.

Author

ALVIN TOFFLER

A vital principle for the politics of tomorrow is aimed at breaking up the decisional logjam and putting decisions where they belong. This, not simply reshuffling leaders, is the antidote to political paralysis. I call it "decision division."

Some problems cannot be solved on a local level. Others cannot be solved on a national level. Some require action at many levels simultaneously. Moreover, the appropriate place to solve a problem doesn't stay put. It changes over time.

To cure today's decision logjam resulting from institutional overload, we need to divide up the decisions and reallocate them—sharing them more widely and switching the site of decision making as the problems themselves require.

Today's political arrangements violate this principle wildly. The problems have shifted, but the decisional power hasn't. Thus, too many deci-

sions are still concentrated, and the institutional architecture is most elaborate at the national level. By contrast, not enough decisions are being made at the transnational level, and the structures needed there are radically underdeveloped. In addition, too few decisions are left for the subnational level—regions, states, provinces, and localities, or non-geographical social groupings.

The issue is not "either/or" in character. It is not decentralization versus centralization in some absolute sense. The issue is rational reallocation of decision making in a system that has overstressed centralization to the point at which new information flows are swamping the central decision makers.

From Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), pp. 447-449. Copyright © 1980 by Alvin Toffler.

Alvin Toffler is author of Future Shock and The Third Wave.

State Commissioner of Education

ANNE CAMPBELL

Except for issues involving a clear national interest, educational policy is a state responsibility—and most states delegate a great deal of authority to local districts. But prescriptive federal legislation and regulations are increasingly limiting the latitude within which states and local districts can work. In areas such as vocational education, education of the handicapped, and bilingual education, there is far too much specificity in federal directives.

Most educators and local policy makers agree with the goals of these programs, but they resent federal intervention, especially when it results in increased financial burdens on state and local taxpayers. The governance of education is a complex matter, involving many different actors. It is made more difficult by federal officials who distrust our decentralized system.

Anne Campbell is Commissioner, State of Nebraska Department of Education, Lincoln.

Teacher Organization Official

NORMAN GOLDMAN

Research on school effectiveness continues to focus on the individual school—its leadership, staff, climate, and resources—yet we are witnessing an erosion of local decision making as blanket solutions are imposed on all schools statewide.

An example is the way the New Jersey State Department of Education is using a statewide testing program to distribute dollars for compensatory education, decide who gets diplomas, and even to classify schools according to test results. While the great majority of students in New Jersey have no difficulty with the tests, the program is an enormous intrusion into the teaching and learning process and a waste of time and money.

State officials tell educators not to overreact by concentrating only on a narrow range of subject matter, but what else can they do? This is governance by testing.

Norman Goldman is Director of Instruction, New Jersey Education Association, Trenton. He and William A. Shine are preparing an article expanding on this theme for the December issue of Educational Leadership.

Principal

JOHN OURTH

There's a growing realization that principals must be allowed to run their schools. All the research indicates that principals are the key to excellence.

We have been impeded by central office regulations and mandates and court decisions, but I'm an optimist. I think things are going to move the other way and we're going to take our equal share of the management role.

Florida is an example. There the law says principals are school site managers. Principals are expected to manage their schools effectively based

upon the resources they have available and on the needs of students as they are understood at the local school site. The principals I've talked with are happy about it.

People going into the principalship are certainly much more highly trained, more expert now than we were. We're going to do the job we're supposed to do—education—and we're going to do it well.

John Ourth is Principal, Oak Terrace School, Highwood-Highland Park, Illinois, and President of the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Professor

MICHAEL KIRST

Over the last two decades public education in the United States has been legalized, centralized, and bureaucratized at an increasing rate. The discretionary decision zone of local superintendents and boards has been squeezed progressively into a smaller and smaller area, especially during the last decade.

It is simplistic, however, to call this change "centralization"; there is no single central control point but rather a fragmented oligopoly. Local school boards are subject to pressures from higher authorities—federal and state legislatures, agencies, and courts; and from outside interests like Educational Testing Service and the Council for Exceptional Children. Moreover, the shift of influence to higher levels has not resulted in a commensurate loss of pressure from local sources. Parents of handicapped and bilingual students have considerably more impact locally than they did 25 years ago. Some individuals, such as coordinators of vocational education and Title I programs, represent both internal and external interests.

There is no doubt that something needs to be done to reinvigorate local control given this complex and increasingly outside-controlled environment. One idea with particular promise is the California School Improvement Program (SIP) which is designed to improve the quality of public education by stimulating change on a school site basis. The program has few requirements except

that schools initiate an organized effort to:

- identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school's education program
- plan activities that build on strengths and respond to weaknesses
- evaluate the results of these efforts
- modify things that are not working.

A school site council composed equally of educators, parents or community members, and, at the secondary level, students, is formed in every participating school. Unlike the various categorical programs with their separate advisory groups composed of advocates for the special needs of a particular group of students, the School Improvement Program serves all students in funded grades in a given school. The school site council is intended to bind together the interests of all parents and community members in examining the quality of the school's program for all students. Qualifying schools receive approximately \$120 per pupil in state funds to use as the planning council sees fit.

The planning options make clear that no uniform plan or procedure is required by the state, and a consistent message from the Department of Education has been that if a plan is not working, it should be changed. A plan, then, is intended not as an instrument of centralized statewide regulation, but rather as a framework within which individual schools and districts can organize their programs and design improvements. The funding provided under SIP is intended not simply as another increment of general financial support or as another categorical program. Since there are no particular expenditures that must be made under the program, schools are relatively free to take risks and buy materials and services not otherwise available. One of the most common misconceptions about SIP has been that it "requires innovations." That is not true. If a school feels it has a good program, that program can be reinforced rather than changed.

The SIP idea has spread across about 35,000 California schools and costs the state about \$136,000,000 a year. It is a very large endeavor.

A more extreme form of school site decision making would be pre-

ceded by a complete overhaul and pruning of the state education code to permit more local options. Then each school would elect a citizen-staff council similar to those in SIP. Large amounts of state and local unrestricted funds would be allocated to each school to spend as it chose. The school council would decide the instructional priorities (how much time for basics) and school organization (open or traditional classrooms). At the end of a three- to five-year contract, the council would recommend the retention or replacement of the principal to the central authorities. Collective bargaining with teachers would continue to be at the district level—because if individual school decision making is viewed as a device to undermine teachers' rights and collective bargaining, it will surely fail. However, some issues (curriculum, choice of textbooks) would be reserved for the school site council. As in San Jose, California, at each school the teachers might form a faculty senate to elect representatives of the school site council and to discuss other major site issues. This would help overcome the isolation of teachers that has impeded cooperative school planning. Education policies cannot be imposed on unwilling teachers.

Most of the overlapping and uncoordinated parent advisory groups at each school currently required by federal or state law would be consolidated. For the remainder, the citizen members of each individual school council could meet separately and approve applications for federal and state categorical aid. An annual report of school performance would be sent to each home, including information on program expenditures, educational processes, pupils' test data, and other outcomes such as pupils' self-concept and vandalism.

This new focus on the individual school would be accompanied by a strengthening of the central school board. The school board would continue to make broad policy decisions regarding such issues as desegregation, while educators at each school site, guided by the views of parents, would have greater control over that school's budget, staff, and curriculum.

Experience in some states, such as Florida, demonstrates that school site decision making requires prepa-

ration of principals, teachers, and parents. The central school district would have a crucial role in conducting such training along with responsibility for evaluation and oversight. At the high school level there might also be need for districtwide coordination of work-study, off-campus programs, and so on.

This type of governance plan embodies the recognition that the individual school, rather than the entire district, is the critical nexus between the child and the substance of education. Even in school districts with three or more schools, it is the local school site that is the primary concern of many parents. The individual school is also large enough to have relevance for state aid formulas.

If the governance structure at the local level is revitalized, a stronger justification for returning to local control of education policy is possible. Without such rethinking, the present centralizing trend is destined to continue.

Adapted from Michael W. Kirst, "The State Role in Regulating Local Schools," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 33 (1978).

Michael Kirst is Professor of Education, Stanford University, and President, California State Board of Education.

Principal

ROBERT L. SCHAIN

We don't need structural changes in the ways schools are governed so much as we need a new attitude on the part of both professionals and the public. To have good schools you've got to have good principals, people who know the teaching-learning process and who can unleash the creativity in teachers. In some places principals can do as they think best, within broad guidelines, but in other places they are very limited in what they can do.

For example, here at Wingate we developed a course called "Activities in Mathematics" that teaches math concepts and principles based on what students do in their daily lives. We even wrote and printed our own textbook. A publisher was interested in marketing the text, but after taking a survey, he said he couldn't do it be-

cause most school districts wouldn't restructure their math courses to use the book.

A lot of educators, especially those in small districts, are afraid to change. In many cases the public prevents an otherwise creative person from using his/her creativity. Taking risks, putting your neck on the line, takes support and encouragement from superintendents, boards of education, and the public. Most schools haven't had that kind of support in the last few years.

The public commitment—real commitment—just isn't there. Individuals and interested groups speak about the need for quality education but they fail to come up with the resources. Reckless budget cutting, staff reductions, salaries that keep capable people from becoming teachers (and hurt morale of the existing staff), the low esteem in which teachers are held, and the horror stories about schools in the media all belie the claim that the public considers education a top priority. Unless that changes, and I don't see any signs that it will, we're not going to be able to do the things we know need to be done.

Robert L. Schain is Principal, Wingate High School, Brooklyn, New York.

Union Leader

ALBERT SHANKER

Recent trends—the fiscal crisis sweeping American cities, the move to balance the federal budget no matter what the social costs, the financial burden placed on state and local governments by high unemployment and economic recession, ill-conceived federal regulations, and inadequate federal support for mandated programs—all spell trouble for the future of American education.

More and more decisions are being made by federal bureaucrats, state legislatures, financial control boards, or budget officials at the federal and state levels. While control over public education is slipping away from local officials, it is not being concentrated elsewhere. Power over the schools is being fragmented in a hundred different directions.

The public is demanding higher quality school services and more ac-

countability for expenditure of public funds. But federal funds for educational services are being channeled to community based organizations that keep no records, report no progress, and are accountable only to themselves.

Financial decisions are increasingly controlling education. Local education officials, including teacher union leaders, must be far more knowledgeable and sophisticated in the worlds of finance and politics. They must organize and coalesce to influence financial decisions at the federal and state levels that harm local schools. They must master such topics as tax reform, debt management, intergovernmental fiscal relations, and economic redevelopment to ensure future resources for public schools.

Albert Shanker is President, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, New York.

Principal

JAMES R. KIRBY

Politics has been described as the art of shifting from one set of shoulders to another the unpleasant burdens of society. In education, the tendency has been to shift problems to the local districts and then to forget about them. The governance of public education should be a shared responsibility: a partnership among the three levels of government. Each level—federal, state, and local—must be strong, but the local level must be the senior partner.

James R. Kirby is Principal, Fairdale Elementary School, Casper, Wyoming.

Superintendent of Schools

JOHN PRASCH

There's a lot of complaining these days about a lack of leadership. Perhaps we feel leaderless because our decision-making processes are so inadequate. Our society purposely prevents old style autocratic decision making that used to be the mark of leadership, but we haven't found ways to make democratic decisions

efficiently.

People who need to get things done—that is, to get decisions made—find they must widen the circle of those consulted. Those of us who are generalists frequently need advice from experts, but often we don't know which of the experts to believe. This, for example, is one of the reasons for the failure to develop a federal energy policy.

Another reason is the ascendancy of the "one person-one vote" principle. The notion that we might elect a representative to make decisions for us, using his or her best judgment, seems to have gone out of style. Our zeal for direct representation has spawned the reorganization of local school boards and city councils on a regional basis. Decisions for the overall benefit of a community are harder to get when representatives are answerable only to their neighborhoods.

Parallel to the emphasis on participatory decision making is a counter thrust of apathy. Many are convinced their opinion doesn't count. A subtle legacy of the 60s says that doing your own thing is more important than allegiance to organizational goals, so some make a conscious choice to be leaderless.

Moreover, at a time when rapid changes require timely and accurate decisions, our social climate is belligerent toward shared values and suspicious of consensus. A part of this phenomenon is the single-issue interest group, unwilling to compromise on their own cause but willing to form new alliances that cut across old party lines and thus weaken the more broadly-based organizations that once served us well.

Finally, there is a growing lack of trust among us. A population suspicious of its own institutions cuts off resources, thereby limiting the capabilities of the very instruments most likely to solve societal problems. At the same time, a government suspicious of its constituents wraps every dollar it distributes in so much red tape that citizens have difficulty using their own tax money intelligently.

The best evidence of our inability to reach decisions efficiently is how frequently we turn to the courts. Individuals and groups in increasing numbers bring suit to solve issues that previously would have been settled privately. Not only is this expen-

sive but it poses a serious threat to the autonomy of our institutions.

Concern about decision making can lead us in the direction of a more monolithic and centralized society. That must not happen; we know, after all, that shared decisions are usually better decisions.

Still, shouldn't we consciously accept more autocratic decision making in areas where it's appropriate? In athletics the official in the striped shirt is absolute and the system works because we've agreed upon it in advance and know the consequences of the alternatives. Such arrangements are not inconsistent with democracy so long as we all help make the rules. There must be many other areas where delegation of authority would be sensible and efficient.

But structural changes are needed too. Because the legislative process is so important in our type of government, I'll suggest some ways it might be improved.

The total body of law must be reduced and streamlined. The case-by-case accretion of verbiage must be recast in sets of principles. The continuous flow of new legislation must be dammed or channeled. Maybe one of the new organizations needed is a body charged with organizing, sorting, and reconciling existing law. Our computer capability could be employed in the task.

Since legislators are now perceived by the public not only as lawmakers but as general problem solvers who, to get reelected, must respond to every constituent's concern, perhaps a longer term with no possibility of reelection would help circumscribe a more legitimate legislative role. Certainly legislative bodies should be forced to use a more orderly process. Last minute stampedes before adjournment should not be tolerated by a society that insists on efficiency at every other level and has the organizational and technical tools to bring it about.

Most important, we must send our best decision makers into the legislative halls, on to the regulatory boards, and to other places where the most critical decisions are made. Run down the list of people who represent you at all levels of government and ask yourself if they are the wisest people you know. The most competent among us gravitate to the

private sector and complain about the public sector's incompetence. Maybe we need a conscription system for other than the military.

Some may believe these thoughts about decision making are far removed from questions of curriculum or school governance. The truth is that decision making in the educational enterprise is tremendously clouded. We sorely need increased attention to the process.

John Prasch is Superintendent, Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, Nebraska.

State Board Member

MARK FRAVEL, JR.

The excessive financial burden on local school districts, along with taxpayers' concerns about an ever-increasing federal bureaucracy, plus continuing demands by local school districts for help and assistance from the state will probably result in continuation of the shift to a stronger state role in education. State boards of education will need to be aware of this increasing responsibility and help maintain as much local control as is reasonable.

Mark Fravel, Jr., is a member of the Virginia State Board of Education.

Superintendent

B. C. DESPAIN

For at least three decades now, local school boards have seen their decision-making powers reduced in favor of other agencies. This constant erosion has left boards with a great deal of responsibility, perhaps as much or more than they ever had, but with only a shell of the authority they once had. Many superintendents, including myself, frequently find that a board meeting agenda contains not a single item of moderate importance over which the local board has real control. No wonder board members are frustrated.

The erosion process is far from complete as state legislators and departments of education move toward competency testing for graduation,

zero base budgeting, and a long list of other planned changes. Pressure from the federal government, with its many bureaus, continues to increase. Meanwhile, boards find themselves locked in negotiations for which they are ill-prepared, often bargaining away some of their power in efforts to avert threatened strikes.

The local school board is a thing of the past not designed to deal with the problems facing education today. A thorough study is badly needed to determine a more realistic role for boards to play. The longer this review is in coming, the less chance there will be of meaningful local control.

B. C. DeSpain is Superintendent, Hol-low Rock-Bruceton Special School District, Bruceton, Tennessee.

Community Leader

ROSALIND J. MCGEE

Federal court hearings and rulings have introduced a new factor into the process by which decisions governing a school system are made. School boards and administrations, who traditionally have had sole responsibility for school governance, view court intervention as a diminution of their control and an added burden to the complexities of declining enrollments, rising energy costs, and inflation.

Although there is some merit in this view, I believe there are benefits that can accrue from court intervention that will enhance local governance. In metropolitan Nashville, the courtroom has provided a good place to bring complex arguments to the fore; the lessons we have learned may be applicable elsewhere.

The litigation, initiated in 1955, resulted in a 1971 court order that relied on busing in the more densely populated county center and restrictions on new building in the less populated fringe. We are now entering the second year of intermittent hearings of this "second generation" case. The continuing case, reopened at the request of both the defendant and the plaintiff, has a distinctly new character based in part on the fact that the school system has already operated for eight years under a court-ordered plan.

The suitability of the courtroom for resolution of policy issues and questions has greater acceptance than it had in the earlier stages of this case, and I see hopeful signs for the development, within the court's guidelines, of a new plan that will have greater community acceptance. Those charged with responsibility for administering school governance now move into the role of interpreter between court and community. In this new role school board members and administrators face the greatest challenge of the next two decades: it is their responsibility to translate judicial rulings into policy that is reasonably equitable; to convince teachers, students, and parents that the policies can work; and to demonstrate their success to the public.

Rosalind J. McGee is President, League of Women Voters of Nashville, Nashville, Tennessee.

Governor

ALBERT H. QUIE

The education realities of the 1980s will embrace a much wider variety of issues and concerns than were experienced during the past two decades. Our schools will continue to deal with fiscal stress, enrollment fluctuations, enlarged service demands, uncertain community support, school control controversies, powerful collective bargaining units, and changes in the supply and demand of staff.

In addition, schools will need to address living in an interdependent world of limits, a slow-growth economy, labor scarcity, shifting age and population distribution, taxpayer resistance, increased public demands for educational accountability, demands for continuous lifelong education, continued involvement of the courts in ensuring equal access to education, innovations in technology, and competition from other services for public funds. Given these and other complex forces, it is crucial that we anticipate and plan for change, thereby helping our education system respond in deliberate, pro-active ways.

My use of "we" reflects my belief that education can successfully pull through the decade of the 1980s only

with citizen involvement. The very success of schools in the past—as evidenced by the increasing educational level of our population—has created a critical, diverse, and aware public. Consensus on major issues will not be easily developed or maintained. Yet, only full partnership of citizens in the decision-making process will lead to a renewal of public confidence and support for schools.

Albert H. Quie is Governor of the State of Minnesota, St. Paul.

Parent Advocate

CARL L. MARBURGER

—Power means control of people, money, and things.

—Power means control of the means of decision making.

—Power means significant influence over those—legislators, federal and state, and the executive branch at all levels—who make the decisions that affect people's lives.

—Power comes about through size and the creation of a bureaucracy that insulates itself from accounting to the people it serves.

—Power comes about through status and titles: Doctor, Principal, The Honorable Mayor.

—Power comes about through control of information and the sources of information.

—Power comes about through organization—the strength of numbers for political advantage.

Those who have had the power in terms of the above definitions are administrators, especially superintendents, and gaining power fast are the teacher organizations. On the national level it is generally the teacher organizations that have the greatest access to dollars, to legislators, and to the executive branch. At the local level it is generally the school administrator—the principal or the superintendent—who has the greatest power because of the control of information and control over decisions that affect the lives of children in schools.

Those generally with the least power are students, parents, and citizens, with school boards, state school boards, and state departments of education having less and less influence.

As a consequence, students, parents, and citizens are unwilling to participate in state and local school activities because they feel powerless. Or they set up warring camps because, as Martin Buber has said, "Power abdicates only under the stress of counterpower." That is unfortunately the mood in American public education today.

There is not much time left for the public school system of this country to be dramatically reshaped, or it will not continue to exist as a viable and significant institution. The imperative I call for is shared decision making. It is an imperative because the present state of decision making—based on power, which is generally insensitive to the needs of the students—has not worked, and the public schools of this country are in deep trouble.

For shared decision making to work, two things must happen: Parents, citizens, and students must be included in the process as true partners with the professionals, and there must be formal mechanisms for implementing the process at each school.

Whatever happens to reshape schooling must take place where the child is, where the parent/citizen concern exists, and where the teachers and principal can demonstrate their caring—at the individual school. All else—board of education policies, administrative and budget details, state and federal programs and regulations—have only one purpose: to facilitate what happens at the individual school.

Just calling for and endorsing this concept will not, in itself, create shared decision making at the local school site. There must be a formal mechanism that provides genuine authority for a school council involving parents, teachers, administrators, and students to make decisions affecting that school. School boards and superintendents must delegate a significant portion of their prerogatives to that council and devise carefully drawn but not oppressive limits to its authority. Each district can determine its own limits and then the councils must be trusted to make decisions in the best interest of their children.

Carl L. Marburger is Senior Associate, The Parents Network, National Committee for Citizens in Education, Columbia, Maryland.

Superintendent

LARRY CUBAN

As superintendent of a middle-sized urban school district, I am tempted to use an educational parallel of the Dow-Jones stock averages and list state and federal agencies as "gainers" and local school boards and superintendents as "losers." For many places in the nation that conventional wisdom is unblemished accuracy. For other areas, however, it is only partly accurate or just plain wrong. The point is that diversity more than uniformity marks governance patterns and shifting power bases in almost 16,000 school districts across the country.

In Virginia, for example, where only appointed, fiscally dependent school boards operate, in the last three years the state legislature mandated competency tests, all-day kindergartens, duty-free lunch periods for teachers, and dozens of other requirements that local districts do business slightly different from before.

Also, there are instances when federal and state intervention have prevented local school boards and superintendents from restricting opportunities, distributing resources inequitably, and discriminating against children and employees.

Knowing this, in my judgment, does not take away from the common sense observation that local school boards still exercise an enormous influence on daily affairs within school districts. In short, state and federal constraints on local initiative have indeed multiplied, intervention occurs far more than in any other period, centralizing trends are more evident now, particularly at the state level and yet local autonomy thrives.

What is occurring, I believe, is a realignment in the balance of power between local and state jurisdictions that is heavily determined by whoever has the dollars to pay the bills. A realignment does not, however, mean an inevitable loss of influence for schools in discharging their basic mission.

While I am familiar with the gloomy prediction of the demise of local school boards and the subsequent enlargement of state and federal influence, I continue to be opti-

mistic about what individual schools can achieve with adequate resources and with competent staff sharing clear and high expectations of what students can do. The trend toward further centralization concerns me to the degree that state or federal legislation involves the content or process of classroom instruction. For example, a national competency test was briefly considered and wisely dropped.

I am less concerned about the increase in paperwork which is, indeed, most irritating and time-consuming but probably exaggerated. While I have done my share of yelling about filling out forms, completing reports, and collecting information, the cry over paperwork has also been a convenient proxy for the frustration that many local officials feel about state and federal mandates, barrages of public criticism, and shrinking funds.

The beneficial side of state and federal influence is when intervention plainly deals with equity and opportunity. There is little doubt in my mind, for example, that without PL 94-142 few local school boards would have devoted resources, designed due process procedures, and improved programs and facilities for handicapped children.

Larry Cuban is Superintendent, Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, Virginia.

Congressman

CARL D. PERKINS

The popular impression is that the 1960s and 70s witnessed the advent of the federal government as a major contributor to education finance. The fact is that though the federal share has been large and growing, the rapidly increasing costs of education have kept it at a relatively stable figure of about 8 percent. If current budget constraints continue, this share is not likely to increase notably in the near future.

Of course, control of the purse strings is not the only factor in education governance. Equally important are control of priorities, curriculum, and educational goals.

Certainly, the influence of the federal government in education has expanded in the past decade. New pro-

grams have been enacted and existing ones extended to implement broad social goals, such as equal opportunity for the handicapped, limited English-speaking, and disadvantaged students.

At the same time, the perception that the requirements connected with some of these federal programs are overly burdensome has become more widespread. As a result of this concern, there is an emerging trend at the federal level to take state and local needs into greater account when structuring federal programs.

For example, the Education Amendments of 1978 contained a whole series of amendments aimed at reducing paperwork from federal education programs. They also recognized for the first time the existence of state and local programs which parallel federal programs. For example, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was amended to ease certain requirements for states with their own compensatory education programs, so that the state and federal efforts would be better coordinated.

I want to emphasize that the nature of federal aid is still categorical, for specific groups or specific purposes, and most of the decisions over how the vast majority of our students are educated are left solely to states and local governments. In my opinion, this is as it should be.

As education costs increase, the states may no longer be able to expand their share of education funding, and the concern over federal intervention in education may keep the federal government from increasing its contribution, especially in the area of general aid. If this happens (which I hope will not be the case), local governments may be hard pressed to maintain an adequate level of support for education, especially with a decline in the number of citizens with a direct interest in education.

The future of education governance is in large part up to the American people. We all have a responsibility. The way we exercise it will affect the quality of education and, eventually, the quality of our lives.

Carl D. Perkins, Kentucky, is Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

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