BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

INDIANA’S EDUCATION ODYSSEY

AN HONORS SENIOR PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
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The concept for this project began to take shape during my undergraduate Indiana History course at Ball State University. While studying the pre-statehood era, I became fascinated with the trials and tribulations that early Hoosier education advocates faced, particularly from the frontier settler population. As the course progressed, I continued to inquire of my professor about the reform movements and status of education in the state but despite his best efforts to satiate my hunger for information, his knowledge was limited. Likewise, our textbook could offer only scant pieces of information from various periods separated by multiple decades. Upon completion of the course I set out to explore the topic further. Special thanks are therefore in order for Dr. Michael Wm. Doyle, who directly inspired me to write this thesis and valiantly attempted to answer all of my questions during that history course.

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Abstract

Education in the State of Indiana has endured a long process of reform and legitimatization. In the years prior to statehood, settlers typically neglected to send their children to public schools in favor of educating them at home. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the first public schools began to enroll fair numbers of students, and then only for a few weeks or months out of the year. Most parents insisted that their children remain at home to help tend to responsibilities on the homestead. The turn of the century provided an opportunity for many children to be exposed to public schools for the first time. Industrialization had sparked a public interest in the acquisition of knowledge and technical skills. As Hoosiers embarked on the journey that was the twentieth century, public schools gained greater and greater legitimacy. Collecting exorbitant amounts of public funding via taxation, (a prospect that would have been unheard of a century earlier), public schools in Indiana became the quintessence of excellence and efficiency.

The 1960s and 1970s, however, introduced a new era of distrust among parents and taxpayers. The haze of governmental mistrust that developed during the cold war and Vietnam eras, combined with an economic recession and failing results from public schools across the nation resulted in a growing lack of faith in the system. Since those years public confidence in our nation’s schools has steadily decreased, creating a crisis of epic proportions for educators. Today, teachers and administrators face the daunting task of regaining public trust and loyalty. Only through professional accountability, quality teaching strategies and the turnover of academically empowered graduates can they return to the era of public appreciation that they once enjoyed.
The story of public education in the state of Indiana is one of public disagreement, theoretical reform and constant reassessment. From the earliest days of Hoosier education with its one room schoolhouses and private tutors to the modern mega-scale public schools and tiny private institutions, the history of our state's pedagogical journey involves both internal and external assessment of public schools' educational successes and failures and the accommodation of the public school system to parent and taxpayer demands. And even when considering the multitude of physical and technological changes our public schools have experienced, it becomes readily apparent that the course of public education in Indiana has come full-circle.

Over the course of nearly two centuries, the citizens living here have adapted slowly to the idea of public education for all. During the years of territorial settlement, parents generally dismissed the idea of sending their children to a public institution for education, and few wished to support such a system via public taxation. A general anti-intellectual sentiment was prominent among those first settlers. They had little use for academic disciplines such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Building a homestead and a farm took priority. As the population grew and the people began to settle into daily life under a new state government, however, the foundation for a public education system was established. The new system developed rapidly over the next century until it had evolved into a model of excellence for the entire country. Whereas they had once resisted the idea of mandatory public education for all, Hoosier parents now rejoiced in the multitude of benefits and opportunities public schools offered their children.

Today, however, the situation looks less promising. After nearly three decades of recurrent media reports and survey results about the inadequacies of public schools,
Hoosiers are beginning to return to a pattern of distrust and doubt concerning public schools. An era of disagreement about the effectiveness and content of public school curriculum and educator performance is dawning, and there appears to be a resurgence of a lack of support from taxpayers and parents. The future of public education in Indiana seems uncertain, and its survival may depend on the emerging generation of teachers and administrators reaching out and regaining the faith and trust of Hoosier parents.

**The Early Years**

Indiana became a state in 1816, but settlers lived and reared children in the territory decades before that achievement. Prior to statehood, it was not unusual for Hoosier children to be exposed to very little formal education. These children learned skills such as hunting, cooking, harvesting, planting, building and mending from their parents and family. Reading, writing and mathematics were the only traditional academic disciplines in which children were occasionally tutored while at home, although reading and moral education could also be gleaned from many Sunday schools. In fact, it was out of the semi-educated pastoral clergy that the first Indiana schools began to form. Church congregations and religiously motivated individuals, who were convinced that immorality, illiteracy and heathenism were all tools of the devil, often sponsored schools in order to keep students in line with their views. Preachers and their wives would often supplement their meager incomes with this sort of teaching. Even the earliest colleges established in Indiana, like Hanover, Wabash and DePauw, were funded and supported by religious groups such as the Methodists and Presbyterians.
When Indiana applied for statehood however, opportunities for more public institutions arose. The 1816 Constitutional Convention proposed a state constitution which included a promise that the General Assembly would provide for a “general system of education, ascending in a regular gradation, from township schools to a state university, wherein tuition shall be gratis and equally open to all.” The constitution was ratified June 29, 1816, but there turned out to be little follow-up to the public education clause. Although the phrasing of the clause included “as soon as circumstances permit,” the state neglected to build even the foundations of a public school system prior to 1850. For those in favor of a system for public education, it took widespread public discontent with the lack of such educational infrastructure to prompt action. Thus appeared the common school, locally created, controlled, and funded institutions that provided a great variation in curriculum, almost always based upon local sentiment, religious belief, and market for trade.

There were limits to this new hope for education, however. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers were in short supply in the few decades following Indiana’s achievement of statehood. It was extremely unusual for formal education to be required of those who served as common school teachers. Indeed, there were no formal training institutions for teachers in Indiana. The low pay scale and short-term employment of a teaching job often resulted in teaching positions being filled by young men who were preparing for more “serious” occupations. Attendance was a serious problem for common schools. In 1840, less than 25% of five-to-fifteen year-olds attended school in Indiana. Most of these institutions had terms shorter than three months, (parents often required their children’s labor during planting and harvesting seasons), and obstacles
such as distance and weather hazards could easily prevent students from attending.

Sadly, no common school was open to all children and few were tuition-free.⁴

There also existed no state or local method of taxation to support public schools of any kind. In an attempt to satisfy the promises of the Ordinance of 1785 (wherein the sixteenth section of land in each township was to be set aside for supporting a school), some local governments donated buildings and supported education initiatives with public moneys. Caleb Mills, educational activist and the head of Wabash College in the 1830s and 40s, argued the necessity of a state and township school tax, rather than reliance upon federal land grants, to ensure large popular interest in education. His claims were not without reason; the illiteracy rate was staggering during those years. In 1840 only 14.3% of Hoosiers could read and write, placing Indiana as the eighteenth most literate state out of the 28 in the Union. By 1850 Indiana had risen to a 17% literacy rate, but had fallen to twenty-third place in the Union.⁵ Concern had grown so much among the educated populace that by 1848 Caleb Mills and his associates had pressured the General Assembly to submit to a statewide referendum on public school funding. The measure to enact taxes sufficient to provide at least three months of free common-school education for all children in the state passed by a relatively slim 12% margin. A matter of months later, however, a legislative act provided the opportunity for each county to hold an approval vote concerning the funding law. Sixty-one counties voted to enact such taxation while twenty-nine voted against, twenty-two of which were in Southern Indiana. Obviously, opposition to tax-funded public education was very strong in some portions of the state. But such circumvention of public funding legislation was soon to become much more difficult to achieve.
In 1851 the state’s second constitutional convention approved a constitution that committed the General Assembly to “provide by law for a general and uniform system of common schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all.” There was no room for interpretation in this new document; there was no “when circumstances permit” clause. Swiftly answering its call to duty, the General Assembly enacted a state property tax to fund public education in 1852. Township trustees were given responsibility and authority over local schools with the exception that towns and cities could set up institutions separate from those township schools. Some urbanized areas had gained enough autonomy to attempt to build more modern schools than township funds could provide. Educational reformers rejoiced at their victory, but the celebration was short-lived. Many Hoosiers were simply unwilling to send their tax dollars to an institution that they had no faith in. Opposition mounted, and in 1854 the state Supreme Court declared the School Law of 1852 unconstitutional, stating that if local as well as state taxation were allowed, public schools would vary from place to place, creating a disparity between wealthy and impoverished areas. This logic led to the closing of many of the newly-established schools and nearly halted all opportunities for Indiana’s less economically fortunate youth to receive a public education for a quarter-century. It wasn’t until 1867 that public education advocates succeeded in pushing legislation through the General Assembly. In that year a nearly identical bill to the 1852 version was passed, but this time it met minimal opposition. Thousands of students and parents seized this opportunity and between 1863 and 1880 enrollment grew from well-below 50% to more than 80% of all school-aged children in the state. Finally, public
appreciation for education grew to such a large degree that in 1897 a state law was passed requiring all children aged eight to fourteen years to attend school.

Reform and Conflict

During the years following the 1867 law many reforms were enacted by individual counties and independent schools, many of which left under-funded, rural schools sorely outdated. The curriculum of many urban schools was expanded to include a wider variety of academic disciplines. Order and bureaucracy found its way into the structure of these schools as well. Trustees began hiring superintendents to oversee county-wide school systems. Graded classrooms became more common as student populations grew, and more local systems established high schools as capstone institutions. These graded schools had become an extremely attractive innovation, placing students in grades based on age that brought structure to the anarchy of the mixed-age classroom. Slowly, these modern schools worked toward a graded system, forming phases of advancement that were loosely based upon age, such as primary, grammar, intermediate and high schools. A movement towards modernization and professionalism had developed, and urban-based administrators and superintendents began targeting one-room schoolhouses and contrasting them with the newer, expensive, graded schools showing up in urban areas across the state. By the 1880s such reforms had become so well-received that many educational journals were constantly criticizing rural schools for moving too slowly towards consolidation. Students and parents were forced to adapt as more and more rural students were absorbed by consolidation, but soon local high schools became sources of pride in rural townships. The state diplomas
offered by consolidated schools were also attractive, as they offered many students an unimpeded ticket to state universities. Finally, as if making such sentiments official, the General Assembly passed legislation in 1907 that required the closing of all schools with fewer than twelve pupils. From 1890 to 1920 nearly 4000 one-room schoolhouses were closed and thousands of students were transported to consolidated schools via horse-drawn hack, and later, gas-driven buses. Small rural schools, the original resource for Hoosiers who wanted an opportunity for education, had become obsolete. But the urban-rural conflict would last well into the twentieth century and beyond.

Teachers hired in this era of reform faced many obstacles. Most were typically possessed of little more education than high school students. Indeed, many trustees appointed their teachers directly out of local high schools from the 1860s through the 1890s. The notion persisted up until the twentieth century that nearly anyone could teach, and so the teaching profession remained a particularly low-paying one. This created a recruitment problem in those years before the turn of the century. Some reformers, including Caleb Mills, suggested that women were the perfect candidates for teaching positions, since “the expenses would be materially diminished and the character of the schools might be essentially improved.” Chauvinism aside, this theory allowed many women to find gainful employment, bringing the proportion of teachers that were female up from one-fifth in 1860 to over one-half in 1900 and even to two-thirds by 1914. Many teachers were helpless subordinates to school superintendents as well, often forced to obey extensive rules and regulations and subject to spontaneous and mandatory administrative meetings. Faced with enormous class sizes of fifty or more
Williamson 11

students and usually required to kowtow to the decisions of individual administrators, many teachers found the job to be less than worthwhile.

As Indiana moved into the industrial era, the state found itself generally outpaced by the rest of the nation. America itself was found lacking in many areas associated with education. Other industrialized nations were seen as competitors with better-skilled workers while America's schools hindered progress and social advance because of low standards. And in 1923 Hoosier suspicions were confirmed when the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation found Indiana's schools "too rigid in organization, inefficient, inferior, and unable to meet the needs of children of varying types."\(^{14}\)

Sweeping changes were in order, and curricular reform was the primary agenda for most Indiana schools. There was a growing sense among Americans that students were given no instruction on how to perform practical tasks useful for industrial or vocational work. Students were in need of a new, broader kind of education that went beyond mental discipline.\(^ {15}\) The concept of "manual training" was merged into many school curriculums in hopes that such education would engender a sense of the dignity of vocational labor.

Subjects such as Greek and Latin, languages that were traditionally the cornerstone of an academic education, were considered to have little real utility in the growing industrial society, and many were eradicated from the traditional academic curriculum. Many Hoosiers, perhaps originating from the very same regions as those who originally opposed public schools funded via taxation, attempted to influence the system by demanding that if their children were legally bound to attend schools, they learn useful, practical skills while there.
It was in response to these changes that a battle began between those who favored "practical" education over the traditional academic disciplines. In 1888 the famous Committee of Ten recommended a college preparatory curriculum for America's secondary schools.

**Civic Education and the Academic Shift**

By the turn of the century, educational reformers and legislators alike had come to believe that a definite connection existed between education and the survival of "American values" like dedication, cooperation and hard work. Widespread labor unrest and reform had sparked an air of pride concerning the American working man. The enormous numbers of immigrants flooding into the country prior to World War I had prompted many Americans to demand that schools across the country introduce more "American topics" into their curriculums, pushing aside "less useful" subjects such as foreign languages. Schools across the country responded by offering courses in civic education. The 1892 Committee of Ten Madison Conference recommended that all American high schools foster citizenship via social studies, namely civil government, political economics, and history. Most importantly, the final year of secondary instruction should include American History and Government. As a result, mock legislatures and courts were common in schools at the beginning of the twentieth century. All of these changes were part of a grandiose movement to bring morality and virtue into the American educational system. As Professor James A. Woodburn of Indiana University stated, "The first aim of civics is to cultivate morality." This mentality was
often taken to the extreme—some teachers were directed to “take moral themes from history and be careful not to introduce confusing details to moral instruction.”

The world of secondary education was changing dramatically. In this era of Progressive change, academic and college preparatory education had taken a backseat to civic, moral and vocational education. According to reformers, overbearing college entrance requirements had led to schools ignoring important topics such as citizenship. These archaic lines of study had begun to ignore the tremendous social developments being explored in modern society. Arthur W. Dunn, leader of the civics reform effort in Indianapolis, wanted to bring an appreciation and respect for community service and action into the school. He glorified the water and power workers and the police officers of the state and nation. Social Reconstructionists like Dunn believed that the community was giving students an education “not as a benevolence, nor even as a right, but as an investment in expectation of returns.” Students enrolled in institutions of public education were an investment of the previous generation toward social progress. Supported by many parents, particularly the working class, these reformers hoped that social reconstructionism would improve conduct both in and out of schools by promoting self-governing behavior and assistance to others. Dunn and his colleagues reported great success with their programs, citing examples of students who had taken what they had learned home with them and involved their parents in their education. The education about civics for the next generation had become a priority to most Americans. Indeed, by the late 1930s and early 40s, many educators began viewing service to the community as an extension of their role in society. According to Reese, public schools in Indianapolis had become a national example of modern civic instruction. In fact, in 1915 Indianapolis
Public Schools was recognized as the most innovative public school system in the nation for its shift to a student-based curriculum.\[^{20}\]

The trends of the Progressive era had led to greater parental involvement in public education. As the nation moved into the 1920s and 30s, parental and community involvement in public schools fully blossomed. The avenue by which this new community control found its way into the schools was the extracurriculum. Sports teams and academic organizations had developed across the country by this era. Small, industrial and semi-urban cities were developing throughout the United States, and these communities grew to encourage their youth to participate in activities outside the realm of traditional academic study. Students were becoming simultaneously part of the community and socialized into the modern bureaucratic model of society. Student participation evolved into a community tradition, especially in sports teams, and within a matter of decades, extracurricular activities began to foster a sense of local identity and unity between communities and their schools.\[^{21}\]

As more and more student activities exploded onto the scene, educators began to become wary of the extra time being devoted to social activities rather than study, but as these activities grew in scope and amount of participation they became more difficult to control by school administrators. A backlash of control measures erupted from school bureaucracies, but to little avail. Secret societies began to form as a response. Many challenged administrative control and developed methods by which students could exercise more freedom over their environments, and thus student councils were born.\[^{22}\] It was not long, however, before educators began to realize that the extracurriculum could
be used to further the cause of education and began creating organizations and academic societies.

Post-War Schools and Growing Public Distrust

By the end of World War II public schools had become a necessary service to Americans, producing the best and brightest students the nation had to offer and reinforcing the new superiority America was projecting to the rest of the world. Americans rejoiced in public school systems sparkling with academic promise and bolstered by extracurricular and community reinforcement. Schools eagerly expanded and renovated, reinvigorating their individual communities. Updating and improving nearly every aspect of public schools was of the utmost importance in this new age of American super-power. Optimism, combined with an obsession with science and innovation, drove the educational reformists. Consolidation became the path to success for many communities. The Indiana State Teachers Association School Study Commission reported in 1949 that consolidated city schools were of better-quality than rural schools in almost every way as a result of their superior libraries, science equipment, athletic facilities, guidance departments, teacher pay, and programs of study.23

This drive to produce the best and brightest resulted in a phenomenon of differentiation. There was a growing belief that not all students should experience the same course of study. Different students were adapted to different training, and each should be given the education most suitable for his or her needs. Indiana schools followed this pattern. By the 1950s most of Indiana’s secondary schools offered multiple
courses of study. Everything in IPS was directed toward the proper adjustment of a student to his or her particular course of study. The 1950 IPS superintendent Herman L. Shibler scoffed at traditional academic education, saying it was only for the college bound. Many varieties of courses began to be offered in public schools, each appealing to the various interests associated with post-education employment and extra-curricular endeavors. Some Hoosier schools began the practice of promoting themselves to select groups of Americans who were moving from the cities to the suburbs by pointing out the religious community around the school, the churchgoing teacher population, the daily bible readings, and in one case, a course on America’s (Christian) religious heritage. In this era of extreme anti-communism and overwhelming pro-capitalism, Indianapolis became the shining example of a school that promoted the American way of life.

The creation of a wide array of disciplinary studies lasted well into the 1960s and 70s, the era of the Baby Boomers. Indiana schools swelled with students and both academic programs and extra-curriculars benefited. But beneath the surface, a dangerous situation was developing. As the middle and upper class began moving outward from the cities during the economic recession of the 1970s, city schools were left impoverished and suffered from a crippled tax base. Inner-city residents grew frustrated with the disparity between urban and rural schools. A collapse of respect began between parents and schools in these urban areas. Faith in the expertly-run consolidated schools of the cities was failing, and doubt about the success of those institutions festered.

Statistics grew increasingly dire through the 1970s and by 1983 the murkiness of the situation was confirmed with the A Nation At Risk report. This incredibly influential study commissioned by the Reagan administration reported on the extremely diminished
quality of public education since the 1960s. Indiana found itself to be no exception from the study’s findings, and so educational reformers and the state legislature began an immediate process of examination and reform. Prior to the 1987 legislative session, the Indiana General Assembly had enacted nine or fewer reform provisions per year, but in that year the number jumped to nearly twenty and has not diminished significantly since.\textsuperscript{27} Major education initiatives were established with each new gubernatorial administration, and two categories of reform dominated their agendas: accountability and testing, and curriculum and instruction. The total of all state spending on education more than doubled between 1980 and 1990.\textsuperscript{28}

Indiana schools were typically held accountable for providing services and opportunities until the late 1970s when the state’s priorities shifted toward assessment of outcomes. The Comprehensive Assessment and Program Planning Service was a direct result of this change in expectations. CAPPS, established in the early 80s, involved an interconnection between testing and school accountability. But while teachers and administrators initially favored CAPPS and the student improvements associated with it, parents and local legislators questioned the authority of the state board of Education to require certain levels of success and their ability to disapprove local plans.\textsuperscript{29} In 1984 the Indiana Basic Competency Skills Testing and Remediation Program legislated uniform statewide tests in reading, mathematics and writing in grades 3, 6, and 8 and further removed local flexibility and choice while putting the bill squarely on the shoulders of the state.\textsuperscript{30} The final blow to local autonomy was struck with the 1987 introduction of ISTEP testing in all grades but 4, 5, 7, and 10. Schools were now evaluated by the state through performance-based accreditation standards concerning attendance, test scores,
and graduation rates. Local control over the decision to retain or pass students was now gone.  

In an attempt to address the concerns of millions of Hoosier parents, the Indiana General Assembly had enacted sweeping legislation to set the state’s public schools back on track. But the dramatic increase in state control may have done more to injure public respect for state schools than it did to improve them. Many of the reforms enacted during this period created a wide variety of accountability standards, inflating the state’s educational bureaucracy and shifting many teachers’ attention away from students. Annual reports concerning the low achievement ratings of many public schools across the state only served to disappoint parents more and more as the years passed. Financial turmoil in many local systems, combined with thousands of scathing editorials and articles concerning the failure of Indiana schools in various aspects of character education and discipline have created a massive lack of confidence in the system among taxpayers.

**The Present: Support Withdrawal and the Age of the Competitive Educator**

Today Indiana’s public schools face the danger of a withdrawal of support and funding from a disenfranchised public. Hoosier parents are increasingly losing faith in the public schools of Indiana. An Indiana University survey recently found that only one-third of those polled believed public schools have improved in the past five years. 

Every year hundreds of concerned parents write in to editorial pages commenting on everything from the teacher-to-student ratio in public schools to discipline issues. Some parents despise the state standards for standardized testing while others complain that too much blame is placed upon teachers. There are thousands of different responses that all
carry the same message—public schools aren't working. For some of these parents, desperate measures have been taken to improve the situations of their students.

Homeschooling is a growing phenomenon across the nation and in Indiana. The number of children being homeschooled is increasing by an estimated 15 to 20 percent a year according to the U.S. Census bureau. Currently, about 23,000 Hoosier children are homeschooled. Most Hoosier parents who homeschool their children attribute their motivation to the flexibility and convenience of the task combined with the inherent benefits over public schooling. "I'm concerned about the pigeonholing, grouping and labeling" of children in public schools, says Indiana mother Carrie Maurer. Her acquaintance, Cheryl Knight, claims that public schools "expect everybody to learn the same way, at the same rate. And that's just not reality." A survey released in 2004 by the National Center for Education Statistics found that about 30 percent of parents who homeschooled did so because they were concerned about the environment in regular schools. Ball State University professor of educational psychology Greg Marchant claims that homeschooling has grown from "a perception that schools are in some way inadequate...a general notion that schools are not particularly good." Lora Miller, a consultant on homeschooling at the Indiana Department of Education claims that one reason homeschooling has become a far more mainstream option for parents is the growing availability of very reputable instructional materials and programs for parents to use. Parents can purchase distance learning programs written by professional educators on DVD or over the internet.

Many parents have pursued the avenue of school vouchers to satisfy their desire for a better education for their children. Vouchers give parents an opportunity to remove
their students from their current public school and send them to the school of the parents’ choosing, within certain distance restrictions. The concept of a “government monopoly” has surfaced among some parents, suggesting that state-funded public education is like a business that affords competitors no opportunity for coexistence in the field of educating Hoosier youth. An editorial response in the Indianapolis Star states the case by saying, “People get to choose their own food with food stamps, their own doctors with Medicaid and their own day-care providers with subsidies. Why should education be any different?” The prevalence of school vouchers has created a sense of near-panic among some educators. Many fear that their public-school jobs will be eliminated as a result of a withdrawal of funding. In reality, the school voucher phenomenon has created competition. Parents who are empowered with the choice of where they send their children to school will prompt schools and teachers to perform for survival. Those schools with the best record of educational performance and student success should attract more parents and students. The argument for vouchers holds that such a competitive market will lead to greater efficiency in the realm of public education and a vast improvement in the benefits for students across the state.

Reflections and Implications

The pattern of support for public education in Indiana seems to form a complete circuit. Some of the trends from the earliest years of public education in Indiana have reappeared in one form or another over the last few decades. For instance, in the earliest days of settlement, many of those who settled within the borders of what would become Indiana had little interest in a system of public education, especially when it came to...
financial support via taxation. These anti-intellectuals, having little respect for the academic disciplines, resisted the establishment of local educational institutions and failed to provide public support.

Yet the system developed anyway, growing into a trusted public resource and eventually becoming a paragon of excellence for the entire nation. Beginning in the early twentieth century, student-centered modes of education combined with the practice of community involvement to create a synthesis of the best intentions of both intellectual and practical reformers. Those in favor of vocational studies were pleased with the skills learned in the actual community and those in favor of traditional academics found ways to interject their lessons into the learning process. The resulting strengthening of the school-community relationship developed a local shared identity between the two. The extracurriculum contributed greatly to this relationship as well, often bringing a sense of pride to the community at-large. Indiana's public schools basked in the glow of success and public adoration up until the mid 1970s. But that sense of unity has begun to falter in the last thirty years as a result of the growing disillusionment of Hoosier parents with public schools.

As faith has waned in the system, more and more Hoosier parents have begun shifting away from the massive school corporations of the twentieth century and focusing their attention on alternatives that can offer more educational value to their children. Today a weak rapport exists between many public school teachers and parents, often as a result of parental disapproval of public school policies and curriculum choices. The appeal of civic education has done a great deal to salvage the relationship between schools and parents, but it may not be powerful enough on its own to repair the growing
chasm of disapproval that has been forming since the late 1970s. A growing number of parents are more interested in removing their children from the public education system than helping to improve it. Homeschooling and vouchers have placed parents in the position of control, and they are no longer willing to play a game of trial and error with their children's education. A lack of taxpayer support similar to that of Indiana’s settlement era has resurfaced, bringing with it a few of the most difficult issues that have faced public education in this state over the last 150 years.

The original rural-urban conflict that sprouted during the modernization and consolidation years of the late nineteenth century still rages on today. Smaller, rural schools often find themselves lacking necessary funding, even with special government programs and subsidies. Larger urban schools, especially those with Title I status, have little trouble obtaining and utilizing federal funding and aid. Meanwhile, those parents living in rural areas of Indiana are left extremely disappointed in the lack of opportunities their children are offered in the small schools that make up the majority of Indiana’s public education system. School vouchers now offer a leveling of the playing field. Those small rural schools that do not perform and offer quality educational experiences for the children of Indiana will suffer, fade and perhaps be swallowed up by consolidation. Those rural schools that do perform, however, will grow and amass a more beneficial funding base. Another difference between today and yesterday is, of course, that those teachers of frontier Indiana were blatant subordinates to school superintendents and often substantially uneducated. But with the new competitive market of highly-qualified teachers entering the field from both within and outside the current
system, competitive education may be the final deciding factor for the rural-urban conflict.

During the industrial age Hoosier schools underwent the curricular reforms that brought about vocational and "manual" education. Parents and legislators from across the state had decided that if their children were required by law to attend public schools that they at least learn practical skills that would help them in everyday survival. That sentiment has changed little since the dawn of the twentieth century. Although a revitalization period for traditional academics occurred in the schools of the 1950s and 1960s, parents still tend to demand that their children garner a healthy amount of practical skills while in school. Most public schools maintain technical and vocational courses or send students to nearby vocational education centers during part of the school day. Yet many parents have opted to remove their children from public schools altogether, usually because of a lack of faith in the system. And recently, with the intervention of the No Child Left Behind laws, more and more vocational and technical courses are receiving less funding and many are being cut out of schools completely.

Tension remains between the proponents of the traditional academic curriculum and those who favor a more practical education. Unfortunately, with the sweeping reforms of the 1980s, local Hoosier schools and communities have little autonomy to respond to the wants and needs of these parents, and many students are relocated via vouchers or homeschooling.

The future teachers and administrators of Indiana face a true crisis. Battered about by conflicting state accountability standards and expectations, and often unsupported by the disenfranchised parental community of Indiana, Hoosier educators
have no shortage of reasons to be discouraged. The question of "where can we go from here?" lingers in the halls and classrooms of countless public schools in Indiana. The future of our state's public education system is truly in the hands of Indiana's next generation of educators. Despite the frightening reality they face in a revolutionized field of education, teachers and administrators have been empowered by the new competitive market. Expert teachers and administrators have been given the opportunity to forge a new era of excellence in Indiana's public schools. The task is daunting, filled with public opposition, support withdrawal and often-frightening standards of accountability, but it is an undeniably important one. They must regain the faith and admiration of all Hoosiers in order to salvage the public education system and bring it back to the era of prestige and veneration that it once enjoyed. May this next generation in so doing secure a better and brighter future for all of Indiana's students.
Endnotes

2 *ibid*, p. 111.
3 *ibid*, p. 111.
4 *ibid*, p. 110.
5 *ibid*, p. 113.
6 *ibid*, p. 180.
8 *ibid* p. 36.
9 *ibid*, p. 38.
10 *ibid* p. 40.
15 *ibid*, p. 59.
17 *ibid*, p. 83.
18 *ibid* p. 85.
19 *ibid*, p. 88.
20 *ibid*, p. 90.
22 *ibid*, p. 107.
24 *ibid*, p. 154.
25 *ibid*, p. 156.
26 *ibid*, p. 164.
28 *ibid*, p. 203.
29 *ibid*, p. 206.
30 *ibid*, p. 208.
31 *ibid*, p. 208.


38 *ibid*. p. 1.

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