

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Issues in Florida Education Reform

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Since 1999, Florida education policy has been dominated by sweeping political initiatives during the administration of Governor Jeb Bush, now finishing his second term. In this book, we and our colleagues discuss both the current and historical context for education policy and education reform in the state of Florida. The first term of Florida Governor Jeb Bush's administration, 1999–2003, was a remarkable period for any governor. With both houses of the legislature having comfortable Republican majorities, Bush had virtually all his key education policies adopted with very few battles, at least at the outset. That certainly was unprecedented in Florida history, but it is a significant achievement in any state. Bush's policies affected both K–12 and higher education systems, and his policies embraced a broad range of issues: high-stakes testing with consequences for students, teachers, and school administrators; vouchers tied to high-stakes testing and also available for students with disabilities; alternative routes to teacher certification that bypass formal teacher education preparation; the elimination of affirmative action in higher education admissions decisions; the elimination of a separate board of regents for the state's universities; and the creation of individual boards of trustees for each state university. By the end of his first term, Governor Bush and education officials in Florida were speaking of a "seamless K–20" system of education to provide efficient education with transparent accountability structures.

In several ways, Bush's first term included important lessons for the nation's education policies as a whole. First, Bush's brother, George W. Bush, who became president two years into the Florida governor's term, promoted many of the same policies at the federal level. The No Child Left Behind Act (signed in January 2002) imposes high-stakes testing requirements on states in a manner very similar to Florida's policies. The original bill would have included, as exists in Florida, a "failing-schools" voucher for children in schools who did not meet the standards. And the original bill reauthorizing the federal special education law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) would have created a nationwide voucher program for children with disabilities. Many dynamics in Florida's higher education policies, from the end of affirmative action in admissions procedures to the reorganization of higher education, will likely be played out in other states. In addition, Governor Bush's first term coincided with generally good economic conditions for the state. Higher revenues allowed the governor both to cut taxes and also to claim that he had increased spending on education, at least through the first three years of his term and in the very last year.

Those relatively good conditions did not mean that Bush's initiatives were welcomed throughout Florida. Dissenters challenged the Bush agenda. There were several sources of dissenting voices between his first inauguration in January 1999 and his second in January 2003. Teacher unions opposed his grading of schools and what they believed was an undue emphasis on high-stakes testing (the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests, or FCAT). Civil rights activists opposed both ending affirmative action and tying high school graduation to more difficult state-administered tests. A significant minority of parents opposed high-stakes testing altogether, a method of assessment that pushed teachers to teach to the test, in their view. The Florida Chamber of Commerce issued a report in 2002 condemning the state government for under-funding education. U.S. Senator Bob Graham opposed the elimination of a central oversight board for the state universities. These voices in opposition demonstrate that Governor Bush was decidedly not the only political actor with Florida interests holding strong opinions about education. Bush pushed his initiatives through the legislature (or through the regulatory process) with legislative leaders who were largely cooperative in his first term, enabling him to overcome opposition to his proposals.

Thus, Governor Bush's first term represented a unique moment in educational policy history: the implementation of one governor's vision

for education when the conditions were available for success. With the legislature as well as the governor's mansion in the same party, with remarkable cooperation between the governor and the legislature for the first several years, and with an expanding revenue base, one could say that Governor Bush had the best of all possible political worlds in his first term.

GOVERNOR BUSH'S POLICIES

The judgment shared by the authors in this book is that Bush's first-term education policies were mixed with respect to their impact on the state's educational system and its students. On the one hand, the governor deserves credit for arguing that schools should hold all students to high standards. On the other hand, his policies have pushed for equality in a narrow way. We are skeptical about seeing significant and sweeping improvement in how well schools work for all students. Nonetheless, the broad range of education policy changes enacted in Governor Jeb Bush's first term is startling for its scope. It encompassed both moves toward privatization with a voucher system and also more government control of public education institutions with centralized accountability mechanisms and a "superboard" for all public education. The policies enacted in Bush's first term include the following:

Greater use of standardized testing in accountability. The A+ Plan enacted in 1999 mandated standardized tests in grades 3 through 10, with results used in the state's labeling of all public elementary and secondary schools on an A through F grading scale.

Merit pay. The A+ Plan law also required counties to establish, by 2002, plans to pay teachers for student "learning gains" as a condition for receiving certain categories of state aid.

Vouchers. The 1999 bill also created a voucher program for students whose schools were labeled "F" two years out of four. In 1999, the legislature also created a pilot voucher program for students with disabilities, which has been expanded every year since in terms of eligibility and numbers.

Public school choice. The 1999 A+ Plan also allowed students in twice-labeled-"F" schools to transfer to another public school rated "C" or higher in the county.

Test-based teacher licensing. Beginning in the first Bush term, individuals could earn a teacher license through a regular teacher education

program at a college or university, through a program run by a local district, or by having a bachelor's degree and passing a standardized test.

Higher requirements for teacher education-based licensing. Beginning in 2001, those wishing to earn licenses through teacher education programs at colleges and universities needed to acquire sixty hours (or approximately twenty courses) in required areas before entering the teacher education program (or academic majors for prospective high school teachers).

End of affirmative action in higher education admissions. In 1999, Governor Bush banned public universities from considering race, ethnicity, or gender in admissions decisions. This was part of an executive order that also banned affirmative action in state contracts.

Talented 20 plan. When abolishing affirmative action, Bush pushed a requirement that the state university system accept the top 20 percent of each graduating high school class who met minimum course requirements for entrance into Florida's public universities.

Creation of one new law school and one new medical school in Florida's public universities. In 2000, Governor Bush signed a law creating a medical school at Florida State University and a law school housed at Florida A&M University. Both programs were opposed by Florida State University System Chancellor Adam Herbert and the board of regents.

The elimination of the Florida Board of Regents. In the same year that Bush signed into law the creation of two new professional schools, he also signed a law eliminating the Florida Board of Regents as the governing board for Florida's universities and its replacement by two different structures.

The restructuring of the Florida Board of Education as a "K-20 super-board." One of the replacement structures was a reorganized Board of Education that is now appointed by the governor and, until 2003, had authority over both K-12 and higher education.

The creation of individual boards of trustees for public universities. The other structure was the creation of local boards of trustees for each Florida public university. The original legislation gave Bush the power to appoint all trustees who would serve at his pleasure.

The revision of Florida's school laws. In 2002, the legislature entirely rewrote the Florida school code. The exact consequences of this change are as yet unknown.¹

THE CONTENTS OF THE VOLUME

This volume is the result of the collective effort of scholars from anthropology, history, policy studies, and sociology. We came together

in 2000 to form the Consortium for Education Research in Florida (CERF), assisted by the generous support of the Spencer Foundation and with the encouragement of John Williams, at that time a vice president of the foundation and director of the foundation's southern initiative. The Consortium's mission was to inform educational policy with emphasis placed on advising Florida's educational policy-making processes. During the course of our work over three years we assembled and analyzed a number of data sets, combed the archives at the Florida State Library, Florida A&M University, and elsewhere in the state, and conducted research in several high schools in Hillsborough County (Tampa). Our principal objective was to analyze the education policies currently put forward in the state during the administration of Governor Jeb Bush. Some of our research appeared in the fall 2004 issue of *American Educational Research Journal* commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.² The chapters that follow are the results of this work, research that is both interdisciplinary and collaborative.

In chapter 2, "The Legacy of Desegregation in Florida," coauthors Deirdre Cobb-Roberts and Barbara Shircliffe, both historians of education, demonstrate that civil rights and desegregation politics in Florida markedly affected public education in the state. This chapter sets the stage historically and chronologically for the volume's remaining chapters by demonstrating that trends, including population growth in the state's major metropolitan centers, combined with large-scale demographic changes and an increasingly diversified economy to shape education policy following Reconstruction. The authors introduce an additional critical theme, namely that White majority interests have dominated education policies since the establishment of a dual education system in 1885. The pursuit of equity in Florida's education policy has suffered the effects of indifference and hostility in combination with scarce resources and funding inequities. In 1938, Florida became the site of the first NAACP-supported equalization case in the Deep South. In higher education as well, African Americans both supported desegregation of the state's colleges and universities following *Brown* and also argued that Florida A&M University (a historically Black university) served a necessary role. Tensions between maintaining quality schools in Black neighborhoods and carrying desegregation forward remain unresolved in contemporary school politics. Cobb-Roberts and Shircliffe conclude that a sense of loss and disappointment associated with school desegregation in the 1970s and 1980s still pervades the African American community, a community that fought

for desegregation both as a means to ensure educational equity and quality schools and as a means of strengthening neighborhoods.

In chapter 3, “Education Finance Reform in Florida,” coauthors Sherman Dorn and Deanna L. Michael, also historians, describe the policy and its repercussions articulated in the Florida Education Finance Program, a far-reaching, innovative reform debated and framed in the early 1970s. The authors argue that there are at least three critical legacies of the Florida Education Finance Program: the accountability debate concerning what state government should provide and demand from public institutions, specifically, the local schools; how political negotiations shape complex reforms; and, when all is said and done, how programmatic effects are often more moderate than program planners expect. The authors’ documentation of the political story behind financial reforms in Florida illuminates economic and political pressures confronting state lawmakers throughout the past century. Trends toward metropolitan population growth following World War II in concert with pressure brought to bear on education policy by organizations such as the NAACP combined to move reluctant legislators especially when the governor in office possessed vision and political will.

Chapter 4, “Accountability as a Means of Improvement,” by Deanna L. Michael and Sherman Dorn, focuses on the development of accountability policy in Florida and the role played by governors in this process since the 1970s. The authors argue that policy makers in the state’s capital drove legislation requiring increasingly greater levels of school district accountability and mandated annual accounts of expenditures, particularly those derived from property taxes and other sources. More recently, this top-down accountability model has served as a rationale for requiring high-stakes, statewide standardized testing and subsequent grading of schools. Throughout the modern period, governors of both major parties have taken several factors into account as education policy drivers: the interests of major business leaders important to the state’s economic growth; the increasing urbanization of the state’s population; the decentralization of responsibility from the state to local school districts; and the persistent retreat from racial equity. The authors conclude that a preoccupation with a narrow set of academic skills and achievements may dangerously affect how well students are able to take on responsibility as active and informed citizens in their future worlds.

Chapter 5, “Diversity, Desegregation, and Accountability in Florida Districts,” by sociologist Tamela McNulty Eitle, considers the

convergence of policies such as Governor Bush's A+ Plan in the context of a state student population that has grown larger and more diverse in recent years. Eitle argues that the twenty-first century has ushered in a new period, one she terms the "post-desegregation era," characterized by the granting of unitary status to many large districts in the state, including Miami-Dade and Hillsborough (Tampa) counties. How the policies of this period will unfold and affect the life chances of poor and minority students in particular is not at all apparent. This chapter examines strategies that school districts throughout the state are now implementing including efforts to increase the number of school-based magnet programs and choice programs as is the case in Miami-Dade and elsewhere. Although it is not clear how these programs will affect racial enrollments and isolation, it is fair to say the state education system as a whole is plagued by large-scale racial and socioeconomic segregation with students of color attending schools having highest concentrations of both poverty and poorest performance on the state's high-stakes tests. Because trends toward increased student diversity will continue in coming decades and because students are also increasingly likely to be non-English-language speakers from economically struggling families, it is critical for the state's education policies to address the needs of such students.

Chapter 6, "Equity, Disorder, and Discipline in Florida Schools," by criminologist David Eitle and Tamela McNulty Eitle, examines policies at the school level formulated to address the issue of school violence and disorder. The chapter is organized to address several issues: the problem of school disorder; the nature and extent of school violence and disorder in Florida public schools; types of disciplinary actions taken against students; and connections among disorder, discipline, and school characteristics, including resource inequities. The question of whether segregated learning environments and schools with fewer resources are associated with higher rates of disorder and types of disciplinary actions taken against students is central to the analysis. The authors conclude that policies are largely social control based and aimed at decreasing opportunities for offenders to commit malfeasance. In addition the current policy environment favors increasingly punitive measures to deter offenders from committing future transgressions. Results of their analyses have implications for policy. Because suspensions, expulsions, and other forms of student disciplinary action are most likely to erupt in desegregated settings attended by students who live in highly segregated neighborhoods, it is critical

to address the negative effects of mixing students from segregated communities. Teachers and others in charge of discipline must be aware of how their actions may prompt the use of suspensions in integrated schools, especially since research indicates that the bulk of disciplinary actions against students are taken by a handful of teachers in most schools. In addition, students must acquire the skills of good citizenship and racial understanding.

Chapter 7, "Competing Agendas for University Governance: Placing the Conflict between Jeb Bush and Bob Graham in Context," by historian Larry Johnson and education policy researcher Kathryn M. Borman, puts the reorganization of Florida public universities in a broader perspective. The battle over reorganization, briefly described earlier, was neither a battle between Bush's allies and politically disinterested allies of the universities nor a rational policy that flowed from a specific problem in higher education. The destruction of the statewide board of regents in Bush's first term had both political origins *and* precedents in the history of the board in several earlier threats. It is more accurate to see the initial reorganization effort as the actions of policy makers who took an opportunity in Florida's political environment to solve what appeared to them as a problematic structure (the old board of regents).³ Those efforts have been partially reversed by a constitutional amendment in 2002 creating a new statewide structure to govern the public universities.

Chapter 8, "One Florida, the Politics of Educational Opportunity, and the Blinkered Language of Preference," by Larry Johnson and Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, argues that Florida has persisted in maintaining a dual system of higher education, one of only nineteen states to do so. Segregated Black institutions, including Florida A&M University (FAMU), most notably suffered from inequities in funding and facilities. Currently, universities are monitored by the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education, and when enrollments of African American students drop, action can be taken. The governor's sweeping higher education reforms are placed in context by the authors who argue that the campaign against affirmative action in higher education waged by the One Florida legislation has imperiled opportunities for Blacks to attend Florida's universities. Indeed, the number of African American freshman attending the University of Florida dropped from a high of 829 in 2000 to a low of 461 in the fall of 2001, after implementation of One Florida. In addition, One Florida created a stratified system of higher educational options in the state favoring

attendance at more prestigious institutions by White majority students and the attendance at less prestigious two-year institutions by minorities, particularly Blacks. The authors conclude by asserting that while One Florida program's provisions may strengthen education in poor communities, it is not at all clear that access to the state's higher education system beyond the community college has been enhanced for minorities.

Chapter 9, "Florida's A+ Plan: Education Reform Policies and Student Outcomes," by educational measurement researcher Reginald S. Lee, Kathryn M. Borman, and sociologist William Tyson, addresses the question of how student achievement on Florida's high-stakes tests is predicted by school- and district-level features. While the authors examined such school characteristics as poverty and student race/ethnicity in carrying out their analyses, they also considered indicators of institutional and instructional quality such as the educational background of teachers and the percentage of students enrolled in various academic programs. The authors conclude that the student mix within a school is critical. Poverty indicators are a key predictor both of academic achievement within a school early in Governor Bush's administration (with higher poverty associated with lower proportions of students achieving well) and also of improvement between 1999 and 2004. In that context, the student mix within schools is critical. Resources in the form of funding allocations and curricula are necessary but not sufficient elements for assuring success for all students. In addition to these baseline assets, student achievement is fostered when conditions in schools are such that students' teachers are well educated, when students are provided high-level academic coursework throughout their educational careers, and when the disadvantages of poverty are not concentrated in a school.

OVERARCHING ISSUES

Providing a perspective on Governor Bush's education policies as we have undertaken to do in this volume is important. The combination of political power, economic growth, and little successful opposition to his policies was unusual and provided a base for what appeared to be sweeping changes in Florida education from elementary schools to universities. This book considers three broad questions about Florida education policy:

- What is truly unique in Bush's first-term policies and what is a continuation of the history of Florida's education policies?
- What important issues have Bush's policies omitted from consideration?
- What can we say about the success or failure of Bush's policies?

Some of Bush's policies are truly unique—the voucher program being the obvious example. Others, however, were either an extension of a previous trend (the increasingly high stakes attached to standardized testing outcomes for students, their teachers and their schools) or an idea that had existed at least as a trial balloon if not implemented before Bush's first term (higher education reorganization).

The contributors to this book argue that Governor Bush's policies embody a narrow view of educational equality. Bush was straightforward in his view of equality in elementary and secondary education: everyone is to be held to the same standards, because anything else underestimates the capacity of poor and otherwise disadvantaged children. In ending affirmative action in higher education, Bush argued that all applicants to college and university programs should be viewed without reference to race or ethnicity. These principles are consistent. But Bush's stated focus also largely ignores the history of segregation and the politics of desegregation in Florida. As Tamela McNulty Eitle notes in chapter 5, the implementation of Bush's policies coincided with the cessation of desegregation orders in several of the largest school systems in the state. Is Bush's set of principles wise in ignoring demographics and the changing judicial landscape in elementary and secondary schools? We conclude that it is not.

Finally, the contributors use the analyses in each chapter to offer an initial appraisal of the outcomes of Bush's policies. They do so in four areas: higher education reorganization; higher education admissions policies; elementary and secondary discipline records; and elementary and secondary academic achievement. Unfortunately, the evaluation of Bush's first-term policies is limited in several ways. The state makes available school-level data on student achievement in mathematics and language arts (and science starting in 2004), but it is still in the process of creating an individual-level data warehouse that can be accessed more easily by researchers. We are therefore unable to determine which teachers in which schools and school districts made a real difference in students' subsequent achievement. The state did not

participate in the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) state testing program, thus making it impossible to understand how Florida stacks up against other states in the very first years of the program. The data gathered since is mixed, as Madhabi Chatterji has described. While reading scores on NAEP have increased at fourth grade, there is no evidence of any dramatic improvement or narrowing of achievement gaps for other tests.⁴

With regard to the voucher programs, no data are publicly available to allow a judgment about the quality of education provided students who have participated in the voucher programs. There have been a number of financial scandals involving several of the voucher programs, but that does not address the questions about program quality.⁵ With regard to the failing-schools voucher program (tied to the state's grading individual schools), the state has not released test data for the students who are in private schools, because the numbers in each grade are so small. The much larger group of students with disabilities using the disabled-student voucher program each might have an individualized education program, but those are not standardized and do not allow easy comparison of progress or status in academic achievement or other student outcomes. And, even if such data were available, it would not allow a credible conclusion to be drawn. As other research on voucher programs has shown, it is difficult to find matches for the students who begin voucher programs, and the high attrition makes many conclusions fragile.⁶ The most careful study of the failing-school voucher program's effect on other schools is that the voucher itself—as opposed to the stigma associated with the failing-schools label—has a minimal effect on student achievement.⁷

Governor Bush's second term has been significantly different from his first. He was reelected with a comfortable majority in November 2002, but both the voters and the economy have made it difficult to advance Bush's education agenda. Voters approved three amendments to the state's constitution regarding education, and the governor opposed two of them. The state's electorate voted to reduce class sizes in public elementary and secondary schools over eight years. The voters also approved the creation of a single constitutional body to oversee the state's universities, separate from the Florida Board of Education. Bush opposed both these initiatives. A third, approving state-funded pre-kindergarten programs for parents who want them, passed with no substantial opposition, but the implementation legislation stalled for a year and has been criticized as insufficient to meet the

constitutional mandate.⁸ In addition, the recession beginning in 2001 cut state revenues, creating budget problems similar to those in other states. As a result, the legislature during the start of Bush's second term was unable to increase educational spending and cut taxes at the same time. The political calculus in Florida during Governor Bush's second term has thus been considerably different. In addition, in January 2006, the Florida Supreme Court struck down the first voucher program, the Opportunity Scholarship Program (or failing-schools voucher). The court ruled in this way because the Florida state constitution required a public system with no parallel private system and also because the treatment of public schools and private schools participating in the voucher program was not uniform.⁹ From our perspective, the first Bush term in Florida is a unique period, one with ambitious goals that address *some* of Florida's educational needs, needs that at this writing have been only partially addressed.

FLORIDA AS A NATIONAL TRENDSETTER

Many of the issues that Florida has faced since 1999 or before have become far more widespread in other states. Florida's system of high-stakes testing and accountability accelerated what had existed for many years in some states, such as Texas and North Carolina, attaching significant funding rewards for very specific and complex performance criteria. Yet Florida's state system of accountability is less stringent than the criteria that the state established to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. As a result, while the majority of schools in recent years have received A or B grades, the majority of schools statewide *also* have been judged to have failed the state's adequate yearly progress standards. Florida is by no means alone, but it is an exemplar of the tension between state and national accountability standards, even when the state government defines the standards for both and the state's governor is the brother of the president.¹⁰

One could probably identify a number of ways in which Florida's experiences have been at the leading edge of education reform trends across the country. We focus here on four themes that might be considered lessons for the nation from Florida's recent education reforms: the continuing importance of large, metropolitan school districts and schools; the tensions between governance structures and policy mandates emanating from the state capitol in Tallahassee, on the one hand,

and the interests and concerns of local districts in retaining a measure of autonomy, on the other; unsettled questions regarding desegregation and educational equity; and the will and capacity of the state to support high-quality programs at all levels of the education system.

The importance of urban schools. Despite the universal language of education reform rhetoric, many of the significant problems in the country's schools, especially in the unequal education offered to children, reside in cities and in the politics of urban schools. In several ways, Florida's recent school history is a history of metropolitan districts. As chapter 2 explains, desegregation lawsuits disproportionately focused on urban school districts. The lifting of court supervision in most Florida cities over the past decade makes the conclusions of chapters 5 and 7 on desegregation highly relevant to Florida cities. As chapter 3 notes, metropolitan lawmakers crafted the education finance equalization law in the 1970s in part to redress a prior imbalance in the state. In many states, district lines separate urban from suburban schools. Thus, the effects of being in an urban system in Florida are often muted in comparison to other states.

The tensions between state governments and local districts. The current political battle at the national level, between individual states and districts against the federal government over the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act, are but one example of the tensions between localism and central oversight of schools. We want to stress here that we are skeptical of claims staked to a historical tradition of local control as an argument against central oversight. First, arguments based on local control have been abused in the past to justify continued segregation and inequality in the 1960s and 1970s or more recently. Second, it is difficult to claim that the lack of *government* centralization is the primary impediment to local control when the *private* textbook market in essence centralizes control over the curriculum.¹¹ Third, as chapter 7 makes clear, arguments about centralization versus devolution of control are abstract entities when torn from the context of real policy debates. In Florida higher education, arguments about the wisdom of a central governing board for universities have depended on more concrete concerns about the political domination of the system by its two most senior research universities, the independence of judgment by whichever board was in operation at the time, and the political appointment powers of the governor.

Without making judgments, however, we can say that the tensions are real. Florida's history of accountability has often wavered between

efforts to devolve control onto schools (with 1990s mandate for schools to establish advisory councils that write annual improvement plans) and efforts to centralize control (such as Governor Bush's A+ Plan). Many of the complaints aimed at the federal government's early implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act—inflexible application of the adequate yearly progress standards and inadequate funding—have also been raised in Florida. In some cases, flexibility is possible through negotiations with staff members in a state (or the federal) department of education. But many of the features of Governor Bush's policies have been deliberately inflexible—refusing, for example, to adjust academic expectations by poverty status, race, or ethnicity. One subtle warning from Florida's education reforms goes beyond the typical centralization-decentralization debate: centralization can elide state responsibility in the name of accountability. While the 2005–2006 Florida state budget includes \$263 million for rewarding schools performing well on FCAT, the budget for the last several years has never included more than a few million dollars in direct state support targeted at low-performing schools.¹² In Florida, the A+ Plan shifts responsibility for improving schools and providing resources to local districts.

The continued legacy of battles over school equity. Most chapters in this book describe a concrete legacy of prior conflicts over school equity in Florida. Governor Bush's approach to accountability has acknowledged that past primarily as a reason to hold uniform expectations of schools and students and to create new voucher programs. Because much educator opposition to the A+ Plan focused on the reasonableness of these expectations, debate in Jeb Bush's first term became trapped in the assumption that *either* teachers or students' families were to blame for inadequate achievement. Several chapters in this book illuminate one other factor, the role of residential and school segregation, a topic that is currently politically unmentionable in Tallahassee. There are other policy-specific areas that affect educational outcomes, including access to health care. And there is unequal access to social capital in the forms of both institutional and social networks in specific communities. For the administration of Jeb Bush, broader measures of social accounting have been ignored in favor of more narrow measures of student achievement. They are interrelated, and one cannot address the legacy of school inequity without addressing both.¹³

Doubts over the will and capacity of the state to support high-quality programs. Like many states, Florida has a long history of political battles

over the adequacy and equitable distribution of educational funding. Once, in the early 1970s, state politicians agreed to a dramatic shift in responsibility up to the state, one that eventually equalized funding among districts. Since those events as described in chapter 3, however, Florida schools have struggled with funding issues through more than three decades of tremendous enrollment growth. One part of the funding debate is the level of responsibility (state or district), as noted earlier in this section. But the funding debate is also over the general responsibility of the public toward education. In this way, the political debate over education in Florida mirrors the national tension between accountability and capacity. While Florida's courts have generally declined to intervene in funding battles, a new set of constitutional mandates may presage more success if there is a lawsuit in the future.¹⁴

Focusing on the political funding debate may distract us from another important issue of capacity: the systemic (in)ability to develop, support, and retain qualified teachers. The federal government mandated "high-quality teachers" in the No Child Left Behind Act, but a mandate is not a solution. As others have noted, Florida is one of many states that have turned the mandate into a paperwork exercise.¹⁵ Without careful attention to organizational capacity, the best aspects of this current round of education reform will likely sink under the weight of structural mandates, mandates that do not create deeper changes within a classroom. It is true that some districts and schools respond to structural reforms—such as Governor Bush's A+ Plan—in productive, functional ways. A former head of state testing in Florida referred to this effect of high-stakes stigma as a justification for high-stakes pressures on schools. While we don't doubt the existence of a "kick-in-the-pants" effect of structural reforms, it is inconsistent. Idiosyncratic responses to pressures can also lead to narrowing the curriculum or to performing a triage on students.¹⁶

At the moment, supporting effective changes in the classroom depends on local initiative or relatively narrow networks of educators and institutions that focus on changing classroom practices. At any time, there are always examples of wonderful programs that change children's lives at the local level or in networks through the country. A critical question is always how sustainable those are. Local initiatives are vulnerable to changing political climates, changing personnel, and the vicissitudes of annual budgets.¹⁷ Even national institutions such as the National Science Foundation have discovered that intervening in urban math and science instruction is highly dependent on the effectiveness of

professional development in a local context.¹⁸ We are neither the first nor last researchers to point out the obvious in this area. But repeated warnings that structural reform is insufficient are generally ignored. For better or worse, little of the state or national discussion on education policy is focused on these issues.

The next governor of Florida—or any state—has the ability to reshape the education debate in the first year or two of her or his term. This volume documents the limits of structural reform by an activist, conservative state government. Governor Bush attempted to mold education from kindergarten to graduate school in his first term, and in many ways he was remarkably successful. But in establishing his programs at the elementary and secondary levels, and in creatively responding to events of the day in higher education, he was unable to erase the historical legacy of inequities in schools, unable to shake off the institutional dynamics in higher education, and unable to convince voters to let him pilot the state's schools without additional mandates in his second term. The results have been salutary primarily in elementary school, with little evidence of lasting benefits for adolescents' academic achievement. The last four years of his administration have been largely defensive, devoted to protecting what he accomplished in the first few years. His successor will inevitably take Florida schools in a different path, but without nearly the political power that Jeb Bush held in his first term. We hope that future state leaders will understand both the importance of pushing for higher achievement and also the narrowness of the approach taken in Florida (and much of the nation) over the past decade.

NOTES

1. Florida Statutes, Title 48, Chapter 2002-387.
2. Kathryn Borman, Deanna Michael, Reginald Lee, Larry Johnson, David Eitle, Tami Eitle, Barbara Shircliffe, Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, and Sherman Dorn, "A Half Century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Topeka KS*: The Impact of Florida Education Policies on Student Outcomes and Equity," *American Educational Research Journal* 43 (2004).
3. John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984).
4. Madhabi Chatterji, "Good and Bad News About Florida Student Achievement: Performance Trends on Multiple Indicators Since Passage of the A+ Legislation," Educational Policy Studies Laboratory policy brief

EPSL-0401-105-EPRU (April 2004), retrieved February 25, 2005, from http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/EPRL/EPRU/epru_2004_Research_Writing.htm.

5. Kimberley Miller, "Seven Charged in Voucher Scam," *Palm Beach Post*, June 30, 2004; Florida Department of Financial Services, "Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program" and "McKay and Opportunity Scholarship Programs" (December 10, 2003), retrieved February 25, 2005, from <http://www.fldfs.com/aadir/>.

6. For an interesting discussion about the extent of available evidence more broadly on vouchers, see Henry M. Levin and Clive Belfield, "Vouchers and Public Policy: When Ideology Trumps Evidence," National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College (June 2004), retrieved February 25, 2005, from http://www.ncspe.org/publications_files/OP95.pdf.

7. David N. Figlio and Cecilia Rouse, "Do Accountability and Voucher Threats Improve Low-Performing Schools?" *Journal of Public Economics*, 90, 1-2 (January 2006): 239-255.

8. Jeffrey Solocheck, "Advocacy Group Gives an F to New Pre-K Plan," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 7, 2005; Jeffrey Solocheck, "Pre-K Schools: Funds Too Low," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 19, 2005; Jeffrey Solocheck, "Catholic Schools May Opt-Out of Pre-K Program," *St. Petersburg Times*, February 1, 2005.

9. *Bush v. Holmes* (Florida SC04-2323) (January 6, 2006), available at <http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/2006/sc04-2323.pdf>.

10. Also see Robert L. Linn, "Conflicting Demands of No Child Left Behind and State Systems: Mixed Messages about School Performance," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 13, 33 (June 2005), available at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n33/>.

11. For discussion of the textbook market, see Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Diane Ravitch, *The Language Police* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

12. Florida Law 2005-70, with the version passed by the legislature (prior to the governor's line-item vetoes) available online at <http://www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2005/Senate/bills/billtext/pdf/s2600er.pdf>. The governor asked for \$6.8 million dollars for the Assistance Plus program in the 2005-2006 budget; see the specific details retrieved September 14, 2005, from http://www.ebudget.state.fl.us/dtsearchissue.asp?service_id=48250400&pgm_component_id=0304000000&capp_r_cat_id=&issue_id=4100310. The appropriations bill as passed does not specifically mention Assistance Plus or the Bureau of School Improvement, so it is difficult to trace exactly how much was available for the 2005-2006 academic year.

13. For the germinal work on social capital, see James C. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Soci-*

ology 94 (1988): S95–S120. For an example of broader social accounting of resources available to children and the conditions of children, see the Annie E. Casey Foundation's online Kids Count database, at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/databook.jsp>.

14. See, for example, *Constitutional Accountability Commission, Final Report* (Tallahassee: Florida School Boards Association, August 2005), available at <http://www.fsba.org/documents/finalcacreport.pdf>. Also see the dicta concerning the duty of the state in *Bush v. Holmes* (2006).

15. Kate Welch and Emma Snyder, *Searching the Attic* (Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality, December 2004), available at http://www.nctq.org/nctq/images/housse_report_2.pdf.

16. See, for example, David N. Figlio, "Testing, Crime, and Punishment," *Journal of Public Economics*, 90 (2006): 837–851.

17. For historical examples, see Sherman Dorn, *Creating the Dropout* (Westport: Praeger, 1996), chap. 5.

18. Kathryn M. Borman and Associates, *Meaningful Urban Education Reform* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).