
Indiana's Public School Traditions: Dominant Themes and Research Opportunities

*William J. Reese**

For most citizens Indiana's public schools are a source of some pride as well as disappointment. Alumni recall the winning shot or blocked punt, a beloved teacher or the local Ichabod Crane, the seemingly endless stream of courses that stretched the mind or dampened the spirit. Because America's public schools are largely locally controlled and open to everyone, citizens often draw upon their personal experiences and whatever is newsworthy as they praise or condemn them. Seldom providing sustained examination of anything, newspapers provide information in bits and pieces, with familiar headlines: Cougar Coach Quits; High School Violence Increasing, Committee Reports; National Merit Scholars Named; ISTEP Scores Dip; Teachers Warn of Test Abuses. The negative always outnumbers the positive. In the end, nearly everyone believes that schools should be doing better, and few think that today's schools are as good as those of past years.

Despite the universal belief that Indiana's public schools need improvement, very little is known about how they evolved into their present form. Compared with those of the nineteenth century, our schools are relatively large-scale, bureaucratically controlled, professionally dominated institutions that offer students, from little children to young adults, an array of academic and vocational subjects and social services from subsidized meals to drug counseling and career planning. The founders of Indiana's school system would not recognize a present-day school. Given the contemporary concern about the fate of our schools and natural curiosity about how things came to be, it is therefore surprising

* William J. Reese is editor of the *History of Education Quarterly* and professor of education and adjunct professor of history and of American studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. He would like to thank Ronald D. Cohen, John M. Glen, B. Edward McClellan, and the members of the History of Education Colloquium in Bloomington, Indiana, for their constructive criticism of an earlier draft of this essay.

that scholars have not recently written any comprehensive analysis of the history of Indiana's public schools.

Early in this century, John Dewey remarked that school reform had become America's fundamental approach to social improvement. This essay focuses on public schools: the deliberate, formal, systematic ways in which the state has attempted to transmit values, skills, and learning to the young. Other scholars of educational history study families, churches, neighborhoods, the mass media, and other informal and formal sources of learning. Everything in a sense may educate, but this essay is about public schools, not all of the sources of learning and socialization that exist at any point in time. The essay is also limited to examining schooling below the collegiate and university levels.¹

What follows is a modest attempt both to examine some of the best available research on the history of Indiana's public schools and to suggest further opportunities for study. First, it surveys the few major attempts at writing histories of public schooling in Indiana, highlighting their ideological and professional biases. Then the essay examines several broad eras of Indiana history: the movement for common, tax-supported schools in the nineteenth

¹ Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991).



WASHINGTON COUNTY SPELLING BEE WINNERS, 1915.
LEFT TO RIGHT: GILBERT MATTHEWS (COUNTY CHAMPION),
EDNA MARTIN, RALPH TURNER, MABEL WRIGHT, HERMAN GRAY

Reproduced from *First Education Report*
(Washington County, Indiana, 1915).



THE PEKIN JUVENILE BAND, 1915

century; the recurring waves of educational reform sweeping the state and nation between the 1890s and World War II; and the changing place of schools in local communities after that war, which led to ever more intense efforts to reform school and society. The essay concludes with some final thoughts about whether advocates of contemporary educational reform might benefit by understanding an Indiana history that shows that most of their ideas have been tried before, with often disappointing or mixed results.

Across the course of Indiana's history citizens have tended to expect far more from schools than could reasonably be delivered. This hardly makes Hoosiers unique, for the belief that schools are a panacea for many social ills is almost as old as the nation itself. Americans have held this belief despite the widespread assumption in each generation that families are in a state of decline, public morals worse than before, and the schools in a downward spiral.

A familiarity with educational history might provide some perspective on the familiar tale of doom and gloom without denying the constant need for educational improvement. Knowing history is nevertheless a sobering experience. There has never been a time when schools effectively educated or socialized everyone—or even tried—or when everyone was well mannered, civil, industrious, and well informed. Only in mythical Lake Wobegone are all youth above average. Indiana's poor, whether white or black, have never enjoyed an educational Eden. Until relatively recently, most teenagers dropped out of school, could not hope to graduate, and could only dream of attending college. In addition, Hoosiers have never spent excessive amounts of money on education and child care, and that legacy persists today. Some vocal citizens complain that much money has been thrown at schools already, but this claim of excessive generosity is not validated by comparative evidence on spending patterns in other northern states.

Moreover, citizens have always expected schools to train the minds and morals of an often diverse student body, no easy task for any generation and unlikely to produce cheerleaders for public education when the test scores arrive and public morals seem to slide. Making a diverse population that is stratified by region, social class, ethnicity, race, and gender fully literate and responsible would be a worthy enough feat. But Americans have never been able to agree on a coherent mission for our schools, and they certainly never thought mental discipline the only worthy goal.

While taxpayers continually complain about what seventeen-year-olds do not know, they have simultaneously expected schools in this century to provide nutritious meals for the poor, recreation and sports for the community, counseling about jobs and school achievement, and warnings about drugs and safe sex, or at least about drugs. Driver education may be among the most popular

courses in high school, but its location in the same building that tries to teach physics says something about our expectations. When in doubt, organize a course or start a program.

Every social ill presumably has an educational cause, and schools have regularly been asked to pursue somewhat contradictory goals: concern for the individual but emphasis on team spirit, concern with one's emotional well-being and moral purpose but emphasis on grades and standardized scores, concern about civic responsibility, democracy, and justice but seeming acceptance of racial segregation, poverty, and the status quo. Despite a barrage of complaints about the ineffectiveness of schools, each generation of citizens still seems to expect schools to solve problems unsolved by families, churches, and other community-based organizations. Though we are perennially disappointed with our schools, that frustration has not prevented us from asking them to do more, to complain again when they fail, and to concoct another round of reforms. Can this be the enduring lesson of educational history?

I

Although contemporary demands for public school reform are commonplace, scholars have not provided concerned citizens with any clear sense of the evolution and enduring problems of Indiana's system of public education. Several insightful books analyze certain aspects of Indiana's educational traditions, such as the dramatic efforts at cooperative learning in antebellum New Harmony or the world famous experiments with platoon schools in Gary in this century. And many worthwhile books, articles, theses, and dissertations chronicle other developments in the state's educational past. However, many of the extant biographies of the founders of Indiana's schools, especially those of Caleb Mills, are mostly hagiography. Still other studies of various educational subjects are similarly uncritical and antiquarian.² Most of the one-volume histories of the state's public schools, so often cited in more specialized studies, are badly outdated and suspect. The earliest historians of education in Indiana, as in other states, were usually school men. Keenly aware of the low status of education in many communities, they wrote celebratory histories of public schools. Guided by an insider's view of things, James H. Smart (the state school superintendent) published *The Indiana Schools and the Men Who Have Worked in Them* in 1876. After discussing the uphill battle of the noble educators and reformers who had built

² James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington: 1986), 338n. Important examples of leading scholarship include Ronald D. Cohen, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, 1906-1960* (Bloomington, 1990); and Arthur E. Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829* (Philadelphia, 1950).

Indiana's schools, Smart included flattering sketches of prominent *men* ("Our Eminent Educators," including himself) even though they were largely administrators and the teaching force even then largely female.³

Most professions traditionally have interpreted their history as the progressive growth of more expertise and enhanced levels of achievement. Specialists replaced general practitioners in medicine; those who read law gave way to those trained at professional schools. Educators-turned-amateur historians even in the nineteenth century envied the standing of law and medicine compared with the teaching profession. And their histories of public education attempted to cast public schools as a heroic crusade against ignorance.

The earliest historians of Indiana's public schools sought to instill pride in teachers and to honor the founding fathers of the educational system. When Richard G. Boone published *A History of Education in Indiana* in 1892, he followed the path blazed by Smart. A professor of pedagogy at Indiana University and later a city school superintendent, Boone typically praised the nineteenth-century reformers who fought the good fight for tax-supported education. Since Boone realized that many citizens abhorred taxes and regarded formal education as irrelevant, he elevated the standing of men such as Caleb Mills, the New England Presbyterian who promoted Indiana's common schools in the 1840s and later became a state superintendent. According to Boone, Mills "deserves to be held in grateful remembrance by Indiana teachers, Indiana children, Indiana Legislatures, and all who have interest in Indiana schools or the public morals incident to intelligence."⁴

Fassett A. Cotton, a former state superintendent of public instruction, prepared another insider's sketch of Indiana's schools. His was the last attempt to write a one-volume history. Cotton explained that *Education in Indiana* drew heavily upon assorted facts and anecdotes, including those he heard presented by Edward Eggleston, the famous author of *The Hoosier School-Master*, in a speech to educators in southern Indiana in 1897. Even the Great Depression did not dim Cotton's optimism or undermine the glory of Hoosier schools. History, again, could ennoble and inspire, enabling everyone to see how the state had progressed thanks to the public schools. "The student of education who knows something of early schools in Indiana and of the spirit that made them possible, knows how to explain our present splendid school spirit

³ James H. Smart, *The Indiana Schools and the Men Who Have Worked in Them* (Cincinnati, 1876). Daniel Hough wrote the biographical entry on Smart. A short section of the book that examined the role of women teachers warned that they might overrun the system.

⁴ Richard G. Boone, *A History of Education in Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1941), 93-34.



SEWING CLASS AT KINGSBURY, LA PORTE COUNTY, 1913

Reproduced from *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Indianapolis, 1913).

and educational progress. They have come up out of the past, and were born of the faith that in education lay our salvation."⁵

Evangelical Protestants such as Caleb Mills would have been proud, since Cotton called him "a great man, a great scholar, and a great teacher." Besides explaining how reformers through the decades had bravely combatted ignorance, Cotton again showed how great *men* passed legislation, built schools, added more programs, increased pupil enrollments, and led the state forward. Cotton also praised himself for his personal triumphs as state superintendent from 1903 to 1909. "The reaction of school authorities to his leadership became dynamic. The schools, even the smallest and more remote, felt the generating stimulus." As the head of Indiana's educational system, he pressed for school consolidation, a more uniform curriculum, more diverse educational programs, and more professional authority for administrators and teachers, thereby building upon the labors of earlier generations. Indeed, "it may be said, truthfully, that Superintendent Cotton's six years of service were years of positive and dynamic influence in behalf of the upward trend of education in the state." Modesty mattered little where the fate of the schools was concerned!⁶

⁵ Fassett A. Cotton, *Education in Indiana* (Bluffton, Ind., 1934), 4-5, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 174, 221-22.

These self-aggrandizing histories stand as the major one-volume interpretations of Indiana's public schools. Though parochial in viewpoint and largely uncritical, they nevertheless represented mainstream historical scholarship of public schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were not aberrations. The histories of other state systems of education were similarly framed, marking the triumph of public education as the victory of light over darkness.

Professionally trained historians, too, often believed that public schools epitomized American traditions of democracy and equality of opportunity. The acclaimed historian of the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner, argued in 1903 that the nation's public schools, especially those in the Middle West, reflected democracy in action. "There is no more striking illustration of the democracy of the West than is afforded by its educational system," Turner wrote. "From the primary grades up to the graduate work, throughout this great area, the way is clear for the boys and girls with brains to rise to the full measure of whatever intellectual power is in them. Nowhere else has democracy so completely embodied its educational ideals."⁷

Turner was hardly a public school insider, yet he shared the belief that public schools exuded democratic values. And, while Cotton decades later composed his paean to Indiana's schools, progressive historians such as Merle E. Curti and Charles A. Beard—admittedly in more sophisticated fashion—prepared remarkable studies of the unique place of public schools in America's democratic past. Curti wondered whether public schools could ever accomplish goals that seemed contradictory: to guarantee the rich safety in the streets and the protection of their property and simultaneously to assure the poor that the class system was permeable and opportunities unlimited. Even Curti, however, ended his otherwise critical volume with high praise for John Dewey, whose pragmatism included enthusiastic support of public schools in a democratic society. Beard, too, cognizant of the fascist youth movements plaguing Europe, praised America's schools for promoting a more democratic culture.⁸

For the most part historians of American education generally held a widely shared belief: that public schools were part of the solution to many of America's problems, not part of the problem itself, and that they were a source of pride and not embarrass-

⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Democratic Education of the Middle West," *World's Work*, VI (August, 1903), 3754. Turner waxed enthusiastic: "From the kindergarten to the graduate department, the sons of the banker and of the breadwinner may sit side by side and are furnished with the same opportunities by the State. The boy and the girl are educated in the same institutions."

⁸ Merle E. Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (New York, 1935); and Charles A. Beard, *The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy* (Washington, D.C., 1937).

ment. America did not have the fixed social classes so prominent in Europe, thanks to an abundance of freedom and relatively open access to public schools. When that consensus on values and institutions—never accepted by everyone—collapsed in the 1960s, historians of public schools grew ever more critical and suspicious of the standard histories lining library shelves. Scholars increasingly doubted whether schools—either at the time of their origins or after waves of reform in later decades—necessarily reflected democracy or egalitarian sentiments. Before the 1960s, however, most educational historians—whether amateurs or professionals—still believed in the remedial power of schools. Public schools held great potential for promoting individual welfare and the common good.⁹

This was the faith that informed the histories of Indiana's public schools by Smart, Boone, and Cotton. This faith influenced most of the standard history of education textbooks that future teachers read when they attended normal schools in the nineteenth century and state teachers colleges or universities during most of the twentieth century. In fact, America's most famous and widely read historian of education shared a familiar viewpoint and even hailed from Indiana: Ellwood P. Cubberley. Born in Andrews and educated at the village school and at Purdue and Indiana universities, Cubberley became a pioneer in the field of school administration early in the twentieth century and wrote the leading textbooks on the history of education before the 1960s. Cubberley described the rise and promise of public schools in ways that echoed familiar ideas about the ties between education and democracy, institutional development, and social progress. He summed up and extended the dominant view of amateurs and professional historians alike when, paraphrasing a martyred president, he said that schools were of, by, and for the people.¹⁰

Searching for Indiana's public school traditions requires an appreciation of these once dominant traditions in American educational history. Most of the older histories celebrate their subject, while new research frequently offers a more critical perspective. Already several important new monographs and research studies have appeared on the history of Indiana's public schools, and more new ground remains to be broken. For those who think that histo-

⁹ These controversies peaked with the antirevisionist volume by Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (New York, 1978).

¹⁰ Jesse B. Sears and Adin D. Henderson, *Cubberley of Stanford and His Contribution to American Education* (Stanford, 1957), 4-20; Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States* (New York, 1919); Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley* (New York, 1965); and David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1920* (New York, 1982), 122-28.

ry can provide some guidance in understanding schools today, all this is welcome.

As James H. Madison explains in *The Indiana Way*, some Hoosiers in the late twentieth century continue the struggle to improve public education, pushing for higher academic standards and better financial support for local schools. History never provides definitive answers to how to perfect modern education. However, understanding how the state's schools originated in the mid-nineteenth century and then responded to the challenges of widespread social change in later periods might provide citizen and scholar alike with a perspective usually absent from contemporary debates about educational reform. What were the social and intellectual foundations of Indiana's schools, and how have they responded over time to the challenge of social change and educational innovation? Answering these questions will require transcending the work of earlier generations of historians whose faith in schools and in the future was perhaps more secure than our own.¹¹

II

In the beginning was Caleb Mills, wrote his principal biographer, Charles W. Moores, in 1905. A professor of ancient languages at Wabash College, Mills was the proverbial Yankee schoolmaster who helped agitate for tax-supported education in the 1840s and pressed for school reforms later sanctioned by the new Indiana Constitution of 1851. The state Constitution of 1816 had enthusiastically endorsed public responsibility for schooling, but in part because of financial restraints its provision had remained a local matter. Therefore, according to most standard histories, little good was accomplished before the 1840s. Townships and even smaller districts gained control of education during the 1820s and 1830s, with dire consequences. By the 1840s, the story continues, Indiana had the highest illiteracy rates in the north, and "Hoosier" already was a synonym for ignorance. "Indiana had an opportunity to develop as good an educational system as Ohio or Michigan," wrote Howard H. Peckham in his bicentennial history, "but neglected it." A commonly accepted view is that settlers from the upland South, who largely inhabited the southern reaches of the state, retarded Indiana's educational development. Yankees such as Mills, living in northern or central Indiana, led the charge for tax-supported, free public schools.¹²

¹¹ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 250-52.

¹² Charles W. Moores, *Caleb Mills and the Indiana School System* (Indianapolis, 1905); Howard H. Peckham, *Indiana: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1978), 363; Gregory S. Rose, "Upland Southerners: The County Origins of Southern Migrants to Indiana by 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXII (September, 1986), 242-63; and Roger H. Van Bolt, "The Hoosier Politicians of the 1840s," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLVIII (March, 1952), 25.



BASKET WEAVING IN RICHMOND, 1905

Most historians (particularly school men) commonly criticized the educational arrangements that existed in Indiana before the 1850s. Until the common school crusade of the 1840s, a combination of self-education, private schools, county seminaries, and tax-supported (but not always free) public schools educated the populace. Those who favored publicly controlled, tax-supported education guided more by centralized authority than by local townships and districts naturally denigrated educational traditions that existed before midcentury. For that reason fresh assessments of educational development and change before the 1850s would be welcome. Much has been written about the low literacy rates of early Indiana. Still, frontier and pioneer Indiana should be understood in its own time and place; historians too often assumed the superiority of centralized power and Whig and Republican views of political behavior in their assessments of earlier periods. Historians typically view the champions of Yankee reform as principled and worthy and portray their opponents as narrow-minded, penurious, and opposed to all that is right and good for children.¹³

Surprisingly few historians have sought to evaluate education or schooling before the 1850s in its own context. In some ways they have assumed that the inevitable trend was toward more centralized authority, graded schools, hierarchical school administration, and so forth. It is as if the train of history moved and only should have moved in one direction. Instead of trying to figure out why local residents defended familiar educational arrangements—such as one room schools or a basic curriculum—far too many writers have assumed the superiority of consolidation, expertise, and centralized authority. In that sense writers have uncritically accepted the assumptions of leading reformers, who had nothing but scorn for the values of rural Indiana or lay people generally. Understanding schools in their own time and place, and not simply from the perspective of urban professionals, markedly changes one's perception of the past.

Historians would benefit from the advice offered by Donald F. Carmony. Writing in the *Indiana Magazine of History* in 1962, he concluded his history of Shelby County's schools before the 1850s: "This decentralized district system—with considerable authority given to the district trustees—has been much criticized by school administrators and by historians, particularly during the twentieth

¹³ For an excellent introduction to the controversies, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850–1880* (Indianapolis, 1965), 461–95. On educational institutions before the 1850s, see Walter Jackson Wakefield, "County Seminaries in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XI (June, 1915), 148–61; John Hardin Thomas, "The Academies of Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, X (December, 1914), 331–58, XI (March, 1915), 8–39; and Otho Lionel Newman, "Development or [sic] the Common Schools of Indiana to 1851," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXII (September, 1926), 229–76.

eth century, but, despite its faults, it or something like it was perhaps essential in the pioneer era." Trying to understand educational arrangements in their own time and place remains challenging.¹⁴

Scholars studying the origins of Indiana's public schools often uncritically praise Caleb Mills and the other Whig, Protestant reformers. These activists pressed for more state-level intervention in education and advocated a host of familiar Yankee innovations: graded classrooms, a more uniform and sequenced curriculum, the establishment of free elementary and secondary schools, the hiring of women as the predominant teachers of younger children, and the creation of hierarchical administrative systems controlled by men. Since their reforms often gained influence, earlier decades seem like the dark ages of Indiana education. Mills is usually depicted as a heroic figure, selflessly battling the miserly and rescuing citizens from their ignorance. Since few political activists are selfless, scholars should study Indiana's founding fathers more critically and reassess whether altruism alone explains their behavior.¹⁵

An early biographer described Mills and his fellow reformers as "gentle, kindly, generous, earnest, builders of civilization in the wilderness," and the Wabash professor remains the best known figure of early Indiana school reform. However, Mills has not received a full-length critical biography, certainly nothing comparable to recent assessments of famous contemporaries such as Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, or Catharine Beecher. And only recently have other influential reformers, such as Calvin Fletcher of Indianapolis, received more attention. New research on Fletcher has broadened our understanding of antebellum reform, but exactly how networks of reformers pressed for local school improvements and state legislative action remains largely unwritten. The state's new Constitution of 1851 promoted several educational innovations, including the creation of a state board of education and the office of state school superintendent. The history of how reformers successfully mobilized action throughout the state through speeches, newspapers, and other forms of political lobbying—and whether, as elsewhere, elite women in voluntary associations similarly pressed for change—remains something of a mystery. The pages of the *Indiana School Journal*, the voice of leading administrators and reformers, may reveal how and why

¹⁴ George Billman, "Public Schools in Congressional Township 13, Range 7 East, Shelby County, Indiana, 1829–1852," ed. Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana Magazine of History*, LVIII (December, 1962), 286.

¹⁵ See, for example, Cotton, *Education in Indiana*; and Boone, *A History of Education in Indiana*, 94, 136–37. A useful introduction to educational developments on all levels is provided in John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), II, chapter 17.

key figures tried to restructure schools and educational power relations after midcentury.¹⁶

Most histories of the origins of Indiana's schools highlight the prominence of Yankee immigrants and Whig activists, who supported greater state intervention in education than did southern immigrants and Democrats. Most of the innovations championed by Mills and Fletcher were typical of antebellum school reform throughout the North. As Carl F. Kaestle notes in *Pillars of the Republic*, the best history of common school reform, most northern reformers sought the elimination of private alternatives and lobbied for a *system* of public education. Several scholars have documented how, except for a handful of elite schools or strictly sectarian institutions, Indiana's private academies largely disappeared in the late nineteenth century once public schools gained acceptance and became completely free.¹⁷

Only diligent research will reveal the extent to which other reforms actually influenced local communities. School leaders at midcentury wanted to eliminate township control over schools, to enhance the power of the state superintendent, to grade classrooms and make teachers more professional, to hire more women teachers to improve instruction and lower costs, and to standardize the curriculum in every district and consolidate schools whenever possible. Northern reformers pursued these goals everywhere, and Indiana—despite its earned reputation for moving haltingly into the future—was no exception.

An old proverb states that man proposes and God disposes. More appropriately here, reformers proposed but Indianans disposed. Scholars of late nineteenth-century Indiana have long understood that speeches and laws do not make a school. Frequently citizens moved more slowly than reformers wished. Thus the social history of local schools remains a fruitful area for further study. Parts of this history are found in many scattered sources. There is still a paucity of case studies of individual school systems or of particular educational reform movements. Yet one can hazard a few generalizations about social change that scholars can refine or reject.¹⁸

Despite impassioned pleas for change at midcentury, traditional practices in Indiana's schools often remained powerful. One-

¹⁶ Moores, *Caleb Mills*, 379; Gayle Thornbrough, Dorothy L. Riker, and Paula Corpuz, eds., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher* (6 vols., Indianapolis, 1972–1983). For prominent biographies of various common school reformers, see Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York, 1972); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York, 1973); and Edith Nye MacMullen, *In the Cause of True Education: Henry Barnard and Nineteenth-Century School Reform* (New Haven, 1991).

¹⁷ Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780–1860* (New York, 1983). See note 13 above.

¹⁸ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 179–81.

and two-room schools predominated in many rural areas, making state superintendents and local reformers apoplectic. Though cities such as Indianapolis had fairly centralized school committees, township trustees remained omnipotent in rural Indiana, where most people lived. The heirs of Whig reform—the Republicans, whose party formed in 1856—agitated for a stronger system of tax-supported schooling, but they trod lightly where traditions of decentralized power remained invincible. Local control of schools and opposition to taxes were already ingrained traits, and local property taxes constituted the almost exclusive source of school funding. As numerous studies indicate, however, Republicans remained committed to reform despite the obstacles. How rapidly did “reforms” from graded classrooms to the creation of high schools spread to different geographical areas of the state?¹⁹

Other fruitful areas of investigation in the Victorian period await the historian of Indiana education. Although Indiana's cities—like those elsewhere—today symbolize the worst failures of public education, nineteenth-century reformers saw cities as their great hope. Though often filled with increasing numbers of poor people and, other than in Indiana, with a growing percentage of foreign born, they were everywhere the great testing ground for educational innovation. Graded classrooms, kindergartens, manual training classes, high schools, and other reforms appeared first in the nation's cities. Just as pioneer schools should be understood in their own context so should urban schools of a later period.²⁰

With a larger tax base, quickened economic growth (despite recurrent depressions), and libraries, museums, and other sources of public enlightenment, cities offered a unique site for educational innovation. The heirs of Jefferson called cities the cancer on the body politic, but Whig and then Republican educators endorsed temperance, the work ethic, and moral education as possible cures for the ills of urban life. As economic power became more concentrated and industrialization spread, cities similarly witnessed dramatic changes in school governance and in the nature of schooling.

¹⁹ On Whig ideology and school reform see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, and Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979); on the Republican party see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York, 1970). Harold Little provided a good introduction to urban education in Indiana in “Development of the City System of Indiana—1851–1880,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, XII (September, 1916), 193–213, 299–325.

²⁰ Madison draws attention to the urban-rural differences in *The Indiana Way*, 181, 185. On urban reform generally see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*; Carl F. Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban System: New York City, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 1973); Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1968); Stanley K. Schultz, *The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789–1860* (New York, 1973); and Selwyn K. Troen, *The Public and the Schools: Shaping the St. Louis System, 1838–1920* (Columbia, Mo., 1975).

In contrast with patterns of decentralized, lay control common in the countryside, city schools were governed by more centralized school committees, who hired superintendents and other professionals to administer the daily workings of local institutions. Reformers hoped that rural folk would emulate, voluntarily or by coercion, the practices of the city systems.²¹

Despite much popular romanticism about one-room schools and rural education, few professional educators *ever* had much good to say about them. How to eliminate one-room schools and the lay control embedded in the township would continue to generate conflict well into the twentieth century. Indeed, tensions between central authority and local districts and between professional educators and lay people still surface in contemporary schools.

Exactly what social roles did schools play in rural areas, where most citizens lived in the mid- to late nineteenth century? Did citizens regularly use their district schools for community meetings, spelling bees, political debates, and other social functions? Who tended to serve as local trustees, and what were the prevailing views of what constituted an essential education? How did the demands of farm life and child labor shape community attitudes toward schooling? Most scholars argue that rural education at the time was largely oriented toward moral education and rudimentary literacy and citizenship training. How pervasive was the view that formal schooling should be limited in terms of years of attendance and courses of study? To what degree were professional educators able to persuade local citizens to offer a wider curriculum and to extend the years of school attendance?

Other aspects of schooling invite scholarly examination. One striking phenomenon of the nineteenth century was the hiring of women as school teachers. Perhaps the most famous fictional work on teaching in the late nineteenth century is still Edward Eggleston's *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*. The story of the young teacher, Ralph Hartsook, is set in southern rural Indiana. The pedagogue, an outsider, struggles to preserve his own reputation and also to maintain order and discipline in his one-room school. Though male teachers in impressive numbers still taught in many rural areas, the striking change of the period was the rise of the Hoosier schoolmistress. Men largely managed schools, but women principally taught in them, especially in the lower grades.²²

²¹ Wayne E. Fuller, *The Old Country School: The Story of Rural Education in the Middle West* (Chicago, 1982), is the standard history of rural education. The best study of urban education is still David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, 1974); also see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*; and Frederick D. Kerschner, Jr., "From Country Town to Industrial City: The Urban Pattern in Indianapolis," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLV (December, 1949), 333.

²² Edward Eggleston, *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* (1871; New York, 1965). In addition to Fuller, *The Old Country School*, read Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools* (Washington, D.C., 1984).

The scholarly literature on women schoolteachers in the nineteenth century is voluminous, but very little research has been completed on Indiana. Often hired earliest in cities, where graded classrooms eased their movement into the teaching force, women became the main educators of urban schoolchildren by the turn of the twentieth century. A social history of teachers and teaching in rural and urban Indiana would help reveal one of the most dramatic changes affecting local communities. Many histories of Indiana examine the ideas of school superintendents or prominent reformers—almost always white males—but little has been written on the lives and working experiences of those who taught the young. Extant diaries and other local sources may help reveal the social history of women's work at school.²³

Male reformers and administrators have left most of the written records on the history of schooling. Their significance in shaping legislation and implementing new policies cannot be underestimated. Still, schools did not simply bend to their will, and various extant sources highlight new avenues for research on the social history of local schools. For example, administrators often gathered considerable information on school enrollments. Indeed, the biennial reports of the state school superintendent often bulge with figures on school attendance, which might lead to more quantitative analyses of school going from the mid- to late nineteenth century before compulsory attendance laws had much effect. Many towns and cities also published occasional reports on aspects of change in local schools, and some school districts have preserved minute books of the meetings of their school committees as well as other ephemera. In addition, the state historical library and state archives hold some important records of local districts. Thus the history of schooling can move beyond the speeches, writings, and exemplary deeds of great men.²⁴

Similarly, most scholarship has been concerned with the white majority. Emma Lou Thornbrough and other scholars have helped illuminate the black experience in Indiana, and the history of black schooling in the nineteenth century remains a fascinating

²³ Among the many volumes on women and teaching in the nineteenth century, see Polly Kaufman, *Women Teachers on the Frontier* (New Haven, Conn., 1984); Nancy Hoffman, *Woman's "True" Profession: Voices from the History of Teaching* (New York, 1981); and the various essays in Donald R. Warren, ed., *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work* (New York, 1989).

²⁴ Libraries across the state, whether the Lilly Library on the Indiana University Bloomington campus, or those in various towns and cities, often hold many manuscript collections of interest to scholars of Indiana educational history. The fact that most Indiana towns, cities, and school corporations generally did *not* publish any printed reports complicates the task of the researcher. Indianapolis, for example, only published reports occasionally, and Gary did not even print them when its school system was internationally famous. Ronald Cohen's book demonstrates how the use of newspapers and other extant materials can compensate for this problem, but the lack of printed records remains a serious problem nonetheless.

subject. Excluded from many rural schools before the Civil War and segregated in many schools afterward, blacks were an important litmus test for the idea of a common public school. Radical antebellum reformers believed that *all* children had a right to a free public education. As many scholars have shown, however, most citizens believed in white supremacy, and midwestern states such as Indiana often opposed southern slavery but also opposed equal rights for free blacks. Local residents were hardly color-blind.²⁵

How Indiana's blacks struggled for quality education for their children has already been analyzed by some scholars. However, nothing resembling James D. Anderson's remarkable work, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, exists for Indiana. Anderson provides a sophisticated analysis of white corporate philanthropy and black traditions of self-help, highlighting the dialectical reactions of rich and poor in the framing of educational policy. Despite their poverty and white opposition, blacks had run their own secret schools since the time of slavery and had embraced the idea of community activism and the importance of schooling. Uncovering the ways in which Indiana's blacks, whether in small southern districts or in larger urban areas further north, persevered to provide their young with the best education possible would require painstaking research but would provide wonderful insights into the education of an oppressed people. Given the plight of urban blacks at school today, we especially need more knowledge about the role that churches, families, and schools historically played in the formation of Indiana's largest minority group.²⁶

When school men pressed for free, tax-supported public schools in the 1840s, they fought diligently against the contemporary notion that free schools were inferior ones, suitable only for paupers. Reformers at an educational convention in 1847 asked whether the state would allow those with "talent, learning, and enterprise" to gain a sound education regardless of their wealth or family background. As did other antebellum reformers, they called for better-trained teachers, a common curriculum, and a hierarchy of men to supervise the system; they also claimed that education would reduce crime, eliminate ignorance and illiteracy, and promote virtue in a republic. But only the most radical Whigs and

²⁵ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Since Emancipation: A Short History of Indiana Negroes, 1863-1963* (Indianapolis, 1963); Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 481-83; and Herman Murray Riley, "A History of Negro Elementary Education in Indianapolis," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXVI (December, 1930), 288-305. On racism in Indiana and in the Midwest, read Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Free Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961); V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free But Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago, 1967); and Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago, 1981).

²⁶ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1988).



NEW ALBANY'S "COLORED" SCRIBNER HIGH SCHOOL
AND EIGHTH GRADE, 1908

Reproduced from *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Indianapolis, 1908).

Republicans had an inclusive definition of citizenship as far as race was concerned.²⁷

The common school was born in an era oriented toward white male rule. Not surprisingly, most histories of Indiana's schools therefore highlight the inspiring speeches of a Caleb Mills but give less attention to teachers, students, or various aspects of the educational process. To determine whether and how the ideals of the leading reformers influenced local practice in the city and the countryside would shed new light on the formative decades of Indiana's public schools.

III

The years separating the 1890s and the end of World War II are an especially fruitful time period for historical research on Indiana's schools. From the 1890s through World War I, often called the Progressive era, many citizens in Indiana as elsewhere believed that schools could contribute to human improvement. Schools became increasingly prominent, often blamed for the ills of

²⁷ *An Address In Relation to Free Common Schools. By a Committee of the State Education Convention* (Indianapolis, 1847), 7-13, 18-19.

society, more often expected to cure them. Even the dark days of depression in the 1930s and early 1940s did not dim this faith in the potential of schools. Throughout these decades schools assumed more responsibilities for the welfare of youth and for strengthening the economic and social system. How well local realities squared with the sometimes high-flown rhetoric of the times can help frame future research.²⁸

Between the 1890s and World War I America faced the consequences of massive social change. Industrial growth, immigration from the countryside and southern and central Europe, and the continued growth of cities dramatically transformed the face of America. As many scholars have noted, Indiana remained very rural and traditional in many respects, but it also encountered continual pressures for change. Many citizens supported the continuation of one- and two-room schools and township control and vehemently opposed increased taxes. Old realities and new ideals struggled for dominance during these heady years of reform. Everywhere reformers, with some dramatic successes and failures, tried to adapt Indiana's schools to a rapidly changing society.²⁹

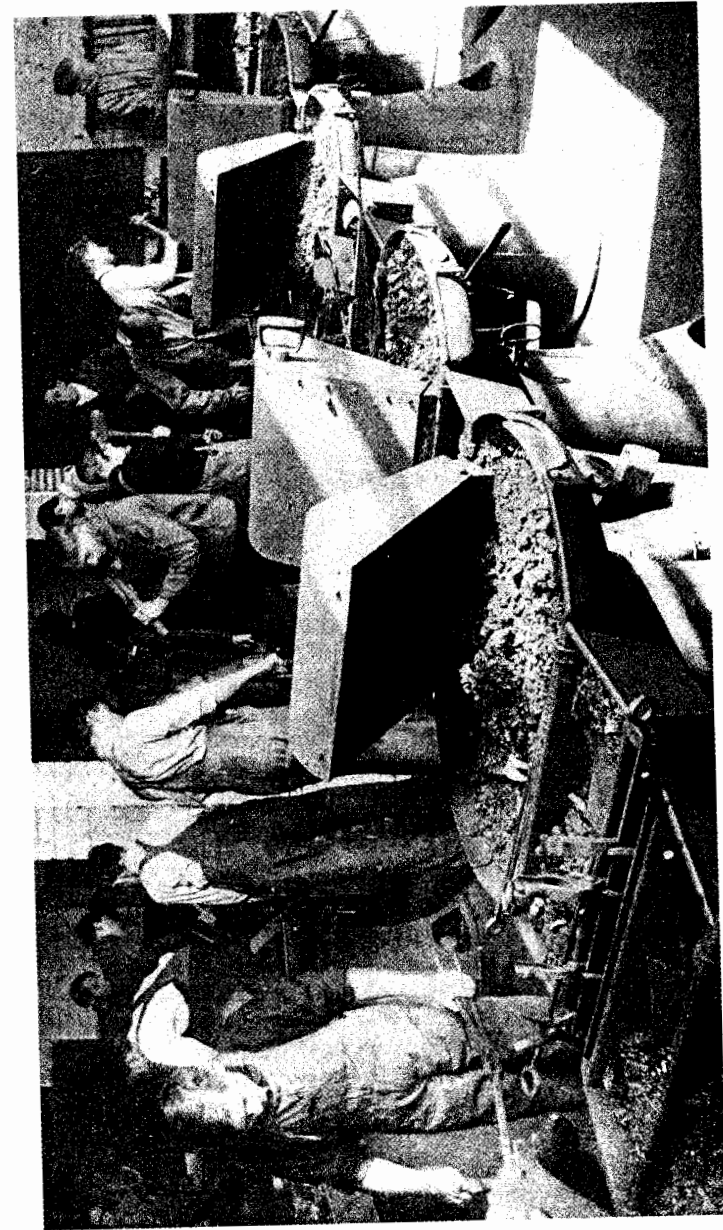
The pace of change was always quickest in cities, still the great hope for professional educators and reformers at the turn of the century. Ronald D. Cohen has written masterful, model studies of the Gary schools, which were led by its famous superintendent, William Wirt, a native of Bluffton. Many writers had previously noted that Gary was not only famous for its steel mills but also for its public schools. But no scholar of Indiana's schools has produced any historical study superior to Cohen's recent book, *Children of the Mill*. Exhaustively researched and persuasively argued, Cohen's study highlights the value of grass roots research and illustrates the complexity of school reform movements in the twentieth century.³⁰

As Cohen explains, reformers at the turn of the century dramatically expanded the schools' responsibility for social welfare. Superintendent Wirt exemplified the dilemma of Progressive era reformers who wanted to balance a desire for social improvement with contemporary demands for social efficiency. Wirt tried to

²⁸ The literature on Progressive era school reform is voluminous. In addition to Tyack, *The One Best System*, see Joel H. Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State* (Boston, 1972); David J. Hogan, *Class and Reform: School and Society in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Philadelphia, 1985); and William J. Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grass-Roots Movements in the Progressive Era* (Boston, 1986).

²⁹ For an introduction to the major social changes during this period in Indiana, see Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth* (Indianapolis, 1968); and Madison, *The Indiana Way*.

³⁰ Cohen, *Children of the Mill*; Ronald D. Cohen and Raymond Mohl, *The Paradox of Progressive Education: The Gary Plan and Urban Schooling* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1979). Also see Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 184; Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 397; and Peckham, *Indiana*, 105.



LEARNING BY DOING IN FORT WAYNE, 1906

maximize use of the local "school plant," employing an innovative approach called platoon schools, also known as the work-play-study plan. Copied to some degree by hundreds of communities across the nation and even influential outside the United States, the system not only utilized classrooms and buildings efficiently, appealing to those who favored dominant business ideals, but also expanded the social purposes of education, thereby attracting considerable praise from liberal activists and radical intellectuals.³¹

Schools throughout Indiana tried to address the knotty problem of how to teach youth new ideals about work, play, and study. Even local educators who did not adopt Gary's approach to scheduling realized that schools faced enormous pressures for change. In the nineteenth century Hoosiers expected schools to teach basic moral values, and children often recited nondenominational Protestant prayers and heard Bible readings without comment from their teachers. Most children studied the Three R's and some history, geography, and grammar in the lower grades and more specialized subjects if they attended high school. As Cohen demonstrates in his well-documented studies, however, the expectations for schools grew enormously in the new century.

Whether in major cities or in smaller districts, professional educators and social reformers at the turn of the century lobbied vigorously to enhance the schools' role in social welfare. Schools grew in complexity. Organized playgrounds; medical inspection; inexpensive school lunches; classes for the blind, deaf, handicapped, and feeble-minded; new courses in health and physical education; and other innovative subjects became familiar in many town and city systems. School budgets in cities such as Indianapolis boomed. Very little has been written on the origins, implementation, and social effects of these programs in Indiana communities.³²

School sports for boys, especially football and basketball, became more prominent in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the Indiana High School Athletic Association was formed early in the century to bring order to a sometimes scandal-ridden scene. Despite the state's proverbial love of basketball, rising in importance and locating villages on the map, its evolution has never really received serious scholarly attention. It was, of course, part of the redefinition of the school's role in the early twentieth century. Play became for athletes and spectators a new form of competition as well as of leisure, increasingly synonymous with the local



³¹ See Cohen, *Children of the Mill*; and Cohen and Mohl, *The Paradox of Progressive Education*.

³² On the expanded social role of the school, see Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education* (New York, 1961). For the study of grass roots pressure for the expansion of social services, see Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform*.

high school. There are many studies featuring the box scores of decisive games, and the latter-day heroics of small-town athletes are captured in the film *Hoosiers*. But why did basketball become such a prominent part of public life?³³

There was little to fear that all play and no work would make students dull boys and girls. Throughout the nation the work ethic was the source of considerable discussion at the turn of the century, and how schools should prepare the young for adult responsibilities remained widely debated. Schools traditionally taught the importance of work, application, delayed gratification, and corporal punishment for classroom sins if moral suasion failed. But learning how to earn a living in more explicit ways also became an increasingly prominent aspect of education. Indiana passed legislation in 1913 that required local districts to offer courses in various vocational subjects. Given the recent passage of work force legislation by the General Assembly, a scholarly study of earlier efforts to improve the links between school and work would be welcome. The source materials to study the subject are voluminous. There are dozens of reports, articles, and related materials in the state teachers' magazines such as *The Educator-Journal* (1900–1924) and *The Indiana Teacher*, first published in 1925, in the publications of the state school superintendent, and in various bulletins issued by different state bureaus. Towns and cities also published valuable information on the spread of vocationalism in their communities.³⁴

Manual training and then vocational education courses became common in Indiana's schools in the new century, first in the cities and then in the countryside. Indianapolis, which offered manual training courses by the 1880s, opened a Manual Training High School in 1895. Other cities such as Fort Wayne soon followed suit, and various agricultural education and home economics courses became common in rural schools. The earliest advocates of manual training emphasized its value in training the hand and the mind, but a narrower vocationalism that emphasized utilitarian ends soon displaced this humanistic emphasis. Vocational education was born. Despite the innovative features of Gary's platoon schools, William Wirt's emphasis on *work* as well as

play and study was a widespread concern of contemporaries. Moreover, many citizens increasingly wanted schools to prepare youth directly for the labor market.³⁵

Citizens in the middle of the nineteenth century generally emphasized the importance of moral and religious instruction, but prominent educators early in the twentieth century emphasized more practical goals. School leaders in the Progressive era urged educators to fit youth into an increasingly corporate, interdependent society. Although high schools had long prepared youth to some degree for the labor market—many women students became teachers, and most young men went directly into the working world or to college—schools now promised more specific skills training and job preparation. The common school ideal—the belief that all youth in theory should study the same curriculum—withered as reformers prepared new courses of study in an attempt to fit youth more efficiently into a more centralized, corporate economy.³⁶

How schools addressed thorny issues of race, class, and gender in vocational preparation needs further examination. Indeed, this has barely been addressed in studies of Indiana's schools. A whole new cadre of specialized teachers had joined the instructional force, teachers dedicated to offering marketable skills to youth. As child labor reformers pressured employers, and educators and reformers emphasized to parents the importance of a high school education, teenagers were increasingly replaced by adults in factories, a process that accelerated dramatically during the Great Depression. High school enrollments boomed during the hard times, and public education would never be the same.³⁷

By enrolling a larger percentage of teenagers, schools became more inclusive institutions. In other ways, however, schools became much less inclusive since they embraced more vocational programs that sorted youth into different slots. Indeed, larger systems were especially well equipped to track students, since they increasingly hired a bevy of educational psychologists and guidance counselors who used a growing battery of achievement and intelligence tests to help assign pupils to "appropriate" high school curricula. One of the pioneers of the testing movement, Lewis Terman, was born on a farm near Franklin, Indiana, and later graduated from the state university in Bloomington. He and other social

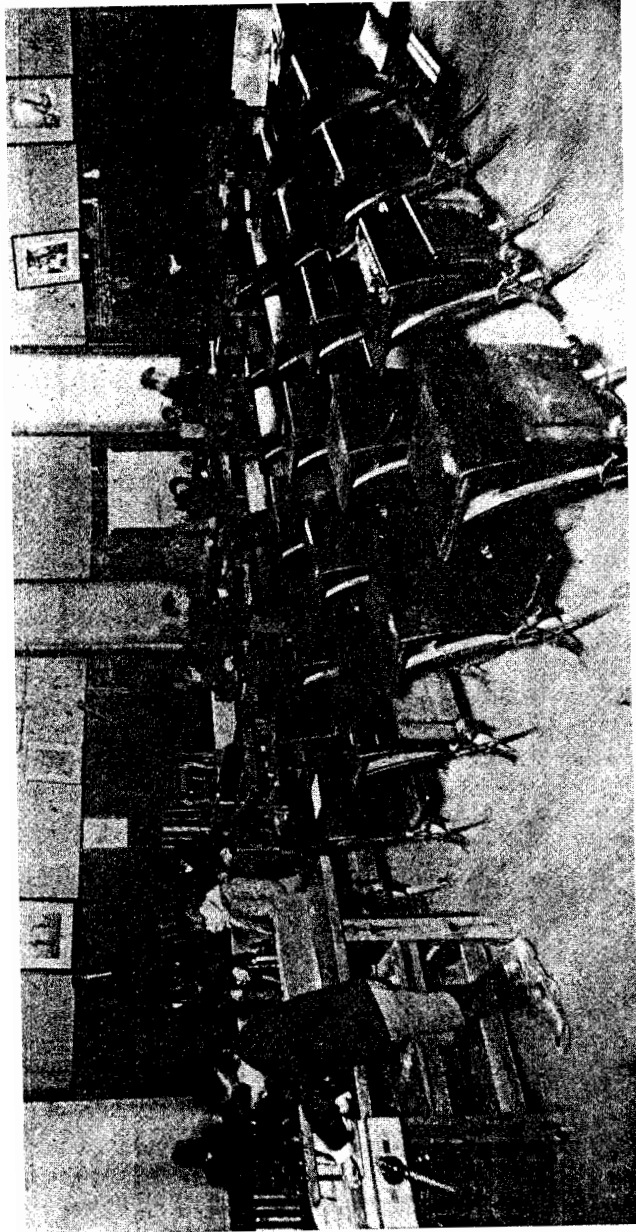
³³ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 191. There is now a voluminous literature on the history of play; especially see Dominick Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880–1920* (Philadelphia, 1981); Cary Goodman, *Choosing Sides: Playground and Street Life on the Lower East Side* (New York, 1979); and Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York, 1983).

³⁴ On vocationalism on the national level see Arthur Wirth, *Education in the Technological Society* (Scranton, Pa., 1972); Harvey Kantor and David B. Tyack, eds., *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford, 1982); and Harvey Kantor, *Learning to Earn: School, Work, and Vocational Reform in California, 1880–1930* (Madison, Wis., 1988). For Indiana see Phillips, *Indiana In Transition*, 398.

³⁵ Phillips, *Indiana In Transition*, 396–97.

³⁶ On the nineteenth-century high school see William J. Reese, *An Aristocracy of Intellect* (New Haven, Conn., forthcoming).

³⁷ On vocational education and women see John Rury, *Education and Women's Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870–1930* (Albany, N.Y., 1991); and Jane Bernard Powers, *The "Girl Question" in Education: Vocational Education for Young Women in the Progressive Era* (London, 1992). Whereas most historians have applauded restrictions on child labor, see the more sympathetic view of children at work by David Nasaw, *Children of the City: At Work and At Play* (New York, 1985).



MANUAL TRAINING FOR TRUANT BOYS, INDIANAPOLIS, 1901

Reproduced from *Twentieth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Indianapolis, 1901).

scientists accelerated the movement away from the common curriculum toward greater vocationalism in the schools.³⁸

By the turn of the century youth attending graded schools often lacked equal access to academic courses. Still, had vocational courses solved the problem of helping young people find satisfying jobs when they became adults? Was a traditional academic education a better hedge against the vagaries of the work place? Writing during the hard times of the 1930s, a former state superintendent of public instruction complained that "vocational misfits" still wandered Indiana's streets.³⁹ Linking schools to the work place obviously remained imperfectly resolved, though an assortment of administrators, teachers, and reformers continued to lobby for more vocational programs. Indeed, the vocational education lobby stands without peer in educational policy in the twentieth century. That working-class children derive few economic benefits from vocational programs compared to the graduates of academic programs has never deterred its advocates. Can schools in a declining economy resolve vocational problems well or equitably any better today than they did in the 1930s?

Had schools undermined democratic opportunity by rejecting the ideal of the common school, which implied a common course of study? Did narrower preparation in vocational courses lead to better job opportunities for boys and girls? Critics of schools in the early twentieth century feared that experts and professionals were not selfless but calculating, enhancing their power and prestige while providing the poor, blacks, and immigrants with a second rate curriculum. For example, according to David B. Tyack in *The One Best System*, still the leading interpretation of Progressive era school reform, intelligence tests were culturally biased, offering supposedly scientific evidence that allowed educators to deny opportunities to those outside the cultural mainstream. College preparatory courses remained largely the province of the native middle and upper classes, while immigrants, blacks, and the poor were often labelled academically inferior and best suited for wood-working or sewing. Turn-of-the-century school reports included photographs that depicted black and white working-class children getting skill training for such servile jobs as boot blacks, maids, and assorted tinkerers. Was such special training necessary for low skilled positions any more than more education is needed to work for fast food chains today?⁴⁰

³⁸ See especially Henry Minton, *Lewis M. Terman* (New York, 1988); Margo Horn, *Before It's Too Late: The Child Guidance Movement in the United States, 1922-1945* (New York, 1989); Paul Davis Chapman, *Schools as Sorters: Lewis M. Terman, Applied Psychology, and the Intelligence Testing Movement* (New York, 1988); and Michael M. Sokal, ed., *Psychological Testing and American Society, 1890-1930* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1990).

³⁹ Cotton, *Education in Indiana*, 406-407.

⁴⁰ Tyack, *The One Best System*; see note 38 above.

The leading contemporary educators and mainstream reformers, of course, saw things differently. Educator-historians such as Fasset Cotton and Ellwood Cubberley believed that contemporaries were "rescuing" the high school from its overly pretentious, intellectual roots. As youth attended secondary school in larger numbers, they argued, the local high school might finally become the "people's college." That everyone should study the same subject, they said, was cruel to the less academically endowed pupils who could never compete with the brightest scholars. In contrast, they did not say it was unkind to offer the least advantaged or endowed with the most anemic academic fare. Scientific tests showed that some were smarter than others, and powerful contemporary notions of scientific management emphasized the efficient use of resources, whether in steel mills or school plants. How the ideal of the common school evaporated across much of the state remains largely unwritten.⁴¹

One of the major theorists of these changes in Indiana was Milo Stuart, principal of Arsenal Technical High School in Indianapolis and author of *The Organization of a Comprehensive High School* in 1926. The idea of comprehensive high schools first circulated across the country in the early twentieth century. With different curricular streams under the same roof, comprehensive high schools offered something for everyone: academic and vocational courses to match one's talents, some common courses such as civics to promote common values among everyone, and an array of extracurricular activities to promote social growth. Whether in algebra class or in leather craft, in the Latin Club or on the hard-wood, the high school had something for every taste or talent.⁴²

Some critics then and many historians today have called comprehensive high schools undemocratic and anti-intellectual since they offered a high quality academic education only to the few and unfairly streamed disadvantaged students disproportionately into vocational classes. That view was not shared by Stuart and most educational reformers or administrators. Research on the rise of new theories about adolescents and their education and socialization would help explain the origins of a distinctive American institution: the multipurpose, cafeteria-style high school.⁴³

⁴¹ Cotton, *Education in Indiana*, chapter 17; and Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States*, chapter 8.

⁴² Milo H. Stuart, *The Organization of a Comprehensive High School* (New York, 1926). On the concept of the comprehensive high school, see Edward Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School, 1880-1920* (New York, 1964); Edward Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School, 1920-1940* (Madison, Wis., 1972); and Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State*, chapter 6.

⁴³ A handful of studies have examined some individual high schools in Indiana. For example, on Evansville see Ruth G. Gilbert, *Central High School: Its History* (Evansville, 1932); and Henry A. Meyer, *Central High School, Evansville, Indiana: Its First Hundred Years, 1854-1954* (Evansville, 1954); on Indianapolis see Laura Sheerin Gaus, *Shorridge High School, 1864-1981* (Indianapolis, 1985).

Like most educational writers of the period, Stuart explained that high schools had to meet everyone's "individual needs." This was already becoming one of the great educational clichés of the twentieth century, hard to argue with and difficult to define. As Stuart explained, "a public secondary school has no choice but to meet the interests, the abilities, and the economic necessities of its every individual student, be he dull, normal, or brilliant, and irrespective of his social position, wealth, creed, or race. The old cry of 'keep him out' as a solution to the problem of the troublesome boy has been silenced." Experts administered batteries of tests to all youth at select ages, later built "junior" high schools to aid in "pre-vocational" education, sorted youth into the most "appropriate" curricula, and (in theory) then prepared youth for appropriate positions in the working world.⁴⁴ The system, Stuart argued, was democratic because it met everyone's needs and allowed each youth to feel successful. Critics who complained about testing or course placement of the poor did not halt the movement toward comprehensive high schools in Indiana or elsewhere, and they found little support from educational experts convinced of the superiority of their scientific measurements and predictions of individual potential.

Urban communities large and small—Evansville, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and Gary—added courses to their schools unknown to previous generations. Although change came most rapidly in the cities, consolidated township high schools soon added, by state law after 1913, such courses as agricultural science and home economics. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which provided federal funds for some vocational programs, reinforced this trend. Many small schools lacked elaborate curricula, and the many one- and two-room schools still so common in rural and southern Indiana continued to teach traditional subjects in traditional ways. But pressures to consolidate schools, to add more modern and differentiated vocational courses, and to hire more educational experts and professionals continued to grow dramatically.⁴⁵

This phenomenon of experts and outsiders pressuring lay people and local residents to reform their schools was an old one in Indiana by the 1920s. It only intensified as the economy grew more corporate and as the influence of social scientists and professionals increased. Scientific surveys of schools, usually conducted by professors in university-based schools of education, rose in prominence after World War I. School administration was a new field of study, and personal and professional ties grew between local school administrators in particular communities and their alma maters. Frequently the surveys said exactly what profession-

⁴⁴ Stuart, *The Organization of a Comprehensive High School*, 3.

⁴⁵ See especially James H. Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change: A History of the Hoosier State and Its People, 1920-1945* (Indianapolis, 1982).

al educators nearly everywhere wanted to hear: reduce the influence of lay people on school boards, enhance the power of the superintendent, increase the number of vocational courses, add more specialists to administer tests, hire more experts to evaluate tests, and then test some more. Some surveys had little influence on local practices and only confirmed and approved changes already underway; others helped justify major changes in the curriculum or power relations. These surveys, however, contain useful information on local conditions in Indiana's schools.⁴⁶

A number of Indiana towns, cities, and counties hired outside experts to conduct surveys. Henry Lester Smith, a dean of the School of Education at the university in Bloomington, published a lengthy study of that town's schools under the auspices of Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1917. Faculty members at Teachers College as well as at Indiana University, Bloomington, later studied many Indiana districts. Often lavishly illustrated with charts and graphs on school achievement with dozens of photographs, their surveys provided some telling insights into how education on the local level was changing. The rising faith in educational science is clear in all of these reports, as hard facts and statistics replaced the flowing rhetoric of earlier reports from the common school era.⁴⁷

The survey of Evansville's schools, published by Teachers College in 1936, contains photographs depicting new school activities: boys in a pasture judging livestock, boys and girls cooking gingerbread cookies in first grade (a progressive classroom, learning by doing), boys learning civic responsibility as crossing guards, children saving money in their school banks, and older girls posing as members of the "Girls Rifle Club." Another photograph, of black female high school students, shows one pupil painting a door frame, another repairing an iron, with the caption: "These future housewives are learning how to repair things that get out of order around the home." The surveys were intended to justify greater professional control and expertise in the schools, yet they also contained remarkable glimpses into the variety of new programs and courses that had entered Indiana's schools.⁴⁸

The tension between professionals and lay people, especially in rural areas, never completely disappeared. The strain was highlighted in the survey of Indiana's schools completed under the auspices of the General Education Board in the early 1920s. Financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, the survey typically argued what

⁴⁶ These ideas are developed in great detail in Tyack, *The One Best System*; and in Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue*.

⁴⁷ For a sampling of local surveys examine Henry Lester Smith, *A Survey of a Public School System* (New York, 1917); and *Your Schools: A Survey of the Public Schools, Greencastle, Indiana* (Bloomington, 1947).

⁴⁸ *Your Schools: A Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of Evansville, Indiana* (New York, 1936).

many educators had long believed: that rural schools were inferior, that township trustees stood in the way of progress, that school taxes were too low, and that the state's 4,500 one-room schools could not hope to offer a superior education. When legislators, however, pressed for the elimination of township control and favored shifting power to the county, the Indiana Farm Bureau and other rural interests opposed several associations of professional administrators and teachers to defeat the bill. As in the past, Republicans favored centralization and reform while the Democratic party, especially strong in rural and southern districts, voted for the status quo.⁴⁹

In the 1920s and 1930s economic pressures nevertheless forced the closing of more one-room schools. Despite considerable support for one-room schools in many rural areas only 616 of them remained in Indiana in 1945. Moreover, consolidated schools in the countryside increasingly added new courses of study and, when finances allowed, social services. Pressure to add such innovations came from the example of the cities, from the labors of new administrators educated at the state teachers' colleges and universities, and from continual lobbying by state bureaucrats in Indianapolis. The larger urban areas had embraced change most rapidly, but the pull of reform drew many unwilling communities within their orbit.⁵⁰

The lobbying efforts of the Indiana State Teachers Association became more sophisticated and elaborate in the first half of the twentieth century. Most strongly representative of urban districts and of a minority of activist teachers, it lobbied in the halls of the legislature and fought for various reforms in the pages of *The Indiana Teacher*. It tended to favor better pay for teachers, a longer school year, tenure, retirement benefits, and other bread-and-butter issues. It also endorsed school centralization and the elimination of one-room schools, thereby enabling rural teachers to share more of the benefits enjoyed by their urban cousins. By accepting the logic of expertise, consolidation, and centralization, the association tended to share the major assumptions about schooling espoused by its alleged enemies: school superintendents and other administrators. The values of corporate America were irresistible.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change*, 266-74; and James H. Madison, "John D. Rockefeller's General Education Board and the Rural School Problem in the Midwest, 1900-1930," *History of Education Quarterly*, XXIV (Summer, 1984), 181-99.

⁵⁰ On rural schools see Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change*, 274 and Fuller, *The Old Country School*.

⁵¹ Evidence for the above claims is documented in a report commissioned by the Indiana Education Policy Center, Indiana University, Bloomington, entitled "Governing Indiana's Public Schools: A Historical Inquiry," 1993.

Teachers today are often discouraged by the problems of poor school funding, and history provides few examples of a happier past. That is, even as school enrollments and new programs expanded, Indiana ranked low in per capita expenditure on education for a northern state throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. The General Education Board in its survey placed the blame on the township system and on the almost exclusive reliance upon local property taxes to fund schools. The existing funding practice meant that per capita expenditure was often wildly unequal from district to district. The movement to provide state aid nevertheless progressed slowly, since traditions of local control remained strong. The legislature first provided some modest tax relief for poor districts early in the century but hardly ended resistance to outside interference. The Great Depression accelerated support for state aid, and following reform legislation passed in 1933, by 1940 about one-quarter of school monies on average came from Indianapolis. How local communities coped with the trauma of economic depression and the prospects of more state influence in local schools deserves further examination.⁵²

Future studies of Indiana schools in the 1920s and 1930s should highlight the continual expansion of enrollments, especially dramatic on the secondary level, and the continual growth of the nonacademic dimensions of schools, which demonstrably changed the social functions of education. Educators faced larger enrollments during the depression. The fact that work opportunities for teenagers disappeared enhanced the custodial functions of public schools. Not without evidence educators often claimed that traditional academic subjects bored their students, which claim justified the search for more classes that appealed to students' "interests" and for more social activities to occupy their leisure time. A study concerning the ways that high schools adapted to these changes would help reveal the changing nature of growing up during these years.⁵³

High school pupils generated considerable material about themselves in their annual yearbooks and school newspapers. Not every student's point of view, of course, is found in these materials, but the extension of school going to those who previously withdrew early for the work place created a veritable youth culture. As revealed in their publications, students joined an inordinate number of clubs and learned to play musical instruments, to march in the high school band, and to cheer for the boys on the court or gridiron. This was called "school spirit." Principals and teachers cen-

⁵² Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change*, 269; and Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 251.

⁵³ David B. Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge, 1984) is the standard study of schools during the depression.

sored student publications; however, yearbooks and student newspapers still contain useful material for the discerning scholar. Paula Fass, in a brilliant analysis of New York City high schools in the 1930s, has demonstrated how scholars can use yearbooks and student materials to reconstruct the history of peer relations that remain sensitive to ethnicity, race, religion, gender, and social class.⁵⁴

Certainly the history of race relations underwent important changes during the 1920s and 1930s and not always for the better. Scholars have a virtually open field for study in this area. Separate black high schools existed in many small towns and cities in southern Indiana in the early twentieth century—in Corydon, New Albany, Princeton, Jeffersonville, Mount Vernon, and Evansville. How did these schools answer the call for more vocational studies and for more nonacademic activities for their scholars? What role did these schools play in preparing black youth for life? In Indianapolis the school commissioners—hardly advocates of racial integration themselves—succumbed to racist pressures and despite strong black opposition built a segregated high school, Crispus Attucks, in the 1920s. This reversed the tradition of locally integrated high schools begun in the 1870s, when some Republicans defended the right of blacks to attend Indianapolis High. Later a basketball powerhouse, Attucks was a source of pride for some in the black community but faced pressures to weaken its academic curriculum by the 1930s, exactly what early opponents had predicted.⁵⁵

By the 1920s and 1930s schools in Indiana showed the strains of tradition and change. Many youth still attended small schools; the typical high school in 1920 had less than one hundred students. However, as the economy became more corporate and interdependent, as professionals pressed for more power, and as demands for a practical rather than intellectual education for the masses grew, schools even in rural Indiana felt the winds of change. Most elementary school teachers were still women, taught in self-contained classrooms, received low pay, and were expected to live exemplary lives. But change proved irresistible in the 1920s, either because small schools were deemed uneconomical in the countryside or, as in the case of blacks in Indianapolis, whites opposed neighborhood and school integration.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Paula Fass, *Outside/In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York, 1989).

⁵⁵ Phillips, *Indiana In Transition*, 401; Judy Jolley Mohraz, *The Separate Problem: Case Studies of Black Education in the North, 1900-1930* (Westport, Conn., 1979); Social Science Department Teachers, *Crispus Attucks High School, Historical Sketch of Crispus Attucks High School* (Indianapolis, 1948); and Frederick K. Gale, "The First Twenty-Five Years of Crispus Attucks High School, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1927-1952" (Master's thesis, Ball State Teachers College, 1955), 26-30.

⁵⁶ Phillips, *Indiana In Transition*, 395.

When Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd published *Middletown* in 1929, they captured the essence of how schools had changed even in small towns in Indiana since the late nineteenth century. In Muncie, they noted, the high school in the 1890s was a small, relatively insignificant institution. In the 1920s, however, many prominent citizens asked why more youth were not graduating from high school or aspiring to college! The Lynds noticed many indices of change: classes were carefully age-graded, and student schedules were divided (like an assembly line) into time periods; vocational courses aplenty existed for the non-college bound; and school sports, unknown a generation before, often captivated the community. Social studies (as the prophets of the comprehensive high school asserted) taught students that they lived in a democracy and that they had a role in their interdependent society. The Lynds concluded: "The high school, with its athletics, clubs, sororities and fraternities, dances and parties, and other 'extracurricular activities,' is a fairly complete social cosmos in itself, and about this city within a city the social life of the intermediate generation centers."⁵⁷

Between the 1890s and World War II schools had been tugged by familiar and opposite forces: farm and city, lay person and expert, those who equated progress with expertise, centralized control, and expanded school services and those who did not. Scholars who study Indiana schools during these years may endorse or denigrate the rise of the cult of science and expertise in education. They may applaud or condemn the disappearance of the ideal of the common school. They may question whether meeting the "needs" of children was an excuse for denying everyone access to a high-quality academic education. But students of Indiana's history will find no shortage of subjects to study or controversies to adjudicate.

The social history of Indiana's schools during the decades immediately preceding World War II is remarkably rich but little studied. Yet much that remains familiar in today's schools started to appear with greater visibility during those years. For better or worse the idea grew prominent, justified by educators and social scientists, that many students could not profit from rigorous academic instruction and that schools should principally prepare youth for work or careers. Indeed, a social consensus formed: schools should provide something for everyone, whether through specialized courses, school clubs, sports, or other extracurricular activities. There was more of a community consensus, however, about a winning sports team than a strong debating team and hardly any faith, unfortunately, that poorer whites or most blacks should have schools equal in quality to the best ones in the state.

⁵⁷ Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York, 1929), Part III. The quotation is on page 211.



TEACHERS OF NEW ALBANY'S "COLORED" HIGH SCHOOL, 1908

Reproduced from *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Indianapolis, 1908).

The war itself had unexpected consequences on the nature of schooling and community expectations for education. Reminiscent of World War I, many local schools were active in war-related work, as students gathered scrap metal and grew victory gardens. Explicitly patriotic school activities became commonplace, and the Victory Corps and other federally initiated programs appeared, especially in urban high schools. None of this was surprising since schools by their nature are conservative institutions, responding strongly to dominant values about patriotism.⁵⁸

Less expected was the effect that the war had on women and blacks, in Indiana as elsewhere. Women's importance in the labor force increased, and even the emphasis on domesticity for women after the war hardly halted their movement out of the home into the workplace. For blacks who helped defeat fascism in yet another war for democracy, the prospect of racial segregation was unpalatable. The war had not been fought to change women's behavior or to stir black discontent, but that was nevertheless the result. Schools had long been a barometer of social change, and some citizens would again invest schools with additional social responsibilities despite their inability to solve every problem, however serious.

IV

Very few histories have been published on the evolution of Indiana's public schools after World War II. Some surveys such as Madison's *The Indiana Way* provide guidance for the student of the recent past, highlighting broad themes worthy of further examination. Overall, however, scholarship on the history of education since midcentury is generally thin, even though the schools' importance in shaping children's lives probably increased over time and even though citizens continued to expect schools to respond to new social changes.⁵⁹

Like the rest of the nation, Indiana faced a host of social concerns after midcentury: the continued expansion of high school enrollments, the emergence of a youth culture, the cold war, and the civil rights movement in the 1950s; the spread of affluent white suburbs and the impoverishment of nonwhite inner cities; various government efforts to improve the education of the poor

⁵⁸ Richard M. Uglund has written outstanding essays on adolescents during the war years. See especially "Viewpoints and Morale of Urban High School Students During World War II—Indianapolis as a Case Study," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXVII (June, 1981), 150-78; and "Education for Victory: The High School Victory Corps and Curricular Adaptation during World War II," *History of Education Quarterly*, XIX (Winter, 1979), 435-51. Also see his thoughtful dissertation, "The Adolescent Experience during World War II: Indianapolis as a Case Study," (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1977).

⁵⁹ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, *passim*.



PATRIOTISM AND THE SCHOOLS

Reproduced from *To Form A More Perfect Union* (Indianapolis Public Schools, 1948).

and to address racial segregation in the 1960s; the rise of feminist criticisms of school and society; the continued long march toward school consolidation during the postwar years; and the revival of conservative political and educational reform movements in the 1970s and 1980s, especially pronounced as state Republicans responded to a growing reform spirit after the publication of *The Nation at Risk* by the Republicans in Washington. Efforts by the state Republican party to reform schools through a host of new initiatives grew throughout the 1980s and were largely continued through the administration of the new Democratic governor, Evan Bayh.⁶⁰

How well did schools respond to these many-sided efforts to adapt to changing political, economic, and social realities following World War II? How well were policy recommendations by state officials, prominent local reformers, and educators at various levels implemented? What enduring problems in Indiana's schools remained unresolved during these decades? How did traditions of local school governance and opposition to taxes, expertise, and district consolidation shape Indiana's recent past? These sorts of questions may help scholars reconstruct the recent history of Indiana's public schools.

The importance of schooling grew dramatically as America became an international power following World War II. The vocational role of schools had expanded throughout the century, and the removal of most teenagers from the work force by the 1940s accelerated secondary school attendance. America's fight against fascism abroad encouraged civil rights activists to combat racism at home, including school segregation. Indeed, whether schools could promote a more democratic social order soon became a prominent topic among local and state-level educators. These aspects of Indiana's educational history have hardly been explored, but the school's role in enhancing civic life and in promoting greater opportunities for disadvantaged citizens intensified after the war.⁶¹

For example, the Indianapolis school commissioners in 1948 affirmed the "strategic role of the public schools and public libraries as guardians of our free institutions." In now familiar language but with greater urgency, educators promised "to permit and encourage the fullest development of the capacities of each individual and the maximum use of these capacities for personal and social good." The commissioners' report, *To Form a More Per-*

⁶⁰ The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *The Nation At Risk* (Washington, 1983).

⁶¹ For general historical surveys of schools since the 1950s, compare Joel H. Spring, *The Sorting Machine Revisited* (New York, 1991); Joel H. Spring, with Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980* (New York, 1983).

fect Union, summed up contemporary educational thought: that "school spirit" generated by clubs and sports and not just academic achievement was essential; that society was "interdependent" and thus required different classes of cooperative workers; that different children should thus study different courses of study; and that every modern school therefore depended upon testing, guidance, and correct placement of every pupil in the comprehensive high school.⁶²

Preparing and sorting youth for the labor market remained central to Indiana's schools in the 1950s, as America's cold war with the Soviet Union escalated. Manpower planning became a vital concern of the federal government and the emerging multinational corporations, and the rise of a youth culture and the civil rights movement—which obviously affected the nature of the future labor force—added new concerns for educational leaders. Throughout the nation adult fears of juvenile delinquency accelerated.

Movies highlighted new social concerns. Racial strife among students and the hostility of working class adolescents toward their teachers dominated the controversial film *Blackboard Jungle*. Hundreds of commercial films of varying quality soon appeared on juvenile delinquency, including Marlon Brando in *The Wild Ones* and Indiana native James Dean in *Rebel without a Cause*. Whether depicting rough working class toughs or confused middle class adolescents, these and other films demonstrated the era's fears of young adults. Teenagers from all social classes had increasingly been removed from the full-time job market, and their childhood in a sense had been extended by compulsory school attendance and by a growing expectation that more pupils should also graduate. Going to high school became almost universal, but did Indiana's youth typically behave like those portrayed in the movies?⁶³

All of this emphasis on preparing youth for work, of course, had precedents in the early twentieth century, as social reformers and educators implemented vocational programs to prepare certain youth for the labor market. This secularization of the schools was a subtle process that probably ultimately undermined a particular kind of Protestant, nondenominational moral education

⁶² *To Form a More Perfect Union* (Indianapolis, 1948), 3, 5, 6, 11. The best general histories of the modern high schools are by Robert L. Hampel, *The Last Little Citadel: American High Schools Since 1940* (Boston, 1986); Theodore R.Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (Boston, 1984); and Arthur G. Powell, Eleanor Farrar, and David K. Cohen, *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace* (Boston, 1985).

⁶³ On popular culture, teenagers, and fears of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s, especially see James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York, 1986); and William Graebner, *Coming of Age in Buffalo: Youth and Authority in the Postwar Era* (Philadelphia, 1991).

once common in Indiana's schools. The reading of excerpts from the King James Bible and morning recitation of the Lord's Prayer were common in Indiana's schools before the early 1960s, when state-sponsored school prayers and Bible reading were ruled unconstitutional by the U. S. Supreme Court. Even the courts could not dislodge traditional practices from local schools, especially in rural communities. Recent controversies over how to respond to the court's ban on graduation day prayers reveal the continual tension over how public schools should address the issue of religion and moral education.

By the 1950s Indiana's schools had a strongly vocational orientation and had become very secular despite the daily invocations of prayer. Understanding the nature of schooling in the 1950s remains a complicated task for the historian. How powerfully did peer culture shape the lives of students, who now spent an unprecedented number of years together in school? Did new teaching methods, ostensibly more child-centered and experimental, enter the classroom? Did the ghost of John Dewey and his disciples hover over the state's thousands of classrooms?

In 1958 the state Department of Public Instruction produced a pamphlet entitled *A Good Start in School*. After claiming that schools should help further the development of the whole child, it condemned "authoritarian classrooms" and praised pedagogical innovation. "Only through day-by-day living in a child-size democratic society in the classroom, sharing its responsibilities, and solving its problems, can children be prepared for the assumptions of the privileges and responsibilities of free men in a democracy later on." The report included a photograph of a classroom depicting young children sitting around a table, without bolted-down seats, cooperating in small groups. Had progressive ideals supplanted the familiar teacher-centered classroom as conservative critics who endorsed back-to-the-basics claimed?⁶⁴

Oral histories of students, teachers, administrators, and other citizens can help supplement traditional written materials to reveal the social history of Indiana's schools since World War II. Certainly one of the era's most volatile issues, besides fears of Russian armies and American teenagers, was the place of blacks in American society. In 1949 Indiana passed a state desegregation law. However, apparently little was done in many communities to integrate schools, and demographic changes in urban areas in par-

⁶⁴ Indiana State Department of Public Instruction, *A Good Start in School* (Indianapolis, 1958), 3, 21, 179. See the previously cited books by Ravitch and by Spring in note 61; both describe the nature of conservative complaint in the 1950s. On the history of teaching see the pathbreaking works by Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms* (New York, 1984), and *Teachers and Machines: The Classroom Use of Technology Since 1920* (New York, 1986).

ticular and white resistance to racial equality in general would soon militate against the prospect of widespread integration.⁶⁵

"The decade since 1950 has done much to completely eliminate the idea of second class citizenship or white supremacy from across the face of Indiana," claimed the Governor's Youth Council in 1959 in its report to the White House Conference on Children and Youth. (The council represented 150 different professional, business, and voluntary associations from across the state, and it deserves further study.) In the next breath, however, the authors of the report admitted that throughout the Hoosier state "the civil right [*sic*] problem, of course, differs from place to place." Moreover, the authors further argued that many urban schools in the state were "attended entirely by Negro children." In school corporations with black pupils, blacks were disproportionately streamed into nonacademic vocational programs if they attended integrated schools, or they otherwise attended the most dilapidated, least desirable schools if they were formally segregated. As suburbs spread and remained largely white and affluent and inner cities became more nonwhite and poor, an American version of racial apartheid became common in many metropolitan areas.⁶⁶

An especially important legislative initiative at the time, influencing smaller areas more than cities, was the School Reorganization Act of 1959, which accelerated the process of school consolidation. Though school funding remained largely based upon local property taxes until the early 1970s, which fact meant unequal expenditures in different districts, consolidation further enhanced the power of educational professionals and reduced lay influence. Consolidation enabled schools to offer more courses of study, to provide larger libraries and improved science and language laboratories, and to standardize curricular offerings across the state. Support for a common curriculum for everyone had begun to evaporate in urban areas by the turn of the century, and greater program differentiation accelerated in rural districts as they further consolidated. The School Reorganization Act of 1959 was so effective that the number of Indiana school corporations dropped from 939 to 382 by 1968.⁶⁷

The phenomenon of consolidating rural or village schools was hardly unique to Indiana. Still, how well did Hoosiers react to changes largely imposed from outside their communities by educational experts and legislators? What determined which districts in the 1960s moved more rapidly than others toward consolidation?

⁶⁵ Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change*, 281.

⁶⁶ See *Reaching Toward Progress: Indiana's Report Concerning Her Children and Youth Made to the Golden Anniversary* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1959), I, 7-8, II, 403-404, on the fate of blacks in Indianapolis. On racial discrimination in Gary, see Cohen, *The Children of the Mill*.

⁶⁷ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 250-52.

What role did local attachment to high school sports teams play in local resistance?⁶⁸

With the closing of many small high schools, a process that had begun earlier in the century, many communities lost a sense of control over local institutions. Large consolidated systems replaced many smaller, competing districts, and the distinctive identities of local schools slowly disappeared. Gone were the Fort Branch Twigs, the West Baden Spurtles, and the Marengo Cave-men. When the Happy Hunters of Huntingburg consolidated with the Holland Dutchmen, they became the Southridge Raiders. Some of the uniqueness of localism was sacrificed, part of a larger process of economic and social change. Chain stores and Wal-Marts in strip malls also soon undermined family-owned businesses on the town square in the 1970s and 1980s. Is there any evidence that the loss of smaller districts through consolidation resulted in significant gains in academic achievement among pupils? Were schools more efficiently managed, or did most savings go to the increased numbers of administrators hired in the larger consolidated districts as well as transportation costs?

Throughout the 1960s demographic change and legislative reforms altered some of the characteristics of local schools. The consolidation of rural districts and smaller school systems, the separation of races and classes in Indiana's towns and cities, and the widening split between cities and suburbs helped define the social history of the period. Very little has been written on the impact of federal programs upon Indiana's schools, including Head Start, Upward Bound, or Higher Horizons. And few historians have examined the struggle for racial integration in Indiana's cities, the debates over busing and its effectiveness in integrating schools, or the changes in teaching practices in the 1960s or early 1970s, reflecting perhaps greater interest in experimental schools, team teaching, or open classrooms by some younger educators.⁶⁹

How did the rise in teenage, after-school employment in the fast food industry after 1960 affect attitudes toward homework and school achievement? How well did schools compete for the attention of pupils in an age of television, popular culture, and ever-growing materialism? Was there any balanced approach to work, play, and study in local schools? Certainly schools throughout the state remained multipurpose institutions: offering something for everyone whether through course work or extracurricular activities. Did relations between teachers and students change,

⁶⁸ On the phenomenon of school consolidation in the Midwest, see Fuller, *The Old Country School*.

⁶⁹ For a comparative look at educational change see Harold and Pamela Silver, *An Educational War on Poverty: American and British Policy Making, 1969-1984* (Cambridge, 1991).

given the rise of the so-called "generation gap" and the popularity of new pedagogical values among some teachers in the 1960s?⁷⁰

By the early 1970s, as conservatism reappeared in reaction to the antiwar movement and the ideology of Great Society liberalism, a resurgent Republicanism in Indiana as elsewhere pressed for controls on property taxes and school expenditures. A property tax freeze in 1973 further forced local schools to rely upon state funding; since then about two-thirds of school expenditures on average have come from Indianapolis. Educators and reformers had long advocated such reforms. The preponderance of funding coming from Indianapolis did not eliminate inequalities in funding from district to district, an issue still facing reformers today, but the practice constituted a major change in public policy, further centralizing state power and reducing local authority.⁷¹

State officials and legislators pressed for more accountability from local schools as inflation skyrocketed in the late 1970s and better paying jobs in northern industrial towns began to disappear. Low paying service jobs replaced many of the better paying ones of yesteryear. Indeed, decent jobs often vanished for the poor trapped in inner cities, as increasingly self-sufficient and prosperous white suburbs turned their backs on the urban core. Schools again became the target of a new generation of activists who called for reform. Unlike reforms in the 1960s, the latter activism was not driven by particular concern for minorities, either blacks or the increased numbers of Latinos or Hispanics in urban centers but reflected the values of a new conservatism, especially prominent during the Ronald Reagan and George Bush years.

Although its effects on schools remain poorly documented, the call for back-to-the-basics was heard anew in the 1970s and 1980s. Like citizens elsewhere, Hoosiers increasingly grew more critical of the public schools. Reformers soon called for a longer school year, higher academic standards, and state-wide testing. Critics attacked schools for failing to teach job skills, moral values, discipline, or academic achievement, and newspaper editorials routinely bemoaned the qualifications of teachers and the behavior of students. Many writers argued or implied that schools contributed to many of the ills of society, yet they still seemed to believe that schools should play a constructive role in social improvement. While the 1970s to the present will properly be remembered as an age of educational conservatism, other movements less conservative in nature also affected educational thought and practice.

⁷⁰ On the new federal programs in Indianapolis, see *Your Federal Funds a Work in Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, 1967).

⁷¹ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 252. On the revival of conservative reform movements in education, see Ira Shor, *Culture Wars: School and Society in the Conservative Restoration, 1969-1984* (Boston, 1986).

For example, federal legislation in the 1970s required schools to provide the least restrictive learning environment for children with special needs; these children, who had a range of physical and mental disabilities or learning problems, had historically been excluded from the system or taught in segregated classes. Urban centers in Indiana as elsewhere first created special classes for "backward," "feeble minded," and other children who were difficult to teach or manage. Their inclusion had added to the growing responsibilities of the system, and so did the reforms initiated in the 1970s.

The social history of contemporary schools in Indiana would be incomplete without careful attention to the rise of special education, mainstreaming, and movements to include *all* children in the regular classroom. Again, while many citizens continued to blame the schools for every social ill, others argued by the 1990s that every child, despite the severity of any particular learning problem, belonged in a regular classroom in the neighborhood school. While these initiatives came largely from the federal government, state and local activists pushed for educational changes in a number of different directions.⁷²

Indiana's Republican leaders advocated a host of reforms in the 1980s. Republicans had tended to favor various reforms—from consolidation to vocational education—since the Progressive era. It is not surprising, therefore, that, since they controlled the governor's office for twenty years before Evan Bayh's election, Republicans were in the forefront of much noisy debate about reform. Assessing their influence will be central to any contemporary history of educational reform.

Many educators and social reformers in the 1960s worried about the fate of equality of educational opportunity and wanted to spend more money on the education of the poor and minority groups. Republican reformers in the 1980s, in contrast, called for more accountability in the schools, higher academic standards, the elimination of superfluous course offerings, and the promotion of overall classroom excellence. Early in the decade state Republicans supported Prime Time, an effort to reduce class size in the lowest grades. Governor Robert Orr and prominent Republicans in the state department of education later sponsored the A+ Program, which proposed various ways to improve Indiana's schools: a longer school year, extra money for high achieving districts, grants to help at-risk youth, more aid to districts to purchase textbooks, and other related reforms. Subsequent efforts to "restructure" local schools became the most prominent panacea of the

⁷² Many studies of educational reform at the turn of the century give passing reference to the rise of special programs for the blind, deaf, feeble-minded, and so forth. Despite some article-length studies, historical research on the changing nature of "special education" is not very extensive.

early 1990s; advocates of restructuring endorsed better on-site, decentralized management of local schools and more power for principals and greater involvement of parents.⁷³

Most state policy documents of the 1980s appropriated the language and guiding assumptions of *The Nation At Risk*. This famous federal report had claimed that Americans faced stiff competition in a global economy and that schools had contributed to the declining economy and other social ills. (Criticism of corporate executives or political elites was noticeably absent in the report.) Historians studying the recent past will learn that citizens in the 1980s often heard or read that they increasingly lived in an "information age" and in a postindustrial world, which explained why school performance mattered more than ever. As Indiana Republicans continued to endorse change, they again stressed that schools were essential to the economy, whose health depended upon higher levels of achievement, high school graduation, vocational preparation, and college attendance. Otherwise, it was alleged that the Japanese would continue to defeat America in the race for dominance over world markets.⁷⁴ Even in Indiana the first Evan Bayh campaign produced television commercials widely perceived as garden-variety Japan-bashing.

In the 1992 gubernatorial contest, won handily by Evan Bayh, the two major political parties agreed not to debate educational issues very much, showing the strongly conservative cast of the state's Democratic leadership. Many of the innovations advocated by Republicans—especially more achievement tests and vocational education, for example—have bipartisan support. Whigs and Republicans most firmly supported Indiana's public schools in the middle of the nineteenth century, and with few exceptions Indiana's Democratic party has not stood in the forefront of school reform. As the national Democratic leadership became more moderate, it regained power in Washington in 1992 in part by endorsing mainstream Republican ideas about excellence and economic competition. The only substantial difference seems to be that leading Republicans support school choice plans that include private schools while Bill Clinton Democrats endorse school choice plans restricted to the public schools. Leading Indiana Democrats have not put forth a distinctive set of educational initiatives and seem to stand in the shadow of the Republican opposition.

The history of Indiana's public schools certainly offers numerous avenues for study. Earlier generations of educator-historians who wrote about the evolution of the state's system were insiders,

⁷³ The educational reforms of Indiana Republicans are conveniently summarized in *From the Drawing Board to the Chalk Board: Indiana's A+ Program for Educational Excellence Adopted by the 1987 Indiana General Assembly* (Indianapolis, n.d.).

⁷⁴ *The Nation at Risk, passim.*

proud of the achievements of Indiana's schools. Their faith in the goodness and desirability of public education was pervasive, and along with many professionally trained historians assumed that schools led to progress and more opportunity for everyone.

That faith seems naive today, but the capacity of citizens to believe that schools either cause most of the nation's problems or can fix most of them still seems immense. Only a handful of citizens publicly question whether the latest spate of reforms—more work force programs under the label "Tech Prep," more state testing, "restructuring," or the purchase of more computers—will lead to educational salvation. To question those in power who enjoy bipartisan support would probably invite censure. Would reformers be pleased to know that local reformers have tried vocational education before and have tested children to death since the 1920s? Moreover, to expect schools to solve nearly every social ill ensures that they will fail given the enormity of the task and relative paucity of resources and will.

Perhaps studying history might reveal that schools face some intractable problems: a public awash in materialism but which funds schools as cheaply as possible, teachers who themselves sometimes lack the highest academic qualifications and are expected to teach many children from unstable and difficult homes and neighborhoods, students who in turn face the prospects of an economy with more low-paying service jobs, and the enduring effects of poverty upon many youth in the city and countryside.

How will more vocational education and statewide testing, for example, address most of these daily issues in the lives of teachers and students? These reforms were born in the early twentieth century, with mixed results, and their reincarnation, without debate, shows the fearful results of ignoring the past. Predicting the future is not the strong suit of the historian, but knowing something about Indiana's educational heritage offers new perspectives on its historic commitment to public schooling. Knowing history is a sobering experience but a path to greater enlightenment.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Recent assessments of Indiana schools include a report by the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Curriculum Advisory Council of the State Board of Education, *Indiana Schooling for the Twentieth-Century* (n.p., 1987); and Harold L. Hodginson, *Indiana: The State and Its Educational System* (Washington, D.C., 1987).