

NEW EDITION

The Political Dynamics of American Education

Fourth Edition

Michael W. Kirst and Frederick M. Wirt

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This new edition of The Political Dynamics of American Education is a major revision of the most widely used text in the politics of education. The authors have devised an original conceptual framework to organize and chart the increasingly complex political web of American education. These competing forces of challenge and steady state now affect all levels of policymaking and administration. Combined, these conflicting forces constitute the "dynamic" nature of American education.

The fourth edition of The Political Dynamics of American Education places more emphasis on school choice, reflecting the political conflict and stress evident in recent reform challenges. The authors expand both on the current increase in local political activity and on the external context of local schools to analyze the political momentum behind education standards. At the same time, the limits of both deregulation and centralized strategies are stressed as academic standards policies confront complex local politics.

The most contemporary issues are treated: the 2008 election, politics of charter schools, mayoral control, and the evolutionary politics of NCLB. Each chapter covers the latest school politics research and reviews new "political" research dimensions and the current state of education politics scholarship.

This text is designed in part for practitioners involved in education—administrators, teachers, state officials, and lay groups. It will also be valuable to scholars of educational administration, political science, and sociology because of its comprehensive framework and extensive synthesis of current research.

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Part I: Concepts and Historical Perspectives.

1. Overview of the Education Political System. Describes the forces that have caused increased political conflict in schools. Overviews the political systems theory and how it relates to the book. Provides the organizational and conceptual basis for the volume. **2. Conflict, Politics, and Schools.** Discusses the challenges that produce conflict in schools today.

Part II: Politics at the Local Level.

3. The Origins and Agents of School Demands. Presents the concept of interest groups and the nature of conflict, coalition, and formation of educational groups. Explores the influence of the media on school politics. **4. School Policy Access: Elections and Referenda.** Examines the relationship of school board elections, community power, and political participation to school policies and politics.

5. Local School Boards, Politics, and the Community. Analyzes the patterns of influence in the local school community and the implications of increased conflict for local leadership. **6. Mayoral Control of Schools: Politics, Trade-offs, and Outcomes.** Describes the evolution and impact of mayoral control of schools. Examines and compares mayoral control in several U.S. cities. **7. The Chief Administrator as Professional and Politician.** Explores the role of the superintendent as both a professional educator and politician. Describes superintendent behavior amidst educational change. **8. The Micropolitics within Schools.** Examines the politics within the local schools, describes interactions between citizens and professionals, looks at the role of the principal, and considers teachers as political actors.

Part III: State, Federal, and Judicial Politics.

9. The History and Evolution of the State Role in Education Policy. Examines the growing state role in education and describes state policymaking. **10. The State Political Process.** Presents the key participants and institutions involved in policymaking. **11. Politics of Federal Aid.** Examines the evolution of the federal role in education and federal financing. **12. Court Functions amid Conflict over Change.** Shows the increased impact of the courts on educational policymaking and examines litigation as a political strategy and the limits of judicial influence.

Part IV: Current Political Controversies.

13. Politics of Charter Schools: Competing National Advocacy Coalitions Meet Local Politics. Examines the politics of charter schools at the local, state, and national levels. Describes both the support for and resistance to charters. **14. Policy Implementation and Evaluation.** Focuses on the implementation of policy by examining two major current reforms: state-level school choice (vouchers and charter schools) and the federal-level school-improvement policy (No Child Left Behind legislation. Considers evaluation of policy, to answer the question, Did the policy work?

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael W. Kirst is Emeritus Professor of education at Stanford University. **Frederick M. Wirt** is Emeritus Professor of political science at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

This book is recommended for use in these courses:

- Politics of Education
- School-Community Relations
- Educational Policymaking
- Educational Foundations

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In the past, American political parties were customarily looked to for jobs and favors by the party faithful and contributors.Â Dynamic equilibrium may be described in this sense as keeping government in pace with new conditions by bringing about rational adjustment or change in its policies and activities. Free Parties for Free Government. The political establishment in America and elsewhere has been under constant attack by disaffected elements who are impatient with imperfections and delays and who therefore denounce our political parties as "system-maintenance instruments."

