NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
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Achieves



Policy Review

January 13, 2026

Benjamin Roundtree

Chief of Staff

SPIRIT | PRIDE | EXCELLENCE

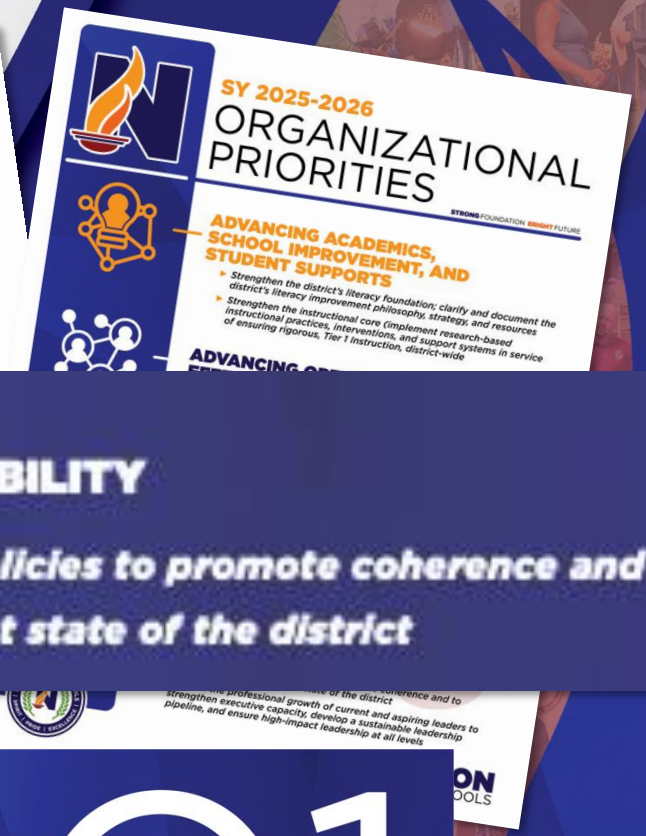
NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS *Achieves*

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES | NOV. 2025 Q1 2025-2026

ACADEMICS
OPERATIONS
CULTURE
ENGAGEMENT
INNOVATION
ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY

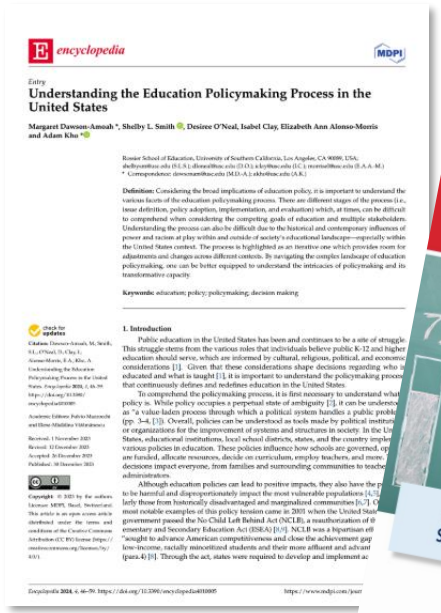
QUARTERLY REPORT







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Entry

Understanding the Education Policymaking Process in the United States

Margaret Dawson-Amoah *, Shelby L. Smith, Desiree O'Neal, Isabel Clay, Elizabeth Ann Alonso-Morris and Adam Kho *

Rosier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089, USA;

Definition: Considering the broad implications of education policy, it is important to understand the various facets of the education policymaking process. There are different stages of the process (i.e., issue definition, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation) which, at times, can be difficult to comprehend when considering the competing goals of education and multiple stakeholders. Understanding the process can also be difficult due to the historical and contemporary influences of power and racism at play within and outside of society's educational landscape—especially within the United States context. The process is highlighted as an iterative one which provides room for adjustments and changes across different contexts. By navigating the complex landscape of education policymaking, one can be better equipped to understand the intricacies of policymaking and its transformative capacity.

Keywords: education; policy; policymaking; decision making

1. Introduction

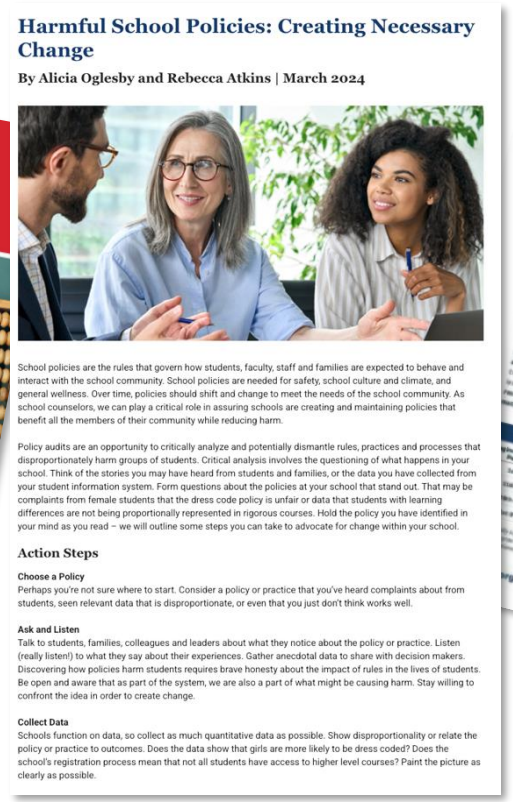
Public education in the United States has been and continues to be a site of struggle. This struggle stems from the various roles that individuals believe public K-12 and higher education should serve, which are informed by cultural, religious, political, and economic considerations [1]. Given that these considerations shape decisions regarding who is educated and what is taught [1], it is important to understand the policymaking process that continuously defines and redefines education in the United States.

To comprehend the policymaking process, it is first necessary to understand what policy is. While policy occupies a perpetual state of ambiguity [2], it can be understood as "a value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem" (pp. 3–4, [3]). Overall, policies can be understood as tools made by political institutions or organizations for the improvement of systems and structures in society. In the United States, educational institutions, local school districts, states, and the country implement various policies in education. These policies influence how schools are governed, operate, are funded, allocate resources, decide on curriculum, employ teachers, and more. These decisions impact everyone, from families and surrounding communities to teachers and administrators.

Although education policies can lead to positive impacts, they also have the potential to be harmful and disproportionately impact the most vulnerable populations [4,5]. Particularly those from historically disadvantaged and marginalized communities [6,7]. One of the most notable examples of this policy tension came in 2001 when the United States government passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) [8,9]. NCLB was a bipartisan effort "sought to advance American competitiveness and close the achievement gap for low-income, racially minoritized students and their more affluent and advantaged (para.4) [8]. Through the act, states were required to develop and implement ac

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Harmful School Policies: Creating Necessary Change

By Alicia Oglesby and Rebecca Atkins | March 2024

School policies are the rules that govern how students, faculty, staff and families are expected to behave and interact with the school community. School policies are needed for safety, school culture and climate, and general wellness. Over time, policies should shift and change to meet the needs of the school community. As school counselors, we can play a critical role in assuring schools are creating and maintaining policies that benefit all the members of their community while reducing harm.

Policy audits are an opportunity to critically analyze and potentially dismantle rules, practices and processes that disproportionately harm groups of students. Critical analysis involves the questioning of what happens in your school. Think of the stories you may have heard from students and families, or the data you have collected from your student information system. Form questions about the policies at your school that stand out. That may be complaints from female students that the dress code policy is unfair or data that students with learning differences are not being proportionally represented in rigorous courses. Hold the policy you have identified in your mind as you read – we will outline some steps you can take to advocate for change within your school.

Action Steps

Choose a Policy

Perhaps you're not sure where to start. Consider a policy or practice that you've heard complaints about from students, seen relevant data that is disproportionate, or even that you just don't think works well.

Ask and Listen

Talk to students, families, colleagues and leaders about what they notice about the policy or practice. Listen (really listen!) to what they say about their experiences. Gather anecdotal data to share with decision makers. Discovering how policies harm students requires brave honesty about the impact of rules in the lives of students. Be open and aware that as part of the system, we are also a part of what might be causing harm. Stay willing to confront the idea in order to create change.

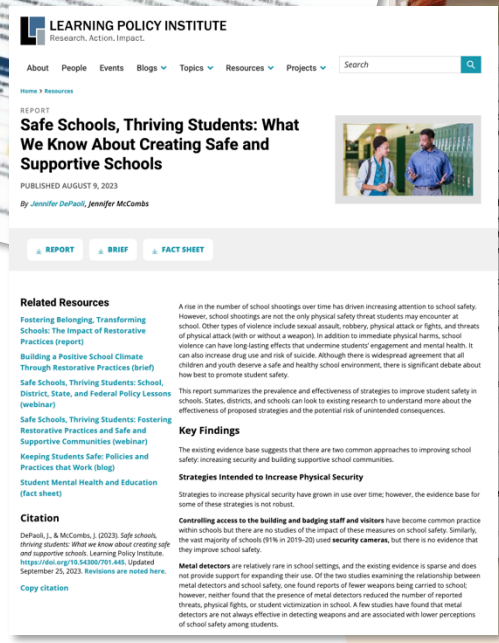
Collect Data

Schools function on data, so collect as much quantitative data as possible. Show disproportionality or relate the policy or practice to outcomes. Does the data show that girls are more likely to be dress coded? Does the school's registration process mean that not all students have access to higher level courses? Paint the picture as clearly as possible.


SCORE State Collaboratives on Reforming Education

Tennessee Case Study: Piloting Instructionally Coherent Literacy Intervention in Knox County Schools

THE DATA ON INSTRUCTIONAL COHERENCE


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REPORT

Safe Schools, Thriving Students: What We Know About Creating Safe and Supportive Schools

PUBLISHED AUGUST 9, 2023

By Jennifer DePaoli, Jennifer McCombs

REPORT BRIEF FACT SHEET

Related Resources

Fostering Belonging, Transforming Schools: The Impact of Restorative Practices (report)

Building a Positive School Climate Through Restorative Practices (brief)

Safe Schools, Thriving Students: School, District, State, and Federal Policy Lessons (webinar)

Safe Schools, Thriving Students: Fostering Restorative Practices and Safe and Supportive Communities (webinar)

Keeping Students Safe: Policies and Practices that Work (blog)

Student Mental Health and Education (fact sheet)

Citation

DePaoli, J., & McCombs, J. (2023). *Safe schools, thriving students: What we know about creating safe and supportive schools*. Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/701.445. Updated September 25, 2023. Revisions are noted here.

Copy citation

A rise in the number of school shootings over time has driven increasing attention to school safety. However, school shootings are not the only physical safety threat students may encounter at school. Other types of violence include sexual assault, robbery, physical attack or fights, and threats of physical attack (with or without a weapon). In addition to immediate physical harms, school violence can have long-lasting effects that undermine students' engagement and mental health. It can also increase drug use and risk of suicide. Although there is widespread agreement that all children and youth deserve a safe and healthy school environment, there is significant debate about how best to promote student safety.

This report summarizes the prevalence and effectiveness of strategies to improve student safety in schools. States, districts, and schools can look to existing research to understand more about the effectiveness of proposed strategies and the potential risk of unintended consequences.

Key Findings

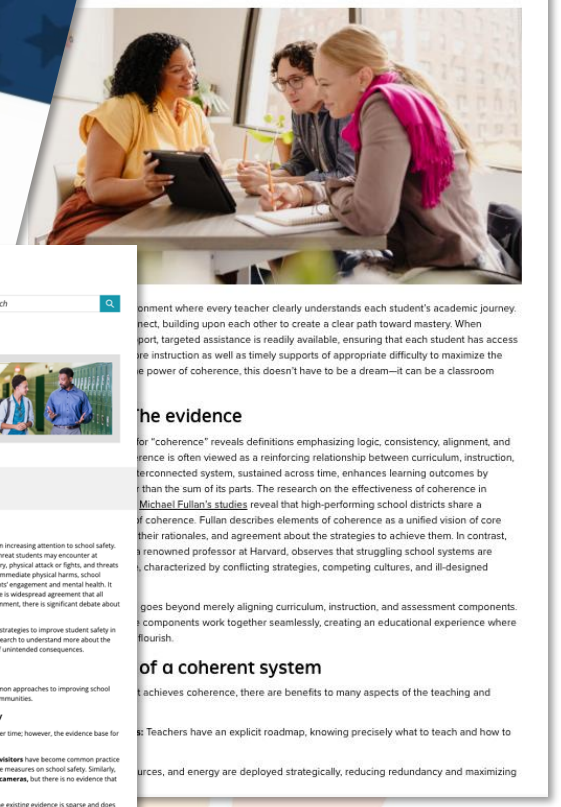
The existing evidence base suggests that there are two common approaches to improving school safety: increasing security and building supportive school communities.

Strategies Intended to Increase Physical Security

Strategies to increase physical security have grown in use over time; however, the evidence base for some of these strategies is not robust.

Controlling access to the building and badging staff and visitors have become common practice within schools but there are no studies of the impact of these measures on school safety. Similarly, the vast majority of schools (91% in 2019–20) used **security cameras**, but there is no evidence that they improve school safety.

Metal detectors are relatively rare in school settings, and the existing evidence is sparse and does not provide support for expanding their use. Of the two studies examining the relationship between metal detectors and school safety, one found reports of fewer weapons being carried to school; however, neither found that the presence of metal detectors reduced the number of reported threats, physical fights, or student victimization in school. A few studies have found that metal detectors are not always effective in detecting weapons and are associated with lower perceptions of school safety among students.


INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Beyond Alignment: The Power of Coherence in School Districts

Dr. Bonnie Cochran

November 20, 2024 · 6 Min Read

onment where every teacher clearly understands each student's academic journey. nect, building upon each other to create a clear path toward mastery. When port, targeted assistance is readily available, ensuring that each student has access re instruction as well as timely supports of appropriate difficulty to maximize the e power of coherence, this doesn't have to be a dream—it can be a classroom

he evidence

or "coherence" reveals definitions emphasizing logic, consistency, alignment, and erence is often viewed as a reinforcing relationship between curriculum, instruction, terconnected system, sustained across time, enhances learning outcomes by than the sum of its parts. The research on the effectiveness of coherence in Michael Fullan's studies reveal that high-performing school districts share a f coherence. Fullan describes elements of coherence as a unified vision of core their rationales, and agreement about the strategies to achieve them. In contrast, renowned professor at Harvard, observes that struggling school systems are , characterized by conflicting strategies, competing cultures, and ill-designed

goes beyond merely aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment components. components work together seamlessly, creating an educational experience where flourish.

of a coherent system

achieves coherence, there are benefits to many aspects of the teaching and

s: Teachers have an explicit roadmap, knowing precisely what to teach and how to

urces, and energy are deployed strategically, reducing redundancy and maximizing

STRONG POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Promote Consistency | Reduce Ambiguity | Support Decision Making

REGULAR POLICY REVIEW

- **Changing Landscape**

  New state and federal laws are enacted each year, and shifting societal conditions regularly shape the expectations placed upon school systems.

- **Transparency & Public Trust**

  They reflect what a community believes, while also providing clarity to stakeholders about how decisions are made and what standards guide our work.

- **Codified Reinforcement**

  It is standard practice for districts to clearly articulate policies related to topics like instructional expectations, literacy, core values, and organizational commitments.

- **Maintaining Relevance**

  Policies that are outdated, duplicative, or no longer relevant should be regularly reviewed.

POLICY FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

- Engagement with Staff & BOE
- Defined Review/Development Timelines
- Feedback Opportunities
- Prospective Dates for Adoption

We are on a relentless pursuit to become the

FASTEST IMPROVING

school district in the state of Georgia - organized and led by a

HIGHLY SKILLED TEACHER & LEADER WORKFORCE

working tirelessly

on behalf of children for the benefit of our community

and **PRODUCING BREAKTHROUGH RESULTS**

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NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
STRATEGIC PLAN

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