Teaching in an Age of Change

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Chapter 2  Students and Schools
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Figure 1.1

Graphic Organizer: Chapter 1

The Changing World of Teaching

Reasons for Teaching

- Contribution to Society
- Few Constraints on Work
- Transmitting Academic Content
- Helping Students Develop
- Recognition for Good Performance

Historical Development of Secondary Education

- Senior High School
- Junior High School
- Middle School
- Historic Secondary School Reforms

Current Reform Trends

- Standards-Based Education
- High-Stakes Testing
- Accountability

Improving Teacher Quality

- Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
The Changing World of Teaching

Objectives

This chapter will help you
■ identify changes that are likely to occur in secondary education
■ clarify reasons for becoming a secondary school teacher
■ trace the historical roots of secondary education practices
■ define the difference in philosophy between the middle school and the junior high school
■ state the potential impact of Race to the Top on secondary school teachers
■ define the implications of reform trends for teachers
■ explain the rationale for standards-based education and common standards
■ state the arguments for and against high-stakes testing
■ define the impact of accountability on teacher practices

Introduction

Traveling across the United States, one is struck by the great diversity of the nation. There are huge forests nourished by cool days and abundant rainfall in the Northwest. Traveling across the Southwest, one encounters vast deserts with low humidity and miles upon miles of sweeping vistas.
of sagebrush and cactus. The Southeast offers warm, humid days and prolific vegetation. The Great Plains are covered with miles of crops irrigated by central pivot sprinklers. Great cities with high population densities are teeming with people and traffic. In contrast, small hamlets offer a personal touch where everyone seems to know each other. The harsh climates of the upper Midwest and Alaska contrast with the perpetual summers of Hawaii, Florida, and southern California. This diversity is an interesting and appealing feature of the nation.

This fascinating diversity extends beyond the physical environment to the human inhabitants. There is cultural and ethnic diversity wherever you go. Even in small towns, you will find restaurants featuring ethnic dishes. Widely scattered hogans of the Navaho in the Southwest contrast with high-density condominiums in metropolitan centers. Tibetans are living in Minnesota, and Vietnamese are living in Texas.

However, there is a common feature that can be found in all of these places. One does not need to look hard to find a secondary school. In fact, as you enter many small towns across the nation, you are greeted with signs proclaiming the accomplishments of the local high school, from athletic championships to academic decathlons and marching band awards.

The secondary school, an institution that was once primarily an institution for the elite, has now become a vital institution for all of society. A common concern of citizens, wherever they live, is the quality of the local schools. Businesses seeking a new location and families looking for a new home are vitally interested in the quality of the local secondary schools.

At the state and national level, politicians proclaim that a quality secondary school education is essential for the future of the nation. They express concern about how well the schools are performing and have found that educational issues resonate with the voters.

Nearly everyone accepts the premise that future citizens will need to know how to respond to an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. There is much controversy, however, concerning how well secondary schools are performing and preparing students to take their place in this complex new world. There is considerable debate concerning what these future citizens should know and be able to do.

Some data reinforces concerns about secondary education. For example, Wise (2010) claims that every available indicator suggests too many secondary students drop out and too many are unprepared for college or employment. His contention is that the goals of education have changed profoundly, yet the basic structure of secondary education has remained very much the same. Therefore, current secondary schools were not designed to meet contemporary demands.

Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender (2010) reinforce this perspective. They contend that the “factory model” for high schools, one designed to process large numbers of students efficiently while supporting only a few for “thinking,” is still the pervasive model for secondary education. However, this model is not appropriate to meet the changing goals of secondary education.

As a result, secondary education has become a topic of much discussion and controversy. Issues relating to the quality of secondary education are being debated from the highest levels of government to dinner tables in homes. Newspapers that once contained little more than information about school board meetings and the lunch menu of the local high school now regularly feature front-page articles about educational issues. Statewide school rankings of schools command considerable space in local newspapers when they are released. Other “hot” political topics that regularly make their way to the nightly news and to regular articles in popular periodicals include school funding priorities, school budgets, national curriculum standards, international comparisons of student achievement, accountability, high-stakes testing, teacher quality, tenure, turning around low-performing schools, merit pay for teachers, charter schools, vouchers, and Race to the Top. To be sure, education is receiving considerable attention. The results are likely to be fundamental changes in secondary education and the role of teachers.
On an individual level, nearly all of us have vivid memories of our secondary school experience. Some of the memories are good, some are not. This is because secondary education occurs at a critical time in the lives of individuals. It is a time of seeking independence, developing self-concept and identity, and basically coming of age. It is a time of life when the decisions made have lifelong consequences.

Some of us developed interests through special programs such as athletics, debate, drama, and music that continue to influence and enrich our lives. Many of us encountered a special teacher or coach that influenced our lives in dramatic ways. In fact, many people choose to be secondary school teachers because of the influence of a special teacher.

For many students, however, the secondary school experience is not viewed positively. For them, the experience was one that was impersonal and irrelevant. A significant number do not believe that their teachers were interested in their success (MetLife Survey, 2010). The National Commission on the High School Senior Year (2001) found that students who did not demonstrate prowess in academics, athletics, or music went through school with no counselor, teacher, or adult knowing him or her well. Their high school experience was impersonal and irrelevant to their lives, and they became disengaged and alienated from the school. While this is not a new phenomenon, the concern is that the nation can no longer afford the consequences of a significant number of low-achieving, disengaged, and alienated students. Contemporary society demands large numbers of well-educated individuals in order to meet contemporary challenges.

Change is a reality that must be faced by anyone contemplating a career in secondary education. The role that you think you will play might not be consistent with the secondary school of the future. Our challenge to you as you proceed through this text is to think deeply about your decision to enter the world of secondary education. What are your assumptions about the role of a secondary teacher? Are you willing to challenge your assumptions and change them? What is most attractive to you in choosing secondary education as a career? Are those features you find attractive likely to persist in the face of proposed change?

Entering the world of secondary teaching presents many challenges. It is not an easy job nor is it one where you will reap abundant monetary rewards. Some of your family and friends will scoff at your choice. It is easy to become discouraged when your efforts are not recognized and your profession is frequently criticized. Are you up to this challenge? Will you be discouraged or challenged when you face students who do not share your enthusiasm and commitment to education and to the subject you teach? Will you be frustrated when you face a lack of resources as school budgets are slashed to balance state budgets? Will you be angered by proclamations of policy makers who have never been in classrooms as they blame teachers for the failures of the society? This, too, is part of being a teacher.

However, secondary teaching can be immensely satisfying and rewarding. There are few things more exciting than seeing the light in the eyes of a student when something becomes clear. The enthusiasm of the youth is contagious. It is deeply satisfying when you see students grow and develop, and you know that you have had an impact on them. It is very rewarding when you receive notes from former students. These are the things that attract most secondary school teachers.

You must start the journey to teaching in the secondary school by understanding that you need to become a reflective teacher. Reflective teachers think about their experience and continually learn from their successes and failures. A successful secondary teacher cannot expect to learn everything they need to know in their preparation program. They must be lifelong learners, and reflection is a key component of lifelong learning.

A good place to start your journey of reflection is with a self-assessment. What do you find rewarding? What are your ambitions and goals? Are you being honest as you consider your strengths? Where do you need to grow? How do your values and priorities square with the realities of teaching at the secondary level? To gain a personal perspective on these issues, spend some time being totally honest with yourself and complete the “Self-Assessment Ranking Exercise” (see Box 1-1). Your answers may tell you something about your priorities.
Box 1-1 Self-Assessment

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<th>PRIORITY FOR CHOOSING TEACHING</th>
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<td>Individuals' reasons for choosing a career in secondary teaching vary. A few reasons that people sometimes mention are included in the statements that follow. What priority would you assign to each?</td>
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<td>Having secure employment</td>
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Reasons for Teaching

Unfortunately, many individuals enter teaching, soon become discouraged and leave. One study found that 33% of teachers leave within the first three years of teaching and 46% leave within the first five years (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2006). There are some unique reasons for this high turnover rate. For example, teaching, compared to many other professions, attracts a large percentage of young women who often step out of teaching in a few years to raise a family. Some teachers continue their education and in about five years are ready to move into nonteaching roles such as administration and counseling. Some teacher recruitment programs view teaching as something akin to a service commitment and ask individuals to commit to just a couple of years of teaching before they move on to other careers.

However, a number of individuals leave because they become disillusioned with teaching. They entered with unrealistic expectations that were not realized. Their views of the role of the teacher were not based on reality. Some discovered that they did not have adequate preparation for the complex task of teaching secondary-level students, and they were unable to experience the rewards associated with teaching. The number of teachers who leave in the first few years is a serious issue. It is difficult to build quality schools if nearly half of the teaching force needs to be replaced every five years. Individuals choosing secondary teaching need to enter teaching with a realistic understanding of the challenges posed by the changing world of secondary teaching.

Given the challenges, why do teachers remain in teaching? The top three reasons given by teachers for remaining in teaching were (1) they enjoy working with young people, (2) they feel education is important, and (3) they have a deep interest in their subject (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2006). Let’s dig a little deeper into some of the reasons that people enter the field of teaching.

Making a Contribution to Society

Did you rank this option high on your priority list? If so, you have lots of company. Many people are motivated to teach because they believe they will be doing “something important.” One study indicated that 52% of those polled cited this as a major reason for choosing teaching (Ornstein & Levine, 2003).

Certainly, few people challenge the point that education is critical to health and survival of society. In addition, it is widely recognized that a quality teacher in the classroom is the key ingredient for quality education. Therefore, good teachers certainly do make an important and lasting contribution to society.
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However, this by no means suggests that educators are members of a profession that enjoys high status. Although it is common for members of society to proclaim the importance of teaching, it is often not backed by action. An alarmingly low percentage of people do not bother to vote in elections involving school issues, few parents attend school functions, and educational budgets are often one of the first to be slashed when budgets are tight. You might be surprised at the number of individuals who assert that teaching demands quite low levels of intelligence and skill. For example, one of our students recounted being told, “You’re a bright girl. Be something; don’t be a teacher.” Another student who was interested in changing her major from business to one leading to a secondary teaching credential came to our office. As we concluded the conference, she stated, “Don’t tell my dad. He’ll be upset.” The lack of respect and status awarded to teachers often has such a de-meaning impact on teachers that when they are asked about their profession, they respond, “I am just a teacher!”

In summary, many teachers have a deep commitment to teaching and believe what they do is important. They know they are making an important contribution to society even though they may not have status appropriate for their contributions. As a teacher you need to realize that you will probably not get much recognition from society, and you may need to rely on the personal satisfactions you get from working with young people.

Freedom to Work with Few Constraints

In the not too distant past, teachers enjoyed considerable autonomy. When a teacher walked in the classroom and closed the door, it was the teacher’s domain. Although there was a defined curriculum and an occasional visit from an administrator, few questioned what teachers did in the classroom. While teachers, still enjoy some freedom of action, the days of absolute teacher decision-making are quickly fading.

There are more limitations on what you can teach. You may teach in a state or school district that requires teachers to follow a detailed curriculum. Criticism of teaching in recent years has led to more emphasis on “scripted lessons” that teachers are expected to follow. The increased use of high-stakes standardized tests have placed pressure on teachers to teach to the test and require that they spend more time on content that will be tested rather than on content they believe is important. Some school administrators require teachers to justify every lesson and to stick to a strict plan of content coverage and to a pacing schedule.

It is fair to say that contemporary teachers enjoy less freedom of action than those who taught just a few years ago. This has caused dissatisfaction among experienced teachers and has led some to leave teaching or to seek teaching positions in places where they have more input into decision-making.

On the other hand, when you are in front of a classroom interacting with students, you are still the one making the decisions. The unpredictability of classroom environments and the reality of unexpected events make your decision-making essential. You need to use all of your knowledge and creativity to create a productive learning environment and to meet unpredictable challenges. Authors of scripted lessons cannot anticipate what will happen in a given classroom, and they cannot tell you how to respond.

Lessons are your personal creations. Students are not inert raw material waiting to be processed. They are human beings! They have hopes and fears, interests, and aspirations. They are the product of past successes and failures. They come from incredibly diverse backgrounds and have different strengths and weaknesses. Some come to school ready to learn; others come to school with poor nutrition and in poor health. Some are excited to be there, while others are only in school because they are required to attend. Regardless of their qualifications or their good intentions, individuals far removed from your unique classroom simply cannot prepare lessons that will meet the day-to-day realities.

Realizing that lessons must be your personal creation is both challenging and exhilarating. It is exhilarating when a lesson goes well and you observe the success and the excitement of the students. That is your creation!
It can be discouraging and frustrating, however, when it does not go well. You put forth considerable effort and feel like you failed. A teacher evaluator once explained that one of the most difficult dimensions of evaluating teaching was this personal involvement in lessons. He noted that criticizing a teachers’ lesson is like saying, “My you have an ugly baby!”

Yes, teachers still have a good measure of freedom when they are in the classroom. Teaching is one of the few occupations where you still have the ability to make significant changes if you are unhappy with what is happening in your working environment. However, if you lack initiative, if you are insecure and need someone to tell you what to do next, if you become defensive when critiqued, if you have difficulty responding to the unpredictable, if you need lots of public affirmations of your abilities, then teaching is probably not for you.

### Transmitting Academic Content

Are you excited about the subject or subjects you want to teach? As indicated above, this is one of the top three reasons why teachers stay in teaching. Enthusiasm about a subject is a great asset in the classroom. Enthusiasm conveys to students that you believe what you are teaching is valuable and, even more important, that you derive some real satisfaction from knowing the subject. Your personal interest can ignite a commitment to your subject even among students who, initially, may express little enthusiasm for what you are teaching.

It can be very rewarding to work in a job that allows (even requires) lifelong learning of a subject that interests you. We have certainly enjoyed the opportunity to continue to learn in our content areas throughout our careers. Interest in what you are doing is a key element of job satisfaction in any job. Some teachers find it exciting to attend workshops, take additional college coursework, and engage in various forms of professional growth. It might be said that some individuals choose to be teachers because they enjoy being students!* To them this is one of the most appealing aspects of being a secondary school teacher.*

On the other hand, when you begin working with a class of students, you need to understand that some of them will not share your enthusiasm for the subject. It can be discouraging to a teacher, especially a new teacher, when students demonstrate a lack of student enthusiasm, or even open hostility, toward his or her subject. One of the most common complaints that we hear from student teachers and new teachers is that students don’t seem interested in learning. That is why some new teachers express an interest in teaching advanced placement classes. They assume that advanced placement students will be more interested in the subject.

However, it is very rewarding to spark an interest in a subject in reluctant and unmotivated students. It is exciting when they see the usefulness of the subject and expend time and energy outside class to pursue additional knowledge.

Teaching involves more than just transmitting information. Wiggins and McTighe (2010) remind us that the goal of education is not just to cover content. Rather, the goal is to help students become thoughtful about the content. The goal is not to help them be good at school, but rather to prepare them for the world outside school. This requires more of teachers than just knowing information. It requires a different perspective on content than simply passing along information.

### Helping Students Develop

Sure, it can be fun to continue to grow in knowledge of your subject and discuss it with others. Yes, it is nice to be working in a profession where there is freedom to inject your skill and creativity. But helping students grow and develop as individuals is at the core of teaching. This is one of the most popular reasons individuals gave for choosing teaching as a career. In one survey, helping students grow and learn was cited as a major reason for teaching by 90% of the respondents (Ornstein & Levine, 2003). All of us want to believe that what we are doing in life is important. Some second-career individuals choose to move into teaching because they want to do something for society rather than just earn a salary.
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However, it is also demeaning when influential and powerful members of society continually claim that teachers are academically weak, that they put forth minimal effort, and that they are in teaching because they have favorable daily working hours and they get summers off (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2006).

One of the realities that you will confront when you are a teacher is that everyone is an “expert.” Nearly everyone has attended a school, and many of them have “the answer” to what exactly needs to be done to improve education. Notice how at social gatherings everyone has an answer for what is needed to improve education! This “expert” perspective includes policy makers who have no experience teaching, who have seldom visited classrooms, and who have no reluctance in mandating solutions to complex educational problems.

Sometimes debates about school issues seem strangely disassociated from the real human beings the schools serve. Prescriptions for “improvement” tend to focus on test scores and other issues tied closely to the content-transmission goal of public education. The students, as human beings, when mentioned at all, often appear to be viewed as passive objects who are just waiting to be “improved.”

Recognized and Rewarded for Good Performance

There is intrinsic satisfaction in knowing that you are doing a good job. However, everyone likes to be recognized for their efforts. While there will be students, parents, guardians, and members of the general community who are appreciative of your efforts, you must realize that, as a teacher, you work in an environment that has a high degree of anonymity. It seems strange that this would be true when you may be in front of 100 or more students every day. However, parents almost never see you teach. It is rare for other teachers or even school administrators to observe in your classroom. Secondary students are often so consumed with finding their own identity and with adolescence egocentrism that they seldom consider the needs of teachers. They can be thoughtless and can easily offend overly sensitive teachers. Therefore, extrinsic rewards and recognition for your efforts is likely to be quite rare.

It is a mistake to assume that everyone will applaud what you do or that you will be quickly lauded for your efforts. If you are expecting accolades from others, it might not happen very often. You will need to rely on self-evaluations of your performance. You need to gather good and reliable data regarding your teaching success and be willing to reflect honestly on what you are doing and on your successes and failures. You may need to be satisfied with personal indicators that you are doing a job well.

Another issue related to gaining recognition for your efforts is that people vary enormously in their beliefs about what constitutes “good” educational practice. For example, you may be a strong believer in the worth of inquiry and problem solving in engaging students’ higher-level thinking skills. However, you may well encounter parents who think that it is a waste of time and want you to spend more time preparing students for high-stakes assessments. No matter how hard you work developing and implementing engaging lessons, these parents may not regard you as an effective teacher. What all this means is that different people apply different criteria in determining whether the job you are doing is acceptable. You need to understand that people who define quality instruction differently than you do may not be impressed by your instructional practices. For example, one of our former students, an individual who had chosen teaching after a successful career in business, took a teaching position in a highly ranked secondary school. After two years of teaching, he visited us to explain that he was leaving the school because he could not tolerate parents who constantly questioned what he was teaching and how he was teaching.

One of us remembers, not so fondly, the time we taught a successful and engaging lesson that was observed by the school administrator. At the end of the observation, the administrator commented that the blinds on the windows at the back of the room were not all open at the same angle!

Recognition for a job well done is scarce, and it easy to become discouraged. Moulthrop, Calegari, and Eggers (2006) note that teachers are highly educated professionals...
who want to be recognized and valued. They want to be involved in the direction of education and to lead reform movements. However, they are often treated as little more than babysitters and civil servants with a salary schedule that reinforces this perception.

In summary, teaching is both highly rewarding and highly frustrating. Like most professions, it has highs and lows. It is a role that is recognized, as least verbally, by society as extremely important. It calls for high levels of teacher commitment and involvement. In the final analysis, you will be the one who will have to base your rewards and recognition on the progress you see in students. The students do provide most of the satisfactions. It is always rewarding, and a bit sad, to watch students you have seen grow and mature cross the stage at graduation time.

### Historical Development of Secondary Education

Some of the issues that are being addressed in proposing reforms for secondary education have their roots in history. Evaluating why schools operate the way they do and proposing changes is enhanced by understanding the historical roots. For example, many calls for reform seem to imply that at some point in our history there was a “golden age” of secondary education when there were few problems. Schools all had high achievement levels, all teachers were dedicated and qualified, and all students were motivated to learn. These critics contend that education has lost its way and needs to return to those glory days. An understanding of the history of secondary education can reveal the validity of that argument.

### The Senior High School

The importance of a high school education is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the early colonial period of our nation, education was restricted to instruction in the basic skills. Education beyond the basic levels tended to be restricted to the sons of the elite. The curriculum was largely classical in nature, and the goal was to prepare these boys for leadership. However, this narrow application of secondary education was questioned.

Thomas Jefferson argued for a broader distribution of education by pointing out that democracy required an educated citizenry. In addition, as middle-class merchants and other practical occupations became more prevalent, they challenged the idea of a curriculum composed of Greek, Latin, and the classics. Some private secondary schools, however, such as the Franklin Academy; Philips Academy at Andover, Massachusetts; and Philip Exeter Academy at Exeter, New Hampshire, emphasized the idea that secondary education was important.

The first public high school established in the United States in 1821 was the Boston English Classical School. The name was soon changed to the English High School. The program of study emphasized what was then defined as useful and practical subjects as opposed to subjects that appeared to have no clear connection to daily living. However, there was not an overwhelming response to the high school as an institution.

As late as 1860, there were only about 40 public high schools in the entire country (Barry, 1961). One of the barriers to the spread of the high school was money. Public financial support for elementary education dated back to colonial times. However, the high school was not viewed as useful for everyone. Those who attended secondary school still tended to be the upper classes and those preparing for higher education. There was doubt about the legality of using tax money to support secondary schools for this limited population. A landmark case in this area was the famous Kalamazoo case of 1874 (Stuart v. School District No. 1 of the Village of Kalamazoo, 30 Mich.69 (1874)), which supported the right of state legislatures to pass laws permitting local communities to levy taxes to support secondary as well as elementary schools.

Once the legality of public funding was established, the number of secondary schools increased rapidly. By 1900, there were over 6,000 high schools serving half a million students. However, in 1900, only 50% of the children were in school, and they received an average of
only five years of schooling. Only 6% of the 17-year-olds were high school graduates (Bernard & Mondale, 2001).

Great debates developed concerning the purpose of secondary education. The debate centered on whether the secondary school should prepare students for the world of work or for the academic world of higher education.

In the 1890s, the National Education Association’s Committee of Ten issued a report suggesting that the high school should be almost exclusively devoted to preparing students for higher education. The committee recommended that all students take Latin, Greek, English, a modern non-English language, mathematics, the sciences, natural history, history, civil government, political economy, and geography (National Education Association, 1893).

However, this view came under attack as high schools grew to include a broader spectrum of the general population. By 1920, school budgets had grown and high school graduation rates had climbed to 17% of the 17-year-old population. Child labor laws restricted the employment opportunities of youth, and new laws made school attendance compulsory. A report of the National Education’s Committee of Nine issued in 1911 suggested that the high school had a responsibility to produce “socially efficient” individuals. These were individuals who were committed to fundamental American values and were capable of making real contributions to the technical and social development of the nation (National Education Association, 1911).

In 1918, a compromise was reached by the National Education Association’s Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918) in what has been widely regarded as a seminal document on the development of the American high school. The commission suggested that the high school should be “comprehensive” and should serve multiple purposes. These broad purposes were expressed in the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. These principles promoted that the following goals be developed:

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

These cardinal principles guided the development of secondary school throughout the 20th century. Even today, their influence can be seen in the purposes and the curriculum of the school.

The Junior High School

Junior high schools were not established until the early years of the 20th century. As large numbers of public high schools began to emerge, their academic programs were generally quite demanding compared to the basic education offered in the elementary schools. Some individuals saw the need for a school that would help prepare students for the rigors of high school.

Increased interest in child growth and development led others to conclude that children were not simply “miniature adults” but proceeded through developmental stages. This led some to the idea that a special school was needed that could respond to the unique physical and emotional needs of preadolescents and early adolescents. The views of those who saw the need for a school to prepare students for the rigors of high school often conflicted with those who wanted an institution that met the developmental needs of children. This debate has continued unabated since the first junior high school was established in Berkeley, California, in 1909.
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The organizational pattern followed in Berkeley was copied by large numbers of school districts throughout the country. This was a 6-3-3 pattern that featured a six-year elementary school, a three-year junior high school, and a three-year senior high school. Junior high schools in this pattern usually involved Grades 7, 8, and 9. However, there were other patterns. A common one was a two-year junior high school that served Grades 7 and 8 and left Grade 9 in the senior high school.

By the end of World War I, the debate over the purpose of the junior high school had largely been won by the partisans of academic preparation for high school. Most of the teachers hired for the junior high school had preparation that was oriented toward teaching in the high school. Many of the junior high teachers had aspirations to “move up” to the high school. Ever sensitive to negative comments that might come their way from teachers at the senior high school, many junior high school teachers worked hard to prove that there was nothing “academically soft” about junior high school programs.

As a result, attention was not focused on the specialized needs of junior high students. This continued to bring criticism from people concerned about the growth and development issues. Over time they began to win support. Drawing on the work of developmental psychologists as an intellectual rationale, critics of the traditional high school began proposing in the 1960s the establishment of schools with a different emphasis. They proposed that this school be called a middle school, a term borrowed from European education.

The Middle School

The middle school concept began to catch on in the 1960s. In general, middle schools were organized to include at least three but not more than five grades that must include Grades 6 and 7 (Lounsbury & Vars, 1978). What was more important was the middle school philosophy. The middle school was to be developed around the special emotional and developmental needs of students in the 11–14 age range. Since middle schools first began to appear in the 1960s, their popularity continued to increase so that they became the dominant type of intermediate school.

As originally conceived, middle schools were supposed to be schools heavily oriented toward serving the unique developmental needs of students. Many institutions called middle schools do reflect this philosophy. However, there are others that reflect the academic orientation that differs little from the junior high school programs that initially prompted the establishment of middle schools. It is common to hear middle school proponents refer to a school as “a middle school in name only.”

Similarly, some junior high schools have developed student-oriented programs and curricula that are every bit as responsive to the developmental needs of students as similarly oriented middle schools. It is simply an overgeneralization to state that “middle schools care about students,” and “junior high schools care about subjects.”

There are many challenges as well as rewards in teaching students in the intermediate years. Individuals teaching at this level must have an appreciation of the special needs of students at this level. The students are active and can display great maturity one moment and tremendous immaturity the next. They are often not afraid to get excited about things and will often do things that are not “sophisticated” enough for high school students.

There is no doubt that these middle years are crucial years when many students either develop a positive self-concept and move toward success, or begin the downward spiral toward failure. Because this age is the turning point for those who eventually drop out of school, the need for committed and understanding teachers at this level is great.

Historic Secondary School Reforms

The role of the secondary school has been challenged throughout history. There has never been a “golden age” when everyone agreed with the priorities of secondary education and believed that secondary education was functioning properly. This lack of agreement has led
The Changing World of Teaching

More from the Web
The following are three websites where you can explore issues and trends in secondary education.

**EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES (ECS)**
URL: http://www.ecs.org
The Education Commission of the States has an extensive website that covers a broad range of issues in education. Clicking on the issue “high school” brings up a wealth of information on reports, research, and contemporary issues in high school education. Numerous other issues such as testing and accountability are also linked to excellent reports and research.

**THE NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**
URL: http://www.nmsa.org
This organization provides a wealth of information about middle school education. Current events, conferences, professional development opportunities, research summaries, and links to other sites are listed at its website.

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**
URL: http://www.nassp.org
This website contains excellent information on issues, trends, research, and publications relating to secondary schools.

to several reform eras. We are currently in an era where reform is very strong. Reform of secondary education is being advocated by a wide range of individuals and organizations. Many of these reform proposals have their roots in the past. Some have been tried before and are now getting renewed attention.

From the earlier origins of the modern secondary school at the beginning of the 20th century to the 1950s, there has been tremendous growth in the number of students attending secondary school. Around 60% of the age-eligible students were attending secondary schools by the 1950s (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). However, there were great inequities based on gender, color, and ethnicity. African American students were segregated by law in 17 states. The opportunities for girls were limited, the average number of years of attendance for Mexican American students was 5.6 years, and 72% of children eligible for special education were not even enrolled in school (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). While some groups were doing well in secondary schools, a substantial segment of the population was not being well served.

A number of events quickly changed the educational scene. Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 overturned the “separate but equal” policy and moved the schools toward integration. This development was not well received by all citizens. There was some movement toward private schools and growth of de facto segregation. Criticism of education in general was accelerated with the Soviet launching of the earth satellite Sputnik in the fall of 1957. The event was a severe blow to American pride, and people wanted explanations about why the nation had lost its technical and scientific superiority.

The schools became the target of the criticism. A number of popular books were published that were critical of the schools and contended that the basic purposes of secondary education were misguided and that the curriculum was out of date and weak. Individuals who disagreed with the progressive school movement had been claiming that the schools were focusing too much on student needs and interests and were attempting to make school “fun” and “meaningful.” They seized on the launch of Sputnik as evidence that
American schools were too soft and had moved away from intellectual rigor. In 1958, the National Defense Education Act was passed and emphasized a subject matter–centered curriculum. Science and mathematics, areas that were viewed as critical to national defense, were the first areas of the curriculum addressed by the new act. Much of the curriculum development was turned over to subject specialists and academics in the content areas. New curricula were developed for high school physics, biology, chemistry, and mathematics. A nationwide network of summer institutes for teachers was launched in an effort to improve the quality of instruction.

Toward the end of the 1960s, other social problems such as widespread poverty, racial unrest, the Vietnam War, and a rebellious youth culture shifted attention from the space race. Once again the schools became a target. This time a more liberal segment of the population depicted schools as joyless, oppressive, and inhumane places. This shifted the focus of the schools from the more conservative subject-matter emphasis that followed Sputnik to a student-centered, open approach allowing high degrees of student freedom. A variety of alternative high schools were developed in many regions of the nation. Some allowed students to choose what they wanted to study and how they wanted to study it.

Toward the end of the 1960s, another issue that was to have long-term impact on the schools came to the forefront. Advocates for the special needs of students followed the civil rights lead of an earlier era and began a campaign requiring the inclusion of special needs students in public education. By the mid 1970s, Public Law 94-142 was passed. That law required that public schools be responsible for the education of handicapped students from the ages of 3 to 21. In addition, it required that, where feasible, handicapped students should be taught in regular classrooms. This changed the student composition of regular classrooms, required additional education for classroom teachers, and resulted in large expenditures for school districts.

By the late 1970s, new concerns about the student-centered emphasis of the past decade began to surface. The publication in 1983 of the National Commission of Excellence in Education report, *A Nation at Risk*, began a new reform movement. This reform movement was triggered by the economic success of other nations such as Japan. These nations were growing in economic power and were challenging the industrial leadership of the United States. Much like the reaction to Sputnik 25 years before it, this report placed primary responsibility on the schools. The report claimed that the schools were failing and this failure threatened survival of the nation because of its inability to compete with other nations (Hlebowitsh, 2001).

Given that the challenge addressed by *A Nation at Risk* was an economic one and that many of those who crafted the report had business backgrounds, it is not surprising that the report signaled the ascendancy of a conservative philosophy emphasizing that schools needed to be operated like a business. The report called for more rigorous graduation standards, the development of national standards against which school performance could be measured, more emphasis on academic subjects like math and science, more teacher and school accountability, more parental choice, longer school days and longer school years, and revised preparation programs for teachers that emphasized academic rigor rather than teacher education. The Japanese educational system was held up as a model that the nation should emulate.

Many questioned the data upon which these reforms were based (Astuto et al., 1994; Berliner & Biddle, 1995). They pointed out that the American schools were a great success. More students from more diverse backgrounds had been educated to higher levels in the United States than any other society in the world (Ryan & Cooper, 2004). Significant improvements had been made in the educational attainments of minority populations, dropout rates were low, and more students were graduating from high school and contemplating higher education than ever before. Actually, the SAT scores for every subgroup had improved over the years, even though the overall score had dropped, because more students from traditionally low-performing groups were taking the test (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).
However, *A Nation at Risk* was a public relations success, and large segments of society were convinced that education was failing. The reforms mentioned in the report continue to guide educational policy almost 30 years later. The impact of *A Nation at Risk* continued into the 21st century, and many of the reform proposals were implemented in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) signed into law in 2002. This act was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act first passed in 1964 as part of the Johnson administration’s “war on poverty.” No Child Left Behind was another expansion of federal influence and focused on the establishment of state academic standards, assessment, accountability, and improved teacher quality. This legislation signaled a major change in the educational landscape by increasing federal involvement in educational policy-making.

**Current Reform Trends**

Many of the current reform trends have their origin in these earlier reform proposals. Current reform proponents advocate three components to successful reform: curriculum standards, frequent assessment to provide data for decision-making, and teacher and administrator accountability (Ornstein, 2003). These three components reflect the business model of resources allocation and efficiency applied to education. Setting standards is the educational equivalent of setting production or sales goals, assessment is intended to provide concrete data focus on the accomplishment of the goals, and accountability assigns rewards or sanctions to individuals based on goal attainment.

**Standards-Based Education**

Policy makers have been frustrated with previous educational reform efforts. There seemed to be lots of action, but with disappointing results. States would adopt new books and curricula, yet classrooms would continue pretty much as they had in the past. School districts would reorganize and develop new mission statements but fundamental change did not occur. Money would be spent on professional development and technology but with little impact on teaching practice.

As a result, the focus of educational reform shifted from changing the “inputs” (money, curriculum, resources) to evaluating outcomes (student achievement). Standards-based education became the foundation for educational reform movements across the nation.

There are positive dimensions of clearly stated content standards. Many secondary school teachers, even after having completed a college major in a subject, are left wondering what parts of that content need to be taught to a specific group of students. Clear content standards can help teachers conceptualize the essential elements of a subject that should be taught to students. They can be very useful in planning for teaching. In the past, the decision about what to teach was based on the content of the textbook. However, textbooks have an uneven quality and reflect the decisions of the authors as to what is important. Standards can be a more comprehensive and reliable guide.

One argument made by supporters of standards-based education focusing on good standards places the focus on what students should learn. This provides the foundation for developing measurements of these educational outputs. In addition, measurement of clear standards can provide for meaningful comparisons among schools. These comparisons would allow parents, guardians, and policy makers to make judgments about individual schools and would increase competition between schools that would lead to school improvement.

Content standards describe what elements of a content area teachers are supposed to teach and students are expected to learn. Many national subject-area organizations recognized the importance of clear content standards and developed content standards defining
what the experts in the content area defined as essential. National content standards were
developed for subjects such as mathematics, English language arts, history, civics and gov-
ernment, science, and geography.

While the content standards established by national organizations defined what the
“experts” believe is important, they did not overcome the political necessity for states to
define their own standards. Defining the curriculum is a state responsibility, and state
standards form the legal basis for the curriculum in a given state. No Child Left Behind
required that states develop these standards to qualify for federal funds.

While states have always been responsible for curriculum within the state, the guide-
lines have usually been general ones that were then used by local school districts to guide
the development of what was taught in the classrooms. This focus on state standards repre-
sents a fundamental shift in the traditional ways educational decisions have been made.
The establishment and enforcement of state content standards on all districts in a state ef-
ectively removed control of the curriculum from local authorities. Proponents of common
standards contend that high mobility of the population makes it important that there be
some consistency of expectations across school districts.

However, the establishment of state standards raises a couple of critical questions.
Who should determine the content standards for the schools and therefore for all students?
And how is achievement of the standards to be measured?

Those controlling the establishment of standards can exert a tremendous impact on
what students learn. Fear of political influence on what students learn has led to reluctance
to place curriculum decisions too far away from the local community. One example of this
fear has been the actions of the committee in Texas that establishes social studies standards
for the state. This elected group with a conservative orientation developed standards that
clearly emphasized a political agenda. Should politicians such as the president, governors,
or legislators decide what students should know? Should leaders in business and industry
define what students should learn? Perhaps academic professors in universities should
make the decision. Consider the possible agenda of each of these groups and how the stan-
dards would be different based on who developed them.

It can be argued that the goal of the reform movement to standards-based education
has largely been accomplished. States have developed content standards as required in No
Child Left Behind. However, some critics pointed out that the standards adopted by differ-
ent states are uneven and some are much less demanding than others. The call now is for
common national standards. This has been a major provision of the Obama administra-
tion's Race to the Top program.

The other major issue relates to how the standards are assessed. If the assessment
process is flawed and the data gathered is invalid, then data about student achievement is
relatively worthless. This then undercuts the argument that data would better inform the
public and policy makers and would provide the foundation for better decisions.

Are current approaches to assessment adequate? Are they providing useful data re-
garding student achievement and teacher performance? The quality of the assessments is
key to achieving the goals of the reform movement. If the emphasis is changed from “in-
puts” to “outcomes,” then good assessment of the outcomes is required. However, there is
widespread concern that current assessments of student performance are inadequate at
best and are generally flawed and misleading. Because this is such an integral part of educa-
tion reform, it is curious that there have been few efforts directed at improving the quality
of educational assessment.

High-Stakes Testing

The reform movement focuses on identifying how well students are achieving and how well
teachers and schools are performing. This information is used to make important decisions
such as the allocation of resources, teacher evaluation, school rankings, and whether stu-
dents are allowed to move to the next grade or to graduate. These decisions have important
consequences. Tests that gather data to be used in making these important decisions are called high-stakes tests.

The most prevalent approach to testing is the use of standardized tests. A standardized test is usually one that has been developed by a professional testing company. The test items are developed and tested on a group of students. Test items are revised as needed and norms are established based on the scores of the group. Standards are then established for the administration of the test so that all students taking the test will do so under similar conditions. This process then allows for comparisons of student scores from across the nation based on the established norms or proficiency levels.

The testing associated with standards-based assessment presumes that the testing program will be well matched to the instructional program. In reality this is not always the case. The simple fact that standardized tests are usually developed by large, for-profit companies intent on selling tests to the widest possible audience means that tests cannot focus on the standards for different states. The result is that the test will not measure all of the standards of a given state. In addition, it is likely that because of state-to-state differences, some of the content measured on a given standardized test may not have even been taught in a particular state. In these instances, using test results as a valid measure of students’ learning of content standards makes little sense.

High-stakes testing has fueled intense debate. Critics of high-stakes testing point out that such testing practices narrow the curriculum to those things included on the tests. Because lower-level content is easier to test, that is the content that will be emphasized. In addition, because high-stakes tests are so important, great amounts of instructional time are spent teaching to the test rather than teaching important content. Basing decisions solely on the content of a high-stakes test also runs the risk of misidentifying good teachers and good schools (Popham, 2001).

The issue of the alignment of the tests with content standards brings about another concern. Because there is seldom a strong alignment between tests and standards and because teachers are teaching to the tests, defining what should be taught is influenced more by those writing the tests than by those defining the standards.

Because of concern over the possible misuse and the negative consequences of high-stakes tests, several professional organizations have issued position statements. One such statement was developed by the prestigious American Educational Research Association (July 2000). This position statement included the following points:

1. Decisions that have important educational consequences should not be based solely on the basis of test scores.
2. The content tested must be incorporated into the curriculum and the materials prior to administering the test to students.
3. High-stakes tests should not be limited to the portion of the curriculum that is easiest to measure.
4. Sound procedures must be followed in establishing proficiency levels and passing scores.
5. The validity of the tests needs to be established and reported.
6. Attention needs to be given to language differences and students with disabilities.
7. The reliability or the precision of the test scores must be established.
8. The intended and unintended consequences of high-stakes tests needs to be subjected to ongoing evaluation.*

In summary, many of the reform proponents have emphasized high-stakes testing as the only way to bring about educational reform. High-stakes testing is an important

component of the reform movement and is likely to be a feature of education in the years to come. However, the goal of having well-crafted tests is one about which there is considerable debate. Most of the critics of high-stakes testing contend that the majority of the tests are not well crafted and do not adequately indicate successful learning of standards. These individuals point out that high-stakes testing has the potential for serious harm. Educators need to understand the issues involved and be prepared to take a stand (Savage, 2004). See Box 1-2 for some questions to think about.

**Accountability**

The third component of educational reform is that of accountability. Accountability is directly tied to the standards movement and to high-stakes testing. Accountability in education means holding teachers and schools responsible for what students learn. Accountability is closely related to issues such as the financing and control of education, and it developed in response to several concerns. One was the cost of education. Educational expenditures are a significant portion of the budget of any state. As costs have increased, policy makers have insisted that schools be held accountable for spending money in ways that result in improved student learning.

Few educators disagree with the concept of “fair accountability.” However, several issues relate to questions of what teachers should be accountable for, what data is useful for accountability, and whether the accountability process is fair. Is accountability fair if it is based on the results of one test that is given over one or two days once a year? Should teachers be held accountable only for how well students score on tests? Is it fair to hold teachers accountable when they have no control over a number of variables that influence student achievement, such as the quality of the learning materials, language differences, learning disabilities, and the home environment of the students?

Some experts point out that real educational reform is time consuming and costly. It requires reorganizing schools and classrooms, expanding tutoring programs, lengthening the school day and the school year, reducing class size, changing teaching and learning conceptions, and confronting the societal problem of poverty (Ornstein, 2003).

Other critics point out that there needs to be better data gathered from a variety of sources in order to reflect fairly on the accomplishments of the schools and teachers. They suggest that data on topics such as dropout and graduation rates, college acceptance rates, follow-up studies of high school graduates in the years following graduation, and teacher turnover rates are examples of data that need to be considered when making valid determinations of school and teacher accountability.

**BOX 1-2 What Do You Think?**

**High-Stakes Testing**

This is one of the most debated issues in contemporary education. There are intense feelings on both sides of the issue. Some believe that high-stakes testing is essential to the improvement of education, and others see the movement as a serious detriment to quality education.

**Questions**

1. After reading the previous section, what is your position on high-stakes testing?
2. Do you agree that only high-stakes testing will motivate students and teachers to do better?
3. Which arguments do you find most compelling both for and against high-stakes testing?
4. What are the alternatives to high-stakes testing?
The problem is that gathering this data is difficult, time-consuming, and expensive. However, if critics are interested in fair accountability and true educational reform, then a broader definition of accountability to include multiple data sources must be considered.

In summary, accountability is an important concept that is here to stay. Teachers will need to gather data that indicates that students are learning. However, the idea of “fair accountability” is still an ideal. Educators must be knowledgeable and make sure that accountability does not continue to be defined in narrow terms that simplify the complexity of teaching and learning. Fair and useful accountability will mean that teachers, parents, and students all must be involved (Ornstein, 2003).

### Improving Teacher Quality

The teacher is central to any attempt to reform secondary education. Thus, a focus on improving teaching quality is a component of nearly all reform proposals. Your own teacher preparation program may well include components that have been added in response to some of these improvement initiatives. Ideas put forward by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) have been particularly influential.

#### Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) was established about 20 years ago as an alliance among state education leaders, colleges and universities, and national groups with interests in promoting educational improvement and development of high-quality educators. INTASC defines quality teachers differently than No Child Left Behind. INTASC has promoted teacher preparation programs that ensure teachers leave their preparation programs knowing both the subjects they will teach and methods for transmitting content that will enable all students to learn. To achieve this end, INTASC has developed a guiding set of principles that are known as the INTASC Model Core Standards. They represent features of teaching and teacher performance that should be present regardless of subjects taught or the age and grade level of students. Many state-level departments of education and teacher preparation programs in universities have used the INTASC standards as guidelines.

The Model Core Standards are listed in Box 1-3. At the end of many of the chapters in this text, you will find an exercise titled For Your Portfolio. This provides you with an opportunity to put information you have learned into a professional-development portfolio. You will be asked to cross-reference materials you include to one or more of the Model Core Standards. To do this, you will want to refer back to the standards provided in Box 1-3.

#### National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

In 1987, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy supported establishment of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). NBPTS’s governing board includes teachers, administrators, members of the public, and other stakeholders in education. The organization operates as a private, nonprofit group that receives financing from foundations, grants from large businesses, and funding from certain federal sources.

NBPTS seeks to improve education by promoting the development of teachers who:

- are committed to students and their learning,
- know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students,
- are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning,
- think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and
- are members of learning communities. (NBPTS, 1999)
Box 1-3  Intasc Model Core Standards

1. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.

2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.

3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

7. The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

8. The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and well-being.

Much of the work of NBPTS has been dedicated to identifying high standards related to what teachers should know and do to help students achieve. NBPTS has established a certification process for the purpose of identifying teachers who meet these standards. If you seek a National Board Certificate after beginning your career as a teacher, you will undergo a rigorous set of assessments. You will be observed in your own classroom and in special situations that are developed for candidates at NBPTS assessment centers. You will also be required to prepare an extensive portfolio to document your instructional procedures and their effectiveness with learners.

National Board Certificates do not replace teaching credentials, certificates, or licenses that states issue. What they do is provide formal recognition of teachers who have met much higher standards. National Board Certificates provide evidence that holders have met rigorous criteria that clearly identify them as outstanding classroom practitioners.

Not everyone approves of NBPTS. A few critics argue that the practice of applying national standards and awarding certificates to people who meet them challenges the tradition of certifying teachers at the state level. Even though National Board certification does not replace state certification, some people suggest that it is a step in that direction. Supporters point out that the high NBPTS standards may encourage states to adopt more rigorous certification requirements that, in time, will improve the quality of teachers everywhere.

For additional information, visit the National Board’s website at http://www.nbpts.org/

Race to the Top

The Obama administration continued federal involvement in education and educational reform with the establishment of a program called Race to the Top (RTTT). RTTT is a $4.35 billion incentive program designed to stimulate educational change across the nation. It was designed by the United States Department of Education and included as part of
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the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This act provides for competitive grants to states that embarked on a reform agenda. It includes several features of the educational reform agenda that the Obama administration feels is key to the improvement of schools. RTTT is viewed as an effort to prompt some educational reforms that have been difficult for states to address.

The RTTT competition focuses on 19 criteria identified for awarding grants (United States Department of Education, 2009). These 19 criteria relate to four central themes. The four themes require that states (a) develop internationally benchmarked curriculum standards; (b) develop a statewide data system that can be used to track student progress; (c) improve the recruitment, retention, and rewarding of educators; and (d) turn around low-performing schools.

The development of internationally benchmarked curriculum standards is focused on getting states to agree to a common set of national standards. This addresses the concern that the quality of state standards is uneven and some are of inferior quality. The intent is to hold all states and all schools accountable for achieving rigorous standards that will keep students competitive with other nations.

To comply with the RTTT criteria, many states have adopted common standards. However, this focus also results in considerable concern. Some states contend that their standards are more rigorous than the common standards and therefore adopting common standards is a step backward. Other states cite concern about federal intrusion into their state affairs.

The theme related to the development of a statewide data system for tracking students continues a reform emphasis on “data-based decisions.” Proponents of educational change have long been critical of the absence of good data for assessing education within states. In many states, good data cannot be found that actually indicate how many students drop out of school. Students are not tracked from school district to school district. Many students get lost in the system and their progress cannot be determined. This lack of data is a significant barrier in identifying what needs to be done to improve education in a state.

The need to attract and retain good teachers and principals has long been a major concern. As noted earlier in the chapter, there is a significant attrition rate for teachers, with nearly half of them leaving within the first five years of entering the profession.

Some experts have suggested that a contributing factor to teacher attrition is found in teacher compensation. They contend that the common salary based on the amount of education of the teacher and years in service does not provide rewards for good teachers. In addition, some educational reform proponents believe that we would see dramatic improvement in student achievement if we simply based teacher salaries on student achievement data.

Therefore, this theme of RTTT focuses primarily on tying teacher and principal salaries, at least in part, to student test scores. This emphasis continues the focus on accountability. In essence, it assumes that differences in student achievement are directly linked to teacher performance. While RTTT does not mandate that all teacher and administrator pay rates tie directly to student test scores, it still promotes considerable opposition.

Critics of this theme point out the widespread agreement that current tests of student achievement do a poor job of assessing student achievement and generally focus on limited topics and low-level educational outcomes. They say that it doesn’t make sense to base important decisions such as teacher and administration compensation on these inadequate assessments of student learning. Other concerns relate to the underlying assumption that teacher performance is the major factor influencing student test scores. While teachers are important, there is also an important relationship between student achievement and the socioeconomic level of the students.

Some skeptics point out that teachers do not choose who they will teach. If student performance has a significant impact on something as important as their salary or their employment evaluation, should they not be allowed to have some voice in whom they teach? In addition, if teacher pay is to be linked to student scores, will they be willing to seek teaching positions in those schools where bringing about change in student scores is most difficult?
Another assumption behind merit or performance pay is that monetary incentives are needed to motivate teachers to do a good job. While there is no doubt that teachers would enjoy the opportunity to make more money, it can be questioned that this is their primary motivation for teaching. As the study cited at the beginning of the chapter indicates, salary did not rank in the top three factors influencing teacher motivation.

In fact, it can be argued that, unlike many businesses, there is a built-in incentive for teachers to do well. In many other occupations, the goals of the employer and the employees are in opposition. The employer wants to maximize effort from employees in order to achieve a profit. However, employees want to expend a minimum amount of effort. Therefore, incentives are needed to get employees to increase the amount of effort they expend in helping the employer achieve production goals.

However, good teaching itself provides an incentive for teachers because good teaching makes the job easier. It results in fewer problems and increased social and emotional rewards. Therefore, increased effort usually pays dividends without other incentives. Most teachers contend that increased pay would not increase their performance because they are now expending maximum effort. Therefore, there is considerable doubt that significant improvements in student performance will occur by basing teacher pay on student test scores. Rather, merit pay based on student test scores will only accelerate the focus on "teaching to the test" and the narrowing of the curriculum to information likely to be on the test. Another outcome, one that has already been seen as a result of No Child Left Behind, is that the most effort will be directed to those students who are most likely to improve with the least amount of effort. Those students near the top, where there is little room for improvement, and those at the bottom, where considerable effort would be required to improve achievement, would be largely ignored. The majority of the effort would be directed toward those students at about the median because increased effort is most likely to have the largest payoff in terms of improved class averages.

This emphasis in RTTT led to opposition from teacher associations. Some states have dropped out of the competition for RTTT funds because of the controversial aspects of this emphasis.

The fourth emphasis in RTTT is on turning around low-performing schools. This emphasis focuses on those schools across the nation identified as the nation’s worst performing schools. These are the schools with the highest dropout rates and lowest achievement scores. Four different options were specified as acceptable in turning around these low-performing schools.

One option requires that the school completely transforms itself. In this option, the school needs to be reorganized and restructured. Teachers and administrators are often required to reapply for teaching positions in the school. Options include lengthening the school day and adding days to the academic calendar. Typically the school is reorganized with different schedules and groupings of students. The intent is to provide an opportunity for the school to engage in innovative practices and to reconstitute the teaching staff. One criterion associated with this option requires states to create conditions that facilitate the success of innovative and charter schools. This might mean changing state regulations, teacher contracts, and tenure provisions.

A second option calls for the removal of the school principal and at least half of the teachers if the school does not make significant improvement. President Obama indicated that schools should be given an opportunity to improve. If they show no signs of improvement, however, then there needs to be some accountability (Rowland, 2010). Related to this option is a requirement about the assignment of teachers and principals. This requirement takes into account findings that low-performing schools usually have more new teachers and fewer credentialed teachers than do more successful schools. The intention is to encourage the assignment of high-quality, experienced teachers and principals to the school. This provision of RTTT is controversial. Teacher associations interpreted it as making teachers scapegoats rather than focusing on the conditions and tools needed to facilitate success (Rowland, 2010).
A third option is for schools to close and reopen under new management. Along with this option is the requirement that states lift limits on charter schools, schools publicly funded but privately run. Several states responded to this option by increasing or eliminating limits of charter schools within the state (Toppo, 2009). However, the critics of this option point out that, at best, the research on charter schools is mixed. There has been no definitive indication that charter schools are a superior option to more traditional schools. There are some good charter schools and some poor charter schools. Simply focusing on opening more charter schools is not a prescription for success.

The fourth option is simply to close the school for good. This drastic option accepts the contention that there are some schools for which there is no hope. States need to close them and consider other options for meeting the educational needs of students in those communities.

In addition to the four central thrusts of RTTT, criteria for funding the competitive state grants are identified. One of the criteria is that the state has to obtain the cooperation of teacher associations in the state. This has led to the elimination of some state efforts to obtain the funds because the teacher associations do not agree with the provisions of RTTT. In some states, some school districts agreed to participate and some did not.

RTTT has continued to promote several key components of the reform agenda. It has stimulated considerable action at the state level. Several states made fundamental changes to their education code. However, many of the larger states and those with strong teacher associations have not participated. In the first round of the competition, only two states, Tennessee and Delaware, were awarded grants.

RTTT has the potential to make significant changes in education. The provisions may significantly alter the way schools are operated and the role of teachers. Anyone entering education ought to understand the reform agenda and the potential changes that they may confront as they enter teaching.

Key Ideas in Summary

- New challenges and trends are changing the face of secondary education. If you want to play a role in shaping your profession, you need to become familiar with arguments of both proponents and opponents of school change and reform proposals.
- The basic reasons people give for choosing teaching as a career include making a contribution to society, pleasant working conditions, transmitting academic content, helping students develop, and being rewarded for good performance. Of these reasons, helping students develop is cited by 90% of those preparing to be teachers as a major factor.
- The senior high school became a major component of education during the 20th century. In 1900, only about 6% of the 17-year-old population graduated from high school. However, in 2002–2003, approximately 87% of the population graduated from high school in California. This graduation rate would be similar to that of the nation as a whole.
- The junior high school was originally developed as an intermediate-level school to prepare students for high school.
- The middle school is a recent development with a philosophy that focuses on the unique developmental and intellectual needs of preadolescents. It is fast becoming the dominant intermediate school pattern.
- Standards-based education seeks to provide clear descriptions of what teachers should teach and students should learn. The idea is to provide clear “targets” for instruction.
- High-stakes testing is the use of standardized tests to measure student achievement of standards and the implementation of serious consequences for schools, teachers, and students who do not meet the standards.
Accountability is a key ingredient in many reform proposals. It is the desire to hold educators accountable for students’ learning. It changes the focus of education from “input” or what is put into education to “outputs.”

Two important efforts to improve the competence of classroom teachers have been mounted, respectively, by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). INTASC has identified a list of capabilities that new teachers should have. Many teacher preparation programs now are designed with a view to preparing candidates who meet these standards. NBPTS has developed a system of issuing National Board Certificates to experienced teachers whose performances measure up to rigorous standards.

Race to the Top, the Obama administration plan to reform education, contains four basic components. These components implement elements of the reform agenda. It contains several controversial components. However, it has had an impact on state policies.

**Reflections**

1. Have your reasons for choosing teaching changed as a result of the information contained in this chapter? If so, explain.
2. How does an understanding of the history of secondary education relate to some of the current issues?
3. What is your response to proposals to reform secondary education?
4. What is your reaction to high-stakes testing and teacher accountability based on student test scores?
5. Review the INTASC standards. Which ones do you think are your strengths? Which ones will require additional learning and experience?

**Learning Extensions**

1. Conduct a poll of secondary teachers about their reasons for choosing teaching as a career. Also ask them the extent to which teaching has met their expectations. Note any patterns that emerge from your poll. Is there a difference between high school and middle or junior high school teachers? Are there gender differences? Are there differences according to years of teaching experience? How do you account for the differences?
2. Together with several others in your class, organize a symposium on this topic: “The 10 Most Likely Changes in Secondary Education during the First Quarter of the 21st Century”
   Present findings to your class and invite follow-up comments at the end of the presentation.
3. Review professional journals for articles focusing on standards-based education, high-stakes testing, and accountability and RTTT. List the claimed advantages and disadvantages. Define your own position based on the information you have gathered.
4. Interview some of the faculty members in your teacher preparation program to determine how well your program matches the INTASC standards. Conduct a self-evaluation. Which of the standards do you think you can meet and where do you need additional growth?
The Changing World of Teaching

References


