

EDUCATION POLICY

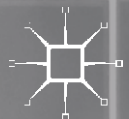
Series Editors: Lance D. Fusarelli,
Frederick M. Hess and Martin West

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EDUCATION REFORM IN THE OBAMA ERA

The Second Term and
the 2016 Election

**Robert Maranto
Michael Q. McShane
and Evan Rhinesmith**



Education Policy

Series Editors

Lance D. Fusarelli
NC State University,
Department of Educational Leadership,
Policy and Human Development
Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Frederick M. Hess
American Enterprise Institute
Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Martin West
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

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The Second Term and the 2016 Election

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Robert Maranto
Department of Education Reform
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

Michael Q. McShane
Director of Education Policy
Show-Me Institute
Kansas, USA

Evan Rhinesmith
Department of Education Reform
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

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PREFACE

We have each in various ways devoted our lives to education, doing fieldwork or actually teaching in more than 200 schools. We also have skin in the education game. One of us was raised in a family of public school teachers and married a public school educator. One of us serves on a local school board, as well as a cyber charter board. One of us has two kids in local public schools; most likely the other two authors will have kids in public schools in just a few years.

From all this we know that however stable they may seem from the outside, schools change in ways good and ill. We have seen traditional public schools creatively use data to guide school improvement, or creatively manipulate data to pretend “accountability.” We have seen dedicated traditional public school educators revamp teaching to raise the bar to meet new standards, and we have seen profit-seeking consultants selling stultifying test prep curricula to school administrators who simply do not care about academics. We have seen well-managed, innovative charter schools which prepare disadvantaged students for college, and other charter schools which really do put profits over kids. We have seen well-designed voucher programs offer children new opportunities, and poorly designed voucher programs harm more children than they help.

Between us, we have seen quite a bit. This has shown us that education policy matters, which means that the ideas of education policy-makers matter. While education was once a state and local responsibility, like much of what government does, education is increasingly national, and like policy and politics generally, increasingly presidential. In the past half century, the Johnson administration pushed for integration and educational

equity, the Nixon administration developed the National Assessment of Educational Progress as a sort of national report card, and each president since Reagan has to one degree or another promoted school choice and academic standards. George Herbert Walker Bush strove to be the “education president.” Bill Clinton forced states to adapt state standards, and like his successors pushed charter schools, particularly high poverty/high achievement charters. Via No Child Left Behind, George W. Bush imposed testing and transparency, as well as a pilot voucher program in the nation’s capital. Perhaps most ambitiously, Barack Obama facilitated national standards through the Common Core, and had many states rework their teacher evaluation regimes.

Here, we will document and evaluate these changes, and speculate as to what comes next. The one certainty is that whoever wins the 2016 presidential race, education reform will continue, and school choice and increased use of measurement are unlikely to recede. Though it is too early to judge, we believe these reforms will do our children, and all children, more good than harm.

Fayetteville, AR
Kansas, MO
Fayetteville, AR

Robert Maranto
Michael Q. McShane
Evan Rhinesmith

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert Maranto is the Twenty-First Century Chair in Leadership at the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, USA. He edits the *Journal of School Choice*, serves on the Fayetteville School Board, and has produced 12 scholarly books on the topic of bureaucratic and education reform.

Michael Q. McShane is Director of Education Policy at the Show-Me Institute and a former high school teacher. He has co-authored or co-edited five books on education policy including *Teacher Quality 2.0* and *Common Core Meets Education Reform*.

Evan Rhinesmith is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, USA. He holds an MEd from the University of Notre Dame, USA, a BA from Wabash College, USA, and previously taught at Sacred Heart School in Washington DC, USA.

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