Presidents, Congress, and the Public Schools

Presentation at the National Conference on Education
by Jack Jennings February 11, 2016
Fifty Years of Federal Aid to Education

The book covers events from 1965 to 2015 including two national efforts to improve schools: equity-based aid and test-driven accountability.
Fifty Years of Federal Aid to Education

Equity-based aid--extra services to millions of students, but by the 1980s Title I’s modestly higher scores due to limited funding and local inequities.
In 1983 *The Nation at Risk*: public schools were failing. That, combined with disappointment over federal aid, led to academic standards/testing.
Fifty Years of Federal Aid to Education

NCLB’s test-driven accountability led to no significant increase in student achievement—pressuring teachers to raise test scores is a faulty strategy.
The bi-partisan Every Student Succeeds Act cuts unwise requirements, but still accountability blaming educators, not considering how schooling is provided.
Presidents, Congress, and the Public Schools

With the book, I had two purposes: to explain what occurred over 50 years, and to encourage new thinking.

Now to the future.
My Future for School Improvement

Instead of negativism, focus on helping students and teachers.

Improvement based on educators’ experiences and on research.
My Future for School Improvement

Research’s four essentials: quality preschool, effective teachers, a rigorous curriculum, and adequate, fair funding.

Also education as a constitutional right.
A specific way for states, school districts, and the federal government to cooperate on agreed-upon changes and increased federal general aid.
My Path to School Improvement

My principles are: experience and research, federal/state/local cooperation, and general federal aid.
Your Path to School Improvement

Over nearly 50 years, I learned if you are not working on your own agenda, you are carrying out someone else’s.
The Role of Educators

Billionaires, politicians, and foundation officers: accountability, charter schools.

It is time that educators stepped forward and offered their ideas.
The Role of Educators

Be bold. Do what makes sense to you.
Have a research basis.
Think long-term, but have ideas to get started. Suggestions to new president.
A Good Education for Every Child

“Having no destination, I am never lost.”
Ikkyu, 15th century Zen monk.

Our destination must be to provide a good education for every child.
Thank You!

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