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The American Dream And The Public Schools



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JENNIFER HOCHSCHILD • NATHAN SCOVRONICK



Synopsis

The American Dream and the Public Schools examines issues that have excited and divided Americans for years, including desegregation, school funding, testing, vouchers, bilingual education, and ability grouping. While these are all separate problems, much of the contention over them comes down to the same thing--an apparent conflict between policies designed to promote each student's ability to succeed and those designed to insure the good of all students or the nation as a whole. The authors show how policies to promote individual success too often benefit only those already privileged by race or class, and often conflict with policies that are intended to benefit everyone. They propose a framework that builds on our nation's rapidly changing population in order to help Americans get past acrimonious debates about schooling. Their goal is to make public education work better so that all children can succeed.

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Customer Reviews

Until recent conservative attacks on the institution, public schooling in America was widely perceived as the ticket to the American dream: economic success, a meaningful and self-chosen life path and full citizenship. But in spite of decades of reform, the dream remains an elusive one for increasing numbers of poor, minority and immigrant young people. The problem, according to Hochschild and Scovronick, professors of government and educational policy at Harvard and Princeton, respectively, is an inherent contradiction at the heart of American educational goals. Our choices--whether about school funding, choice, vouchers, bilingual education, desegregation or special education (all topics covered thoroughly in the book)--pit the success of individuals (often

wealthier, privileged students) against the common good of all students or the nation as a whole. How to resolve this tension, so that "no child will be left behind," is the theme woven through this exceptionally readable book. Many current works about educational policy are narrowly political in their intention or thinly disguised assaults on public education. In contrast, this well-researched, up-to-date and balanced look at hot-button issues examines all sides of the debates while not losing sight of the democratic purposes of schooling. These authors have done their homework and they don't have an axe to grind. They ask readers to take seriously the challenge to create an educational system that provides genuine equality of opportunity for every child, and that might put the American dream within reach of everyone in today's multicultural America. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Digital edition.

Unlike the numerous critics complaining about the failure of public schools, Hochschild and Scovronick confront often-ignored questions about what Americans have asked those schools to do in the first place. How, they ask, can schools succeed, as legislators and parents expect them to enable each child to live out an American dream premised upon an unexamined contradiction? That contradiction emerges from an American self-concept that at once affirms the prerogatives of private ambition and the moral obligations of community membership. It is the absurdity of demanding that teachers and administrators square this circle that the authors see behind widespread dissatisfaction with math and reading scores too low to guarantee individual success and behind bitter disputes over plans for bilingual education to lift underprivileged communities. But far worse, in the authors' view, are the reformers who would use vouchers and free-choice plans to refocus schools on a contracted American dream aglow with individual achievement but shorn of communal obligations. In arguing that the schools must renew--not abandon--their social mission, Hochschild and Scovronick invite readers to join in a debate of great national import. Bryce ChristensenCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Digital edition.

This book is about contemporary issues in education. The authors are somewhat conservative in comparison to most authors I've read in education. Not too worry they are still fairly liberal. They are just more skeptical (I think healthily) of the excesses of Multiculturalism. They cover the issues of education with a writing style that is much better than the textbooks I have had to read. The material is more meaty than most textbooks I've read in education with policy work detail and realism but in an easy to digest format. It writing was not insipidly inspirational like a lot of texts I have had to read

for my classes. It is not a chicken soup for the soul or any drivel like that but a real book on education. It was one of the few education textbooks I enjoyed.

It was in great condition. Better than I thought it would be for the price I bought it for. Also, the book is very intriguing. It talks about different sides of the education problem. It goes in depth.

It is convenient for reading a book with electronic devices. It is also good when the book cannot find in other countries

The book arrived quickly and even though I bought it used it was in perfect condition. However, it was a part of an order of necessary textbook resources; it's not exciting. I can see why buying this book used was a good choice, since I'm reading it as much as the last person who read it and sold it to me categorized as "used". This book will be passed on again in perfect condition! =D

It is very refreshing to find a work that illuminates many of the major issues and debates in education public policy in a clear and cogent way. Hochschild and Scovronick should be commended for fairly presenting multiple viewpoints, the history of the issue where appropriate, and relevant and reputable research that sheds light on the matters. I especially like the section on school financing which shows the weakness of the silly assertion that additional money would not help improve the quality of public schools, but also explains why major school finance reform is so difficult.

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