



# **Building Civic Capacity : The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools (Studies in Government and Public Policy (Paper))**

*Clarence N. Stone, Jeffrey R Henig, Bryan D Jones, Carol Pierannunzi*

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The authors of this volume argue that urban education is in urgent need of reform and that, although there have been plenty of innovative and even promising attempts to improve conditions, most have been doomed. The reason for this, they agree, lies in the failure of our major cities to develop their "civic capacity" the ability to build and maintain a broad social and political coalition across all sectors of the urban community in pursuit of a common goal.

Drawing upon an ambitious eleven-city study funded by the National Science Foundation, the authors synthesize and make sense of the enormous amount of data from Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Not only is this a vivid report from the front lines of big city schooling, but this work challenges us to rethink our approach to the crisis in our schools.

The authors vigorously contend that it is essential for all (or most) important actors in an urban community to join together in a shared vision of what is wrong in the schools and how to fix it, and to pursue that vision strongly and systematically over a long time. That can only happen, however, if those same actors develop the ability and willingness to set aside narrow aims and opportunistic behavior in favor of pursuing the collective good.

Written for a wide spectrum of potential readers including educators, social scientists, policymakers, and every citizen who cares about his or her child's education this book restores coalition politics to the center of educational reform and reminds us to look well beyond pedagogy and management theory for solutions to problems that are immune to the usual remedies. Drawing on select cases, the authors show that effective civic coalitions can be built. The struggle for reform can be won.

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