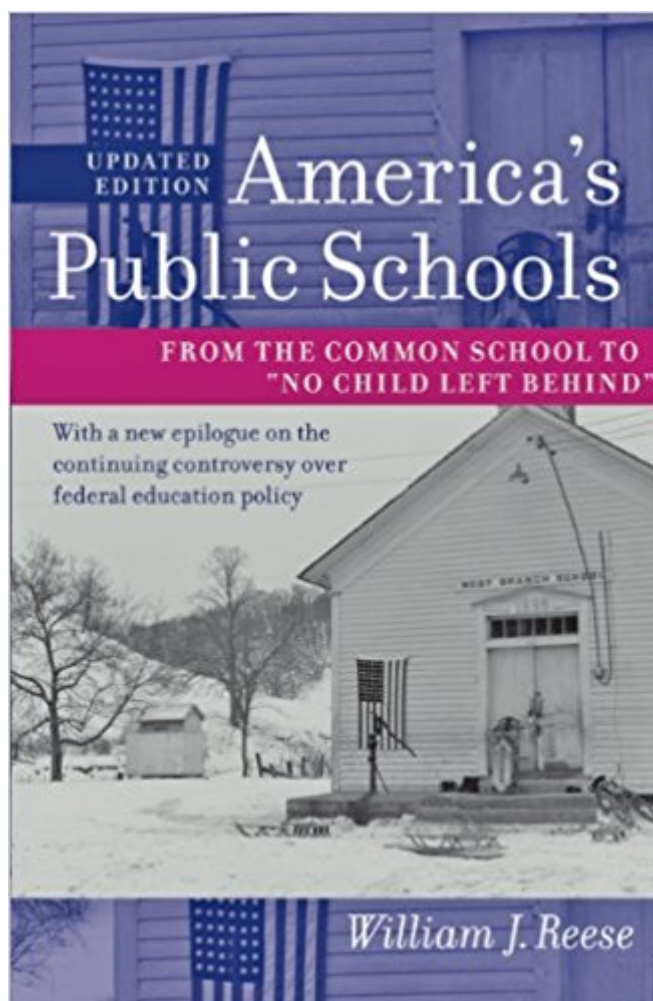


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# America's Public Schools: From The Common School To "No Child Left Behind" (The American Moment)



## Synopsis

In this update to his landmark publication, William J. Reese offers a comprehensive examination of the trends, theories, and practices that have shaped America's public schools over the last two centuries. Reese approaches this subject along two main lines of inquiry—education as a means for reforming society and ongoing reform within the schools themselves. He explores the roots of contemporary educational policies and places modern battles over curriculum, pedagogy, race relations, and academic standards in historical perspective. A thoroughly revised epilogue outlines the significant challenges to public school education within the last five years. Reese analyzes the shortcomings of "No Child Left Behind" and the continued disjuncture between actual school performance and the expectations of government officials. He discusses the intrusive role of corporations, economic models for enticing better teacher performance, the continued impact of conservatism, and the growth of home schooling and charter schools. Informed by a breadth of historical scholarship and based squarely on primary sources, this volume remains the standard text for future teachers and scholars of education.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A very good introductory survey for anyone who wants to learn more about American education."  
(Sunday Times) "A superb history of our public schools, one that is clearly and colorfully written."  
(Journal of American History) "Reese has delivered in one volume an analysis as synthetic, intelligent, and importantly, deeply engaged with the most enduring issues in popular education as

we are likely to encounter for some time." (Journal of Social History)"

"A very good introductory survey for anyone who wants to learn more about American education." (Sunday Times)"A superb history of our public schools, one that is clearly and colorfully written." (Journal of American History)"A brilliant contribution to the field." (Paedagogica Historica)"Reese has delivered in one volume an analysis as synthetic, intelligent, and importantly, deeply engaged with the most enduring issues in popular education as we are likely to encounter for some time." (Journal of Social History)

Just recently having gone back to school I decided to do my first research study on the history of education in America and immigration. Having pretty much no idea what to choose I came across this book. Boy am I glad!!! This is an outstanding book that gives an in-depth look into the history of public education in America. Reese goes all the way back to the original "common school" and covers 200+ years of history in public education. Reese discusses major reformers - you know those people that were so profound that you wondered why "that" school was named after "that" person. This book tells who those reformers were and why they were so important. What is better is that Reese does not get "overly educational" on you! What is also important is how Reese illustrates just through the history alone how society and schools are intertwined. Definitely a good book and more than what I expected. Take your time with this book to hear and see all that William J Reese is trying to show and reveal to the reader!

I bought this because Justice Thomas cited it in his bracing dissent in *Morse v. Frederick*, but for my purposes (researching the Meyer-Pierce doctrine) I found works by Carl Kaestle and and Thomas and Lorraine Pangle for useful.

Needed this book for a masters course. It was difficult to stick with reading the book. The print was small

I was really looking forward to this book. As a long time educator I have often wondered about the purpose of public schools in both the past and the present and thought this book might provide a good historical context. Sadly, I must concur with most of the comments by [tinder\\_blast](#). This book is completely disorganized and utterly confusing. That he "talks himself into circles and I swear he reuses passages in this book just to make it longer" is absolutely the case, and which is all the more

disappointing because it is such a waste of space when covering 200 years of social, political, and economic context to explain the history of US public schools in such a short book (only 300 pages). After pages and pages of disorganized writing, unexplained conclusions, undefined concepts, and a general lack of academic criticism or balance on most of the topics I gave up. When I came to the following unsourced, unreferenced, and unexplained sentence I gave up: "To this day, progressive educators encounter apathy, indifference, and resistance from the poor, who are often moored to tradition and suspicious of bourgeois reform." Seriously!? That's a pretty broad, biased, and hostile brush to paint all poor people in America (and possibly the world) with and more so to put forward that conclusion with no evidence, context, or explanation (it was the end of the paragraph before moving to a new topic) is an example of the shoddy scholarship in this book. It was also just one of MANY times I wanted to ask the author "but WHY are they suspicious? WHY do they prefer the traditional practices? HOW do those practices fit into their world? WHAT did the reformers believe was WRONG with the traditional practices or the people who followed them?" Sadly, these questions are never even asked by the author. The issues with this sentence are representative of many such sentences in the book. I think it also belies the true ideological and political position of the author which comes across throughout the book but which is not explicitly stated and which is fairly hard to discern due to the disorganized nature of the book and the writing.

This book was so dry it was almost painful to read. I felt like the time I spent reading this book were parts of my life that are lost to me forever now. I got nothing from reading this book except frustration. Reese covers the history of American schools very well, if you can read it. He talks himself into circles and I swear he reuses passages in this book just to make it longer. He also jumps around within a time period, making it near impossible to get a clear idea of what education was like for people at one certain time. His ability to cover the subject well does not make up for the unpleasantness of reading this book. If you are looking for something fun to read about the schools, stay the hell away from this. If you are looking for a book for research purposes then find something more coherent. To put this review in a frame of reference, I do not know anything about the history of American education. I am taking a class on it and was assigned this book. So, in all fairness, it may not be Reese that is convoluted and impossible to work through, but the subject itself. I find this difficult to believe, however.

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