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## Education Policy for Children, Youth, and Families

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Public education in the United States occurs in the context of a complex and often contentious system composed of diverse interest groups and divergent political views. At the heart of educational policy debates are several competing beliefs about the primary purpose of education. These purposes include preparing students for the workforce, teaching basic academic skills, preparing future citizens to participate in society, and developing social and cognitive skills (Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2001). This set of interacting purposes creates enormous policy and program challenges.

Recent reports indicate that the current American education system is struggling in its effort to reach all students effectively. Evidence about the overall health of the education system comes from several sources. The National Center for Education found that 50 percent of fourth-grade students and 34 percent of eighth-grade students scored below basic grade level in math ability in 2001. Data from reading tests indicated that 26 percent of eighth graders and 37 percent of fourth graders were below their corresponding basic reading levels in 1998 and 2000, respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). In 1999, 3.8 million children representing more than 11 percent of the nation's youth dropped out of school before earning a high school

diploma. Youth of color are at greatest risk for school dropout, a discussion we will turn to again in a later part of this chapter.

Education has been the target of numerous federal and state-level policy reforms in the past decade. In this chapter we discuss historical and recent educational policies and programs for children, youth, and their families. Three topics are explored as important components for understanding and creating education policy: (1) risk and protective factors for adjustment and achievement problems experienced by children and adolescents in schools; (2) risk, resilience, and protective influences in education policies and programs; and (3) the application of risk, resilience, and protection to achieve service integration in education policy.

## Risk and Protective Factors for School-Related Problems

The term *risk factor* is defined by Fraser and Terzian (in press) as “any event, condition, or experience that increases the probability that a problem will be formed, maintained, or exacerbated” (p. 5). Risk factors for school-related problems may be specific or generic in nature. Within the context of education, nonspecific risk factors such as poverty are not directly related to academic performance. Nevertheless, they have the potential to create maladaptive emotional and behavioral outcomes that in turn have an adverse effect on academic performance (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 1999). Academic performance is a broad construct that includes the acquisition of academic and social skills necessary to complete high school and pursue advanced education. Nonspecific risk factors may set into motion what Fraser and colleagues call a “chain of risk” (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004) that may culminate in outcomes such as academic failure.

Other risk factors directly impact the likelihood of academic failure and school problems. For example, factors such as low commitment to school directly contribute to truancy, poor grades, and overall academic performance (Carnahan, 1994). As shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, risk factors can be individual in nature or appear in the context of families, schools, communities, or neighborhoods (Jenson & Howard, 1999).

Protective factors are characteristics or traits that buffer exposure to risk. In situations of high risk, protective factors such as attachment to teachers or other adults at school may reduce risk and decrease the likelihood of school-related problems. Closely related is the concept of promotion. Promotive factors are defined as resources that exert positive influences on behavior irrespective of the presence or absence of risk (Sameroff & Gutman,

2004). High intelligence or strong social skills illustrate examples of factors that may promote positive behavioral outcomes irrespective of risk exposure. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 summarize risk, protective, and promotive factors that affect academic performance.

### Frameworks for Understanding Risk, Protection, and Resilience

As Jenson and Fraser note in Chapter 1, principles of risk, protection, and promotion interact in the course of a child's developmental process. One

**Table 3.1** Risk Factors for Academic Failure by Level of Influence

<i>Level of Influence</i>	<i>Risk Factors</i>
<i>Individual</i>	Learning related social skills (listening, participating in groups, staying on task organizational skills Social behavior Limited intelligence Presence of a disability Minority status Special education status Students who fail to read by the fourth grade
<i>Family</i>	Early exposure to patterns of antisocial behavior Parent-child conflict Lack of connectedness with peers, family, school, and community
<i>School</i>	Large school size Limited resources High staff turnover Inconsistent classroom management Percentage of low SES students School and classroom climate School violence Overcrowding High student/teacher ratios Insufficient curricular and course relevance Weak, inconsistent adult leadership Overcrowding Poor building design Overreliance on physical security measures
<i>Neighborhood</i>	Poverty Low percentage of affluent neighbors

**Table 3.2** Promotive and Protective Factors for Academic Failure by Level of Influence

<i>Level of Influence</i>	<i>Promotive Factors</i>
<i>Individual</i>	Cognitive skills (e.g., intelligence, the ability to work collaboratively with others, and the capacity to focus in the face of distraction) High socioemotional functioning Ability to adapt to changes in school or work schedule Effective and efficient communication skills Ability to use humor to deescalate negative situations Social skills Understanding and accepting capabilities and limitations Maintaining a positive outlook
<i>School</i>	Positive and safe environment Setting high academic and social expectations Positive relationships with teachers School bonding Positive and open school climate Relationships with teachers Positive ratings for overall educational performance <b>Protective Factors</b>
<i>School</i>	School climate Classroom management strategies that reduce classroom disruption and increase learning School bonding Consistent and firm rules for students
<i>Peer</i>	Acceptance by pro-social peers Involvement in positive peer groups

positive outcome of this interactive process is expressed in the lives of resilient children. Resilient youth are generally defined as young persons who successfully adapt to life circumstances in the presence of multiple risk factors (Arrington & Wilson, 2000; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003). Research suggests that one's degree of resilience is related to the frequency, duration, and intensity of risk exposure. The greater the exposure, the more resilient one must be to thrive or be successful.

Children's differential responses to risk have been conceptualized through additive and interactive models (Fraser et al., 2004). Additive models forward the notion that risk and protection operate on a continuum, with the amount of risk directly increasing the probability of poor adaptation,

and the amount of protection directly increasing the likelihood of positive adaptation (Masten, 1987). Conversely, as the name implies, interactive models emphasize the interactions that occur between protective factors and varying levels of risk. In this model, one assumes that protective factors have differential protective qualities in the context of high and low risk (Fraser, Richman, & Galinsky, 1999).

We believe that an interactive model of risk and resilience holds the most promise for developing effective education policy and programs. Evidence from efficacious school-based practices supports the need to attend to interactions among key individual, social, and environmental factors. Over the past several decades, our knowledge of “what works” in school-based prevention programs has increased dramatically (Sloboda & David, 1997). For example, we now know that the most successful school-based prevention programs are dual-focused; that is, they employ a comprehensive approach that includes both individual- and school-level change strategies (Sloboda & David, 1997). Rather than targeting only individual students, successful school-based practices seek to change the culture and climate of a school (Dupper, 2002). Effective programs clarify and communicate norms about positive behavior and teach social skills to children and youth over extended periods of time (Walker, 2001).

The risk, protective, and promotive characteristics of youth who are more likely to experience academic failure support the need for policies and programs to address key environmental factors that are present in children’s lives. For example, Richman, Bowen, & Woolley (2004) cite empirical evidence indicating that youth of color and persons from low socioeconomic families experience high rates of academic failure and dropout. These and other characteristics found to be associated with school problems represent important markers that should inform policy and program efforts. Richman and Woolley (2004) [same as above reference] argue that school dropout, although important, is not the only manifestation of school failure. In an effort to maximize school success for high-risk youth, a wide variety of educational problems must be examined, including truancy and attendance, low performance on achievement tests, and suspension and expulsion rates.

Principles of risk and protection hold great promise for education policy and school-based practices. We review the realized and potential influence of such principles for education policy next.

## **Educational Policies and Programs: Past and Present**

Our review of education policy in the United States begins with the recognition that American educational practices are profoundly influenced by political ideology, most frequently viewed in conservative and liberal terms. Historically,

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a conservative view of education forwards the idea that individual students have the capacity to earn or not earn their place among the academic elite. Policy approaches based on conservative views tend to emphasize knowledge-centered education, traditional forms of learning and curricula, respect for authority and discipline, and the adoption of rigorous academic standards. In contrast, educational solutions from liberal perspectives tend to support curricula that are responsive to individuals and to social and environmental contexts (Apollonia & Abrami, 1997). Educational policies and programs in the past 100 years are reviewed next and summarized in Table 3.3.

### Early Public Policy

From its inception, public education has been conceptualized as a social vehicle for minimizing the importance of class and wealth for determining who will excel economically. In the mid-nineteenth century Horace Mann exemplified this belief, stating that education, more than any other process, was the great equalizer of people from various walks of life (Cremin, 1957). Similarly, Dewey's philosophy of education viewed the role of education as the "leveler" of social reform (Dewey, 1916). Social policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on the liberal ideas of Mann and Dewey. Policy also stemmed from the conservative notion that mass education was necessary to ensure that the citizenry was able to obey the law, vote, pay taxes, and serve on juries and in the armed forces (Derezinski, 2004). The Massachusetts Compulsory School Attendance Act of 1852 required public school attendance for all able-bodied children of a certain age, unless the parent of the child could establish that the child was obtaining equivalent instruction outside of the public schools. By 1918, 48 states had adopted similar attendance policies (Derezinski, 2004). This policy change resulted in programs based on the idea that all children attend school and graduate, assertions that were nonexistent before compulsory attendance laws. At this point, segregated education was determined to be constitutional, as evidenced by the separate-but-equal clause in *Plessey v. Ferguson*, which supported separate transportation systems for African Americans and whites.

### Education Policy from 1930 to 1970

In the post-World War I era debates about academic and social goals of education, and whether all children should receive the same quality education dominated educational policy. Although the focus on curriculum and teaching methods remained, a values-based debate ensued that was

**Table 3.3** Major American Education Policies, Court Cases, and Public Reports, 1852–2004

<i>Policy, Court Case, or Public Report</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Influence on Education</i>
Compulsory School Attendance Act	1852	Required public school attendance for all able-bodied children of a certain age, unless the parent of the child could establish that the child was obtaining equivalent instruction outside of the public schools	Resulted in programs designed to have all children attend school and graduate. Existing programs would need to change to accommodate a very different student population that had not previously attended school.
<i>Plessey v. Ferguson</i>	1896	Commonly referred to as “separate but equal,” this decision supported separate transportation systems for blacks and whites	Validated the belief that separate schools for blacks and whites was a constitutionally sound practice
<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	1954	The Supreme Court ruled that that laws assigning students to schools based on race were unconstitutional. The court ruled unanimously that such laws violated the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee that the rights of all Americans deserved equal protection. The rationale for the verdict was that being separated from white students could result in feelings of inferiority in students of color and compromise their futures.	Desegregation gained momentum and competed for attention in the national spotlight and attempted to force school districts to desegregate.
Numerous Public Reports	Late 1960s and early 1970s	Highlighted the structural inequalities in the educational system (particularly for African American children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds) and the	Justified busing students between schools and between school districts, suggesting that reassigning poor students to schools with middle-class

*(Continued)*

**Table 3.3** (Continued)

<i>Policy, Court Case, or Public Report</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Influence on Education</i>
		relationship between socioeconomic status and unequal educational outcomes.	students would improve poor students' academic achievement
Head Start Act	1965	Head Start was designed to address a wealth of factors that affect poor children and their families, with the ultimate goal of increasing early school readiness by providing health, educational, nutritional, family support, social, and other services for 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income households.	The first primary prevention program of its kind, designed to prepare disadvantaged children on a universal level for kindergarten.
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	1965	The ESEA of 1965 provided funds for schools that had high percentages of disadvantaged students (Title I). Goals were to promote safe and drug-free learning environments (Title IV), help linguistically diverse children (Title VII), and promote the inclusion and participation of women in all aspects of education (Title IX). These funds were used for whole school reform, compensatory education, and remediation for the country's most disadvantaged children, and to provide free and reduced-cost lunches for children in need.	Title I and Title IV have had the greatest impact on high-risk youth. Title I has been the largest source of federal funding for poor children in schools, serving 10 million children in more than 50,000 schools.
<i>Milliken v. Bradley</i>	1974	The courts declared that if segregation was the result of an individual's choice,	Released a district from desegregation orders after it demonstrated it

<i>Policy, Court Case, or Public Report</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Influence on Education</i>
		school districts could not be forced to remedy the situation.	had done everything possible to desegregate schools. This ruling set a president for similar rulings that resulted in an end to racially balanced schools in many American cities
Education of All Handicapped Children Act, PL-94-142 (later, the Individuals with Disabilities Act)	1975	Provided screening and identification for children with a wide range of disabilities and required schools to provide a variety of services for children based on an individualized education plan developed by a multidisciplinary team.	Altered the education of those with disabilities for many years to come.
A Nation at Risk	1983	Cited high rates of adult illiteracy and low achievement test scores as indicators of declining literacy and educational standards. The report recommended that educational policies strive to improve education for all students and develop more rigorous and measurable standards to assess academic performance. It highlighted the failure of education to ameliorate social problems and blamed these policies for producing mass mediocrity in education that resulted in the decline of authority and standards in schools.	Federal, state, and local policy switched to the improvement of curriculum, school-based management, the tightening of standards, the importance of discipline, and the establishment of academic goals and assessment.
America 2000	1992	President George H. Bush called for voluntary	Began what would become a major movement

*(Continued)*

**Table 3.3** (Continued)

<i>Policy, Court Case, or Public Report</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Influence on Education</i>
		testing in grades 4, 8, and 12, and proposed six goals for education, called America 2000	toward education policy aligned with the conservative ideology.
Goals 2000	1994	President Clinton proposed this initiative, which would have set into law the six national education goals proposed by President George H. Bush.	Continued the trend toward standards and accountability testing.
Gun-free Schools Act	1994	This Act provided funds only for schools that adopted zero-tolerance policies for guns and drugs on school grounds.	Resulted in the expansion of zero tolerance policies for less severe student infractions. Led to promising prevention and intervention services such as teacher involvement/training; the restructuring of schools to increase student engagement, attendance, performance, and family involvement; and the establishment of clear behavior expectations in schools.
No Child Left Behind	2000	NCLB is the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA. It is designed to create a stronger, more accountable education system, seeks to change the culture of education, and purports to use evidence-based strategies found to be effective through rigorous research. NCLB holds students accountable to high educational outcomes and standards. NCLB requires each state to set clear and high standards and to put an assessment system in place to measure student progress toward those standards	To be determined

associated with issues of equity and excellence. By 1930 the direction of education policy shifted toward equality in education. During the 1930s the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People initiated a campaign to overthrow the *Plessey v. Ferguson* decision, with school desegregation a major goal. The achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students became increasingly clear. Subsequently, desegregation gained momentum and competed for policy attention in the national spotlight.

The achievement gap between white and African American and advantaged and disadvantaged children became one of the most important educational issues of the century in the 1940s. The debate that ensued served as a catalyst in efforts to close the achievement gap and to maximize educational opportunities for people of color. The integration movement scored a huge victory in 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that laws assigning students to schools based on race were unconstitutional. The court ruled unanimously that such laws violated the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee that the rights of all Americans deserved equal protection. The rationale for the verdict was that separating African American students from white students could result in feelings of inferiority in students of color and serve to compromise the quality of their education. Unfortunately, it took nearly two decades for every state in the South to comply with the court order, and many of the initial advancements that were achieved by the integration movement have since given way.

During this same time frame, progressive directions in education were attacked by conservatives, who suggested that the American education system was sacrificing intellectual goals for social ones. The discussion between progressives who saw the educational arena as the most legitimate vehicle for leveling the playing field and critics who demanded more academic rigor in education became known as "the great debate" (Ravitch, 1983). The debate was fueled by the Soviet launching of the space satellite *Sputnik*, which served as a warning that the United States might no longer be leading the world in scientific research and development. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s the pursuit of excellence, standards-based education, curriculum reform, assessment, and accountability gained momentum. This direction would not take center stage in education policy, however, until the 1980s.

The 1960s witnessed great divisiveness in educational policy illustrated by the tension evident in the eventual move toward a more liberal reform orientation. This change mirrored larger societal issues, predominantly the emphasis on equity issues raised by the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1960s and early 1970s, several influential books highlighted the structural inequalities in the educational system, particularly for African American children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These books (Clark, 1965; Kohl, 1967; Kozol,

1967; Rosenfeld, 1971), along with a report by Coleman entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966), highlighted the relationship between socioeconomic status and unequal educational outcomes. The Coleman Report [eliminating quotations is fine with me] suggested that student composition within schools was highly correlated with student achievement (Sadovnik et al., 2001). The implications of the report were shocking, primarily because Coleman set out to demonstrate that the achievement gap between African American and white students could be attributed to the organizational structure of American schools. The Coleman Report justified busing students between schools and between school districts, suggesting that reassigning poor students to schools with middle-class students would equalize educational opportunities. Seemingly contradicting common sense, the Coleman Report suggested that between-school differences affected educational outcomes only minimally. The report was challenged by many researchers who questioned the premise, method, and findings.

Other progressive policies also emerged in the 1960s. In 1965 the Head Start Act funded an innovative preschool program for disadvantaged children. Head Start was designed to address a wealth of factors that affected poor children and their families. The goal of the program was to increase early school readiness by providing health, educational, nutritional, family support, social, and other services to preschool children from low-income households. The Head Start program was the first federally supported primary prevention program of its kind.

Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. Like Head Start, this legislation was passed on the assumption that inequities in educational opportunities were largely responsible for the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children. ESEA provided funds for schools that had high percentages of disadvantaged students in order to promote safe and drug-free learning environments (Title IV). The Act also supported linguistically diverse children (Title VII) and promoted the inclusion and participation of women in all aspects of education (Title IX). These funds were used for whole school reform, compensatory education, and remediation for the country's most disadvantaged children, and to provide free and reduced-price lunches for children in need. ESEA has been revised and reauthorized every 5 years since 1965. Provisions of the Act are currently responsible for funding bilingual education, drug education, and school lunch and breakfast programs (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2004).

Title I and Title IV of ESEA have had the greatest impact on vulnerable and high-risk youth. Title I has been the largest source of federal funding for poor children in schools, serving 10 million children in more than 50,000 schools (Slavin, 1999). Title IV provides early screening, remedial academic

support, and violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, and teenage pregnancy prevention programming. Transition programs for youth coming from residential and juvenile justice settings are also supported under Title IV.

## Education Policy from 1970 to 2000

The 1970s brought new attempts to integrate schools through complex busing plans and magnet schools designed to attract white students to neighborhood schools that they would not ordinarily attend (Cecelski, 1994). However, desegregation became increasingly difficult to maintain as a host of court cases gradually began to undo the *Brown* mandate. In the 1974 case of *Milliken v. Bradley*, the courts declared that if segregation was the result of an individual's choice, school districts could not be forced to remedy the situation. Put simply, once a district had done all it could to desegregate schools, it was released from further desegregation orders. Similar rulings led to renewed efforts to racially balance schools in many American cities (Nelson et al., 2004).

In 1975, Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), or PL-94-142, which altered educational patterns for students with disabilities. The EHA has undergone several reauthorizations, including a name change, to the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), in 1990. The Act provides screening and identification for children with a wide range of disabilities and requires schools to offer a variety of services for children based on an individualized education plan developed by a multidisciplinary team. The EHA contained four components that have proved particularly important to high-risk children and youth: (1) screening and identification of children with disabilities; (2) intervention services for children with disabilities; (3) inclusion of students with nondisabled students to the greatest extent possible; and (4) discipline provisions for students with disabilities.

In the late 1970s many conservative policy proponents pointed to the government's inability to solve social problems in the schools. Some spoke critically of the way in which EHA interfered with individual freedoms (Nelson et al., 2004). Many experts argued that progressive reforms had failed to narrow the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children and had actually increased discipline and other behavior problems in schools. This belief was fueled by the National Commission on Excellence report titled "A Nation at Risk" (Anyon, 1997). "A Nation at Risk," initiated under Terrel Bell, President Reagan's secretary of education, cited high rates of adult illiteracy and low achievement test scores as indicators of declining literacy and education standards. The report recommended

that educational policies strive to improve education for all students and develop more rigorous and measurable standards to assess academic performance (Nelson et al., 2004). This report paved the way for future educational reform efforts. Following the publication of "A Nation at Risk," primary education reform efforts have focused on excellence for all, rather than concentrating on subgroups of children such as disabled or high-risk youth. The report highlighted the failure of education to ameliorate social problems and blamed past policies for producing mass mediocrity in education that resulted in the decline of authority and standards in schools.

Subsequently, federal, state, and local policy switched to the improvement of curriculum, school-based management, tightening of standards, discipline, and the establishment of academic goals and assessment as new policy foci. School-based management emphasized a structural shift away from bureaucratic boards of education to more local forms of control. New policies aimed to engage parents, teachers, and administrators in decision-making processes. Teacher empowerment, closely related to school-based management, was emphasized as a way to give teachers more decision-making power within schools. School choice options, such as vouchers, charter schools, and magnet schools, were created to provide parents with alternatives to the traditional public school offerings. These strategies were based on the belief that the best way to reform education was to include principles of competition and accountability in education policy. This philosophy became a cornerstone of the recently passed No Child Left Behind Act.

### Current Federal Education Policy: The No Child Left Behind Act

The momentum created for educational reform gained in the 1990s culminated in the passage of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB has been described as the most sweeping federal reform in education since ESEA was passed in 1965 (Nelson et al., 2004). Technically, NCLB is the most recent reauthorization of ESEA. However, NCLB adds many new initiatives; it is designed to create a stronger, more accountable education system, seeks to change the culture of education, and purports to use evidence-based strategies found to be effective through rigorous research. Rather than providing specific resources for at-risk youth, NCLB proposes assisting children and youth by holding them accountable to high educational outcomes and standards. NCLB requires each state to set clear and high standards and to put an assessment system in place to measure student progress toward those standards (Paige, 2002). Specifically, NCLB requires states to test all students annually in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math. Scores

reported by states must be disaggregated by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and English language proficiency so that potential achievement gaps can be identified. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress toward identifiable goals need to be identified for improvement and are subject to corrective action (Paige, 2002). NCLB mandates that teachers use strategies that have proven effective; emphasis is placed on early reading programs. Finally, grants for character education have tripled under NCLB. These policies have affected practice dramatically, placing a premium on standards and assessment, school-based management, teacher empowerment, and school choice (e.g., vouchers, magnet schools, charter schools, and privatization options).

The current era in education policy has also been influenced by the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994. This law provided funds only for schools that adopted zero-tolerance policies for guns and drugs on school grounds. Public and political concern heightened in the mid-1990s with the outbreak of mass school shootings (Jenson & Howard, 1999). This resulted in the expansion of zero tolerance policies for less severe infractions. Alternative schools and increased school security strategies were also implemented to address school safety issues. The focus on school safety has also led to many promising prevention and intervention services, and to the restructuring of schools to increase student engagement, attendance, performance, and family involvement. In recent years, there has also been a trend to establish academic excellence for all students by engaging students, teachers, and staff in reform efforts, with a focus on the relationship between school climate and overall academic achievement.

A number of studies suggest that a positive, open school climate increases student achievement (Cummings, 1986; Fine, 1991; Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998; Kagan, 1990; Reyes, 1989) and a school's overall effectiveness (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). In fact, school climate has been identified as the most important variable in helping schools exceed their academic expectations (Glidden, 1999). Consistent with this finding, Walker, Sprauge, and Severson (2003) suggest that the primary target for school-based prevention efforts should be the peer culture of a school. Programs designed to affect school culture positively, such as conflict resolution programs, peer mediation strategies, and antibullying campaigns, illustrate the growing emphasis on changing peer and institutional culture. Social and economic strategies have also been used in pursuit of academic excellence for all students through innovative services and programs such as school-linked services and community and neighborhood reform. Although the policies underlying these reforms are not particularly new, the dissemination of research findings describing what works in school-based interventions is beginning to have a positive impact on practice (Nelson et al., 2004).

## Summary of Federal Policy

Public education in the United States has gone through a number of reform movements in the past century. From the end of World War I until the mid-1940s, education policy focused on equity and attempted to narrow or eliminate the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged youth. From the 1950s to the 1970s, issues of equity dominated federal education policy. Policies favoring equity in education were not without criticism during these years; many critics of equity policies believed intellectual and academic goals were being sacrificed for social ones. These attacks created space for alternative strategies such as the adoption of standards, curriculum reform, and accountability systems. Since the mid-1970s most education policies and programs have been more closely aligned with conservative ideology that focuses on improving education for all students than with policies aimed at helping children or youth at elevated risk for academic failure.

## Principles of Risk, Protection, and Resilience in Education Policy

There is evidence to both support and criticize the effectiveness of the policies and programs discussed in the prior section. Next, we briefly evaluate the degree to which historical and current policies and programs in education have been based on principles of risk and resilience, beginning with those that are clearly framed within this framework.

Several policies illustrate the relationship between risk, protection, and educational approaches to change and reform. For example, Head Start and IDEA emphasize principles that are consistent with interactive and developmental models of risk and resilience discussed earlier in this chapter. Head Start targets youth who are at highest risk for academic failure due to low socioeconomic status. The program attempts to bolster school readiness skills before entering school and is consistent with evidence suggesting that learning-related social skills gained in early childhood are critical to school success (DeRosier, Kupersmith, & Patterson, 1994; Ladd, 1990; Ladd & Price, 1987; McClelland & Morrison, 2003; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000). IDEA intervenes with children before they enter school and targets children at risk of school failure as a result of disability.

Policy efforts and programs that seek to implement schoolwide changes are also compatible with risk and protective factors. These efforts generally strive to improve the learning environment, increase school connectedness or bonding among students, enhance school climate, and increase teacher

expectations for students' performance. Positive school and peer cultures have been shown to increase school bonding, which in turn serves as a key protective influence for children (Haberman, 2000; Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, & Hill, 1999). School-based management strategies aim to increase levels of connectedness among schools, families, and communities, an important protective factor against academic failure.

The recent emphasis on standards-based education sets high academic expectations for all students, itself an identified protective factor against school failure and dropout (Furlong & Morrison, 2000). However, standards-based educational strategies are not directly connected to, or based on, the risk and protection literature. It may also be important to note that such standards have the potential to be counterproductive to children and youth who are not able to compete academically. Some experts have argued that standards-based policies may actually be contrary to principles of risk and resilience because they may lower expectations for teachers and subsequently have a negative impact on achievement (Nelson et al., 2004). Finally, zero-tolerance policies, particularly those that apply to less severe infractions, have been shown to increase risk for poor outcomes among high-risk children and youth (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

In sum, the application of risk and protective factors to the design of educational policy is inconsistent. Some policies (e.g., the Compulsory School Attendance Act, the Head Start Act, EHA, and IDEA), court cases (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education*), and programs (e.g., Head Start and special education) support the constructs of risk and resilience. Other policies (e.g., NCLB and Gun-Free Schools Act) and court cases (e.g., *Plessey v. Ferguson* and *Milliken v. Bradley*) ignore or may even reject the constructs of risk and resilience. New and sustained efforts are needed to implement a risk and resilience framework in education policy.

## Using Principles of Risk, Protection, and Resilience to Achieve Integrated Education Policy

Principles of risk, protection, and resilience can be applied to education policy in two fundamental ways. One option requires policymakers to specifically focus efforts on youth who are most likely to experience academic failure and school-related problems. Such a strategy tends to concentrate program and policy efforts on youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, since socioeconomic status is a key risk factor for educational failure (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). A second approach uses knowledge of risk, protection, and resilience to design promotive educational policies and

programs that are beneficial for all children irregardless of risk exposure. We begin our discussion with policy recommendations for programs that promote healthy outcomes for all children and youth.

## Promotive Policies and Programs

We recommend that educational policies and programs aimed at promoting social competence, developing caring relationships, and creating high expectations for all students be developed. Policies that promote participation in positive academic and social groups, enhance school bonding or connectedness, and create positive and safe learning environments should also receive priority in the nation's policy and program debates. Policy approaches and programs appear to be most successful when they are implemented schoolwide over the course of several years (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1999). Although such programs are believed to be effective across multiple levels of risk, additional research is necessary to verify this assumption.

Simply implementing effective programs is not sufficient to produce broad policy change and educational reform. Policies and programs must also foster service cohesion by addressing the need for multiple interventions within schools in an integrated fashion. Walker, Horner, Sugai, Bullis, Sprague, Bricker, et al. (1996) suggest that there is generally a lack of coordination among prevention efforts because no comprehensive strategic plan for coordinating and linking behavioral supports exists at the school or district level. Although the implementation of systemic interventions may provide the best hope for reducing the intensity and number of children who require additional support, single interventions are unlikely to address all problem behavior within a school. Walker and Sprague (1999) described the essential components of a comprehensive approach to addressing the mental health needs of students. Their conceptualization of an integrated prevention model is based on a continuum that includes primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of intervention. We suggest that all schools, regardless of risk status, develop a comprehensive schoolwide plan for meeting the needs of students based on this three-tiered model.

A recent report by the Center for Mental Health in Schools (2002) indicates that school-based reform efforts to date have been unsuccessful because projects and services designed to remove barriers to learning are viewed as supplementary in nature. This has left policy experts interested in removing such barriers largely absent from the decision-making table. The result may be seen in the fragmentation of services, marginalization of professionals, and overall inadequacies in policy reform. Service providers, including school

social workers, school psychologists, speech language specialists, school nurses, and school counselors, must be trained to support the primary mission of schools. Further, policies must be designed to enhance standards while promoting reasonable professional to student ratios for all students.

Promotive programs and policies hold great promise for education. However, policies and programs that specifically target the needs of students with elevated risk are also required to address the needs of children and youth in American schools. We believe that targeted educational policies and programs should focus on schools that have high percentages of students living in poverty and identify and intervene prior to or at the point of school entry. Examples of targeted policies and programs are reviewed next.

## Targeted Policies and Programs

### Redistribution of Tax Dollars to Support Schools in Poor Neighborhoods

The most obvious recommendation for using principles of risk and protection in targeted educational policy may involve school financing. Nearly 50 percent of school funding comes from local property taxes (Nelson et al., 2004). Therefore, adequately funding schools in poor neighborhoods is an ongoing and persistent challenge to policy officials and school administrators. To address this problem, a larger percentage of school financing may need to come from state and federal taxes rather than from local tax bases. Equaling the funding base between advantaged and disadvantaged communities is not likely to produce equal educational outcomes, given variations in individual, family, neighborhood, and community risk factors across schools and communities. And providing more money to disadvantaged schools would require people in wealthy districts to partially fund poor districts, a practice that runs counter to the beliefs of many Americans. However, such a strategy may well be necessary to effect positive change and to promote effective policies based on principles of risk and protection.

### Early Identification and Intervention at the Point of School Entry

Children raised in conditions of poverty experience severe learning deficits by the time they enter school. Whether in preschool or early elementary school, the importance of early screening for risk factors that lead to poor educational outcomes cannot be overstated. Educators are able to predict with great accuracy which children will require extensive academic or

behavioral supports with minimal effort. Systemwide screening, particularly for emotional and behavioral indicators leading to school failure, may be a cost-effective strategy to improve educational outcomes. Many experts believe that enhancing school readiness skills should be the primary focus of policy reforms (Nelson et al., 2004). We concur, and recommend an increase in funding for intervention programs that target school readiness skills.

Several federal programs, including those promoted through Title IV and Title V funds, provide nonspecific funding to address a wide range of educational issues. Title I is consistent with the risk and protection framework described earlier, since the primary criteria to access these funds are tied to students' socioeconomic status. However, there is no mandate that interventions created through these funds address known risk and protective factors. Additionally, there are no mandates that require the funds, or a portion of the funds, to be used for evidence-based practices.

In sum, a series of policy and system reforms is necessary to improve the condition of the country's schools. Principles of risk, protection, and promotion offer a means to begin thinking more systematically about a continuum of education policy defined by levels of service. Integration of policy and programs across other systems of care should be a part of such a continuum.

## Strategies to Integrate Education Policy

It is both exciting and challenging to envision integrating educational policies and programs across service domains such as child welfare, substance abuse, mental health, juvenile justice, developmental disabilities, and health. In many respects the compartmentalized nature in which federal-state funding is provided, and the isolated educational training that professionals in each problem area receive, runs counter to such a vision. Given the number of children involved in the educational system, the amount of time children spend in school, and the ability of schools to mobilize linkages with families and communities, we believe that the education system is an ideal location to identify children in need of services across problem domains.

Cross-system funding for education, health, and social services may be one means to achieve integrated policy. Cross-system funds could be used to (1) promote school readiness skills for high-risk youth; (2) provide early screening to identify children most at risk; (3) deliver case management and wrap-around services to those who display signs of adjustment problems before second grade; (4) provide seamless access to and provision of educational, health, and social services through support service providers and family resource or youth service centers; and (5) implement primary prevention programs at key developmental stages. This vision is consistent with the

### **A Case for Integrated Service Delivery**

Jeremy is a 14 year old male who was physically and sexually abused as a young child. His mother was incarcerated when he was six, and her parental rights were terminated when Jeremy was eight. He was placed in six out-of-home placements before he was finally placed in a stable foster care home with loving and supportive parents at age 10. Jeremy has struggled socially and emotionally in the school setting since kindergarten, but was not identified for special education services under the emotionally disturbed category until his current foster parents advocated for an evaluation at age 11. He has done well in some settings but he was suspended 13 times last year during his first year of middle school. Jeremy has been convicted twice for misdemeanor charges and is currently on probation. He receives support from a learning specialist and a school social worker at his middle school, sees a counselor at the local mental health agency, and has a child protection caseworker. Jeremy reports to a probation officer regularly and sees a psychiatrist to monitor medications yearly. These individuals have never met together and many of the services being provided are duplicated across settings.

school-linked services movement, which locates social and health services for children and families within or near schools (Dryfoos, 1998). Full-service schools take this notion one step further, bringing community agencies such as child care, parent education, employee training, and health and education services to schools (Dryfoos, 1998). Such comprehensive policy and program efforts should be based on building resilience for all children and should focus on improving outcomes across a range of child and youth problems. We use the case of Jeremy to illustrate this point.

An integrated approach to service delivery would be beneficial to Jeremy and his foster parents in several ways. First, if the services provided by his teacher, learning specialist, school social worker, counselor, caseworker, probation officer, and psychiatrist were coordinated, each provider would be aware of how Jeremy is functioning in other aspects of his life. Each provider would also be aware of other services Jeremy is receiving. Such an approach would reduce redundancy in service provision and likely would be more cost-effective. An integrated service delivery system would facilitate communication between professionals and would allow each easy access to the information the others possess. An integrated approach would also result in one set of goals, one treatment plan, and one system to evaluate progress. Additionally, an integrated strategy would be much easier for his foster parents, who find it difficult to attend the requisite meetings associated with each service. Finally, it is exciting to imagine

the services that could be put in place if the requisite departments of education, juvenile justice, and child welfare shared costs and interventions for all the services being directed to cases such as Jeremy. Most important, if there had been an integrated approach to assessment and service delivery early in Jeremy's life, it is possible his early antisocial behavior and school failure would have raised warning flags that might have altered Jeremy's path to antisocial behavior.

## Summary

Education policy in the past century has vacillated between progressive and conservative ideologies that have resulted in inconsistent practices in schools. According to Anyon (1997), education policy continues to revolve "around the tensions between equity and excellence, between the social and intellectual functions of schooling, and over differing responses to the questions, Education in whose interests? Education for whom?" (p. 87). Policy directed at the nation's schools has not been guided by a set of consistent principles. Principles of risk, protection, and resilience offer promise as a systematic method of designing and enhancing education policy and programs. Policymakers at all levels would do well to incorporate these principles into the nation's struggling educational system.

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### *Questions for Discussion*

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1. What are the similarities and differences in liberal and conservative ideologies in general and their explanations of unequal educational performances specifically?
  2. What solutions to school failure do liberal and conservative ideologies promote?
  3. What are some of the major risk factors for school failure? Which of these should receive the most attention in educational policy and why?
  4. How would one approach the concept of risk differently from an additive versus an interactive model?
  5. What educational policies and programs over the past 100 years have best served the concept of risk and resilience? Why?
  6. What factors inhibit the integration of policies and programs across problem domains?
  7. What are some possible solutions to the factors inhibiting the integration of policies and programs across problem domains?
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## Web-Based Resources

- The Education Policy Institute <http://www.educationpolicy.org/>  
Education Policy Clearinghouse <http://www.edpolicy.org/>  
Center on Education Policy <http://www.ctredpol.org/>  
Education Commission of the States <http://www.ecs.org/>  
Public Reason Policy Institute <http://www.rppi.org/educ.html>