In the next few slides, I will provide you with a timeline of the federal government’s role in education. We will stay on these slides for an extended period of time as I go through the timeline. The notes for this part of the lecture are therefore relatively long. A handout with the notes specifically for this timeline is available as an attachment to this lecture and on the i-site. If you like reading the notes along with the lecture, you may want to print them out to help you follow along.

*1917, 1946:* The first federal involvement in education at all in the United States was in 1917, when Congress voted to give federal aid to vocational schools. This obviously fits into the notion of vocational education that was being developed in the Progressive Era that we discussed earlier and the differentiation among what students were expected to learn and given the opportunity to pursue. It was renewed in 1946.

*1958:* In 1958, in response to the Soviet Union’s shooting a rocket called Sputnik into space, the National Defense Education Act was approved. This was the second congressional intervention in schooling. This act was designed to fund science, math and foreign language instruction. As the title of the Act implies, education was seen here as directly serving the national defense. It’s quite amazing to think that even as of 1958, there had been only two instances of federal involvement in education, and that neither of these focused on literacy or many other core school functions. Nor did they serve particular student populations.

*1965:* The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA, constitutes Congress’ first focused attempt to address educational inequities in the United States, by creating Title 1 funding for disadvantaged children. It was part of the Civil Rights Movement. This act requires re-authorization every five years.

1964: Title VI of Civil Rights Act

*1972*: Title IX of Education Amendments

*1973, 1975:* Section of Rehabilitation Act Education for All Handicap Children Act

Other Acts passed during the Civil Rights Movement also addressed educational inequities and discrimination. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits racial discrimination. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, while Section 504 mandated inclusion and appropriate services for students with special educational needs. It was not until the 1970’s when children with identified special needs even started to get anything consistent in terms of treatment or education and stopped being expelled from school or denied admittance.

*1980: Department of Education Created at Cabinet Level.* Although it’s hard to imagine it now, given the influence that the U.S. Department of Education exerts over American education, it wasn’t created until 1980.

*1983: Nation at Risk*

This was not a federal initiative but an incredibly influential report that you all have read for our first class on tracking. This report was written by a combination of college presidents, Nobel Prize winners, and business leaders. It decried the state of American education. Below you can see a quote that represents the main ideas of the report as you read it and also a picture of the authors on the left there. Please pause and take a moment to read the quote.

*A Nation at Risk* was incredibly influential. It directly criticized local control over schools, which was a sacrosanct American commitment. It also slammed the idea that schools should provide differentiated educational opportunities to different kinds of students. Remember that the explosion of being able to take home economics instead of taking math or taking consumer economics instead of trig all started during the Progressive Era when it was thought that to serve children as they were, we should meet them where they were at and provide the kind of education that they wanted.

As we saw from a social efficiency perspective, too, it was thought not to make sense to train students in calculus who were not going to go on to become engineers. Why waste the resources? These internal school tracks were further emphasized and expanded with *Brown* v. *Board of Education* in 1954 because with desegregation came integration, obviously. Even if students could not be segregated from one another by school, they could still be separated within the school by academic track. For example, a school could create an honors track and then set admissions so that African Americans do not get in. For reasons both honorable and horrific, therefore, tracking was well entrenched in American secondary education by the early 1980s. *A Nation at Risk* said that this kind of tracking was really unacceptable because we were graduating too many students who did not have what they needed to compete in the new global economy.

1980’s-2000’s: In response to *A Nation at Risk* as well as other factors, the 1980-2000’s saw the start of the educational landscape that we know today with states and professional groups developing curricular standards, assessments and accountability mechanisms. We will talk more about this when we go into our accountability lecture. However, it is important to note that before 1980, no state had state-wide standards or frameworks or anything else of the kind. There were no state wide tests required for graduation. Some districts had tests, but the late 1980’s were the first time that states consistently started to develop some common standards and assessments. Texas was a leader in this process, as I’ll explain in the next lecture.

2002: Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which remember from earlier in our timeline had to be re-authorized every five years, was re-authorized and re-christened the No Child Left Behind Act (or NCLB) in 2001. NCLB was a bipartisan effort, heavily sponsored by President George Bush and Senator Edward Kennedy. I am going to assume you know some about the outline of NCLB, which I’ll go into in detail in my next e-lecture on Accountability. But I will point out here that NCLB emphasized the importance of making sure that all students are able to meet state standards. In service of this goal, NCLB required that data be disaggregated so that schools could no longer hide the performance of any one group under the strong performance of another. Even if a school’s overall achievement is very high, it is dinged under NCLB if any group of kids—poor kids, African American kids, or special needs students—are achieving at significantly lower rates.

2004: 2004 saw a major revamping of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (known as IDEA). IDEA brought about tons of important changes in how schools are expected to serve students with special needs.

2009: NCLB is still the law of the land, because Congress hasn’t managed to agree on a reauthorization since 2001. (The Obama administration has converted NCLB’s name back to ESEA, but that’s as far as anyone’s gotten.) ESEA reauthorization is now more than five years overdue. Everyone agrees that NCLB needs major overhaul. Everyone agrees, too, on the importance of keeping NCLB’s insistence that all students be given the opportunity to learn at a high level. Get any more detailed than that, however, and you’ll uncover a lot of contention. Beginning in 2009, therefore, President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan decided to exercise control over schools, districts, and states by setting up financial incentive schemes, most prominently Race to the Top. Using relatively small amounts of money, Race to the Top has incentivized states to pass laws that vastly expand charter schools, tie teacher evaluation and teacher pay to students’ standardized test scores, change their testing regimes, revise curricular standards, and make other significant changes. In these respects, Race to the Top is changing schooling practices across the nation despite the lack of legislative mandate. We will talk more about Race to the Top in class and in the next e- lecture.

2010: Finally, in what might be the most seismic shift in American education at least in the past decade (since NCLB), over 40 states have recently adopted “Common Core Standards” in math and English. Developed by a private group and unveiled in 2010, these Common Core Standards are intended to serve as the centerpiece of nationwide curricular standards—and hence also nationwide student assessment—in math and English. Race to the Top funding is partly conditional on states’ adopting the Common Core, so they have had a strong incentive to do so. I describe this shift as seismic because it is the first time in American educational history that nationwide standards are being adopted and implemented.