

Part VII

Education



A-Z

The following terms represent a sample of relevant issues and ideas in the field of education. Education, like many fields, has a lot of jargon associated with it. This glossary should help you decode the jargon and get a taste for the importance of a few educational concepts.

assessment

An exercise—such as a written test, portfolio, or experiment—that seeks to measure a student's skills or knowledge in a subject area.

bilingual education

An education program for children whose native language is not English. Children are taught for some portion of the day in their native language, with the goal of moving them into mainstream English classes as quickly as possible—usually within two or three years. Ideally, such programs allow students to keep up academically because they can learn subject matter in their native language while they learn English.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka

The 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that banned racially segregated schools, saying that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." In mandating desegregation, *Brown v. Board of Education* led to widespread busing. Busing is now commonly derided by school reformers as an ineffective form of desegregation, one that pushed "white flight" while limiting community development.

charter schools

Schools run independently of the traditional public school system but receiving public funding, run by groups such as teachers, parents, or foundations. Charter schools are free of many district regulations and are often tailored to community needs.

constructivism

Constructivist theory posits that children build new information onto pre-existing notions and modify their understanding in light of new data. In the process, their ideas gain in complexity and power. Constructivist theorists dismiss the idea that students learn by absorbing information through lectures or repeated rote practice.

cooperative learning

A method of instruction that encourages students to work in small groups, learning material then presenting what they have learned to other small groups. In doing so, they take responsibility for their own learning as well as their classmates'.

curriculum

The subject matter that teachers and students cover in class. Not to be confused with **pedagogy**, the theory and strategy behind the methods and tools used in teaching a class.

digital divide

The "digital divide," was first coined by the U.S. Department of Commerce report *Falling Through the Net*, and described the gap between the technological haves and have-nots. More recently, rather than referring to the presence or absence of technology, the digital divide refers more to the disparity in how technology is used in schools.

ESL

English as a Second Language. Refers to non-native English speaking students or programs pertaining to the teaching of non-native English speaking students. **ELL**, or English Language Learner is often used for the same students.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A landmark 1975 federal law, originally known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In exchange for federal money, schools must guarantee that all children with disabilities receive a "free, appropriate public education." Different portions of the law cover children from birth to age 21. The law has been amended several times but originally addressed children with disabilities who were kept out of the public schools and taught either at home or institutions.

magnet school

A school that places special emphasis on academic achievement or on a particular field such as science, designed to attract students from elsewhere in the school district. Defined by the fact that students are assigned for reasons other than their neighborhood.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Note: NCLB is up for reauthorization in 2008, and many of these provisions are set to change.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, signed into law by President Bush on Jan. 8, 2002, is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the central federal law in pre-collegiate education. The ESEA, first enacted in 1965 and last reauthorized in 1994, encompasses Title I, the federal government's flagship aid program for disadvantaged students.

As the newest incarnation of the ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act has expanded the federal role in education and become a focal point of education policy. Coming at a time of wide public concern about the state of education, the legislation sets in place requirements that reach into virtually every public school in America. It takes particular aim at improving the educational lot of disadvantaged students.

At the core of the No Child Left Behind Act are a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in

student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. They represent significant changes to the education landscape (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Annual testing. By the 2005-06 school year, states must begin testing students in grades 3-8 annually in reading and mathematics. By 2007-08, they must test students in science at least once in elementary, middle, and high school. The tests must be aligned with state academic standards. A sample of 4th and 8th graders in each state must also participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress testing program in reading and math every other year to provide a point of comparison for state test results.

Academic progress. States must bring all students up to the "proficient" level on state tests by the 2013-14 school year. Individual schools must meet state "adequate yearly progress" targets toward this goal (based on a formula spelled out in the law) for both their student populations as a whole and for certain demographic subgroups. If a school receiving federal Title I funding fails to meet the target two years in a row, it must be provided technical assistance and its students must be offered a choice of other public schools to attend. Students in schools that fail to make adequate progress three years in a row must also be offered supplemental educational services, including private tutoring. For continued failures, a school would be subject to outside corrective measures, including possible governance changes.

Report cards. Starting with the 2002-03 school year, states must furnish annual report cards showing a range of information, including student-achievement data broken down by subgroup and information on the performance of school districts. Districts must provide similar report cards showing school-by-school data.

Teacher qualifications. By the end of the 2005-06 school year, every teacher in core content areas working in a public school must be "highly qualified" in each subject he or she teaches. Under the law, "highly qualified" generally means that a teacher is certified and demonstrably proficient in his or her subject matter. Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, all new teachers hired with federal Title I money must be "highly qualified." By the end 2005-06 school year, all school paraprofessionals hired with Title I money must have completed at least two years of college, obtained an associate's degree or higher, or passed an evaluation to demonstrate knowledge and teaching ability. That requirement is already in effect for newly hired paraprofessionals.

Reading First. The act creates a new competitive-grant program called Reading First, funded at \$1.02 billion in 2004, to help states and districts set up "scientific, research-based" reading programs for children in grades K-3 (with priority given to high-poverty areas). A smaller early-reading program seeks to help states better prepare 3- to 5-year-olds in disadvantaged areas to read.

Funding changes. Through an alteration in the Title I funding formula, the No Child Left Behind Act is

expected to better target resources to school districts with high concentrations of poor children. The law also includes provisions intended to give states and districts greater flexibility in how they spend a portion of their federal allotments.

portfolio

A systematic and organized collection of a student's work throughout a course or class year. It measures the student's knowledge and skills and often includes some form of self-reflection by the student.

reform network

An association of educators, schools, or districts joined together to provide mutual support as they work on common plans for improving education. Popular reform networks include Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools and James Comer's School Development Program.

school choice

Any proposal that allows children to attend schools outside their local district boundaries. Such schools may be public institutions other than that school that is assigned in their district or they may be private and/or religious schools. Often these proposals include public funding for all or some of the tuition costs.

school reform

A generic term encompassing all kinds of efforts that are taking place to improve schools. Reform efforts focus on all aspects of schooling, from how schools are governed to what curriculum is taught in the classroom.

service learning

Programs that incorporate citizenship values into education by requiring students to perform community service. In some districts, community service is a mandatory requirement for graduation.

Title I

The nation's largest federal education program, with a 2002 funding level of \$10.4 billion. Created in 1965 during the War on Poverty, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act serves remedial education programs to poor and disadvantaged children in nearly every school district in the country. Amendments to the law in 1994 were designed to tie the program to school wide and district wide reforms based on challenging academic standards. Title I was formerly known as "Chapter 1."

Title IX

Bars gender discrimination in education facilities that receive federal funds. The full name of the law is Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX cases, which have typically been filed at the college level, have increasingly been filed against K-12 schools for sex equity in extracurricular sports.

vouchers

A document or chit, usually issued by the state, that can be used by parents to pay tuition at an out-of-district public school, a private school, and/or a religious school. The term is also used more broadly to describe school-choice proposals in which states would help pay tuition for children attending private or religious schools.