

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF 2001 HOUSE BILL 656:
THE EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 2001

by

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(Under the Direction of C. Thomas Holmes)

ABSTRACT

The Education Reform Act of 2001 is noted for the tight retention policy that ended social promotion. This study used the Kingdon (2003) model of merging the streams of problem, policy, and politics to promote an agenda. A historical case study based on those three streams was created. The analysis of the case study discovered: 1) at both the federal and state level, the executive has a strong ability to promote an agenda; 2) most of the federal key players identified by Kingdon (2003) have an equal state level counterpart; 3) state level special interest groups did not function effectively at blocking or changing the policy; 4) compromise is one of the most effective tools for thwarting a group's ability to block an agenda; 5) committee and sub-committee chairs are noted as the most effective in stopping or changing a promoted policy; 6) by using recombination and mutation, policy makers can refute research that is adversarial to the policy; 7) careful framing of ideas makes it possible to hide an agenda. The study recommends further research in the area of special interest and legislative coalition formations.

INDEX WORDS: agenda, agenda formation, policy, politics, problem stream, elected officials, non-elected officials, special interest, education, legislative process, discriminatory effect.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: my wife, who constantly nagged and harassed me to get it done; my two children, who put up with no daddy on Sundays and Wednesdays; my father and mother, who would be proud of me no matter what three letters were at the end of my name.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Context of Study Initiation	3
Research Questions and Purpose.....	5
Methodology	5
Organization of Study	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON SOCIAL PROMOTION	8
New Models for Retention Policy	9
Retention vs. Promotion	11
3 LITERATURE REVIEW OF AGENDA FORMATION.....	14
The Problem Stream	14
The Policy Stream	16
The Political Stream	18
Outside Influences	23
Media.....	24
4 KEY PLAYERS.....	25
Governor Roy Barnes	25
Ron Newcomb	27

	Representative Charlie Smith.....	28
	Senator Richard Marable.....	30
	Representative Jeanette Jamieson	31
	Ralph Noble.....	31
	Herb Garrett.....	32
5	CASE STUDY: PROBLEM STREAM.....	34
	The Early Years.....	34
	Smith and Barnes.....	35
	National Awareness.....	36
	Barnes Administration.....	37
	Policy and Problem Merge	38
6	CASE STUDY: POLICY STREAM	41
	The Idea.....	41
	Governor's Education Reform Commission	42
	Ron Newcomb and Non-Elected Government Officials	45
7	CASE STUDY: POLITICAL STREAM.....	48
	The Governor	48
	Compromises.....	50
	The Governor's Staff.....	50
	Interest Groups	51
	The Role of the Legislature.....	53
	Georgia House of Representatives	54
	GAE and PTA	56

Georgia Senate Education Committee	59
Legislative Black Caucus	60
Conference Committee Report	61
8 FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND FURTHER STUDY	65
Major Actors.....	65
The Problem: How and Why?	68
Tactics	69
Other Findings	70
Conclusion.....	72
Recommendations for Further Study	73
REFERENCES	75
APPENDICES	78
A Interview List	78
B Retention Figures for Georgia Students Fall 2000	79
C Synopsis of Social Promotion Legislative Language	80

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The time has come to end social promotion in our schools” (Gov. Roy Barnes, 2001).

This decree issued from a former governor, echoed by the 2001 session of the General Assembly is now law, and was enacted during the 2003-2004 school year. It states that children in the third, fifth, and eighth grade must pass the Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT) to be promoted to the next grade level (Georgia § 20-2-283, 2002). Now seven years later this policy is in full effect and shows no apparent signs of going away. In Georgia, this issue has arisen and has faded many times. Usually it was defeated or soon repealed upon implementation. The first policy initiative was taken by Gov. Joe Frank Harris, but was not a matter of law. The Department of Education made changes to promotion standards for the state (Lancetti, 1986). The first real legislation was in 1999 with Senator Casey Cagle’s bill Senate Bill 69 (Georgia S.B. 69, 1999). This bill would have made the state board policy implemented in 1984 a matter of public law by not advancing 4th, 6th, or 9th grade students who do not pass the criterion-referenced competency test (CRCT) in math or reading after 3 attempts (Georgia S.B. 69, 1999).

Nationally we have seen this issue arise as early as 1904 when the Russell Sage Foundation supported Leonard Ayres’ study on grade retention and promotion (1909). In this study Ayres found that students were being eliminated from the process. “For each 1000 pupils in the first grade, [we] find only 263 in the eighth, and only 56 in the fourth year of the high school” (p. 14). He posited that the promotion of unsuccessful students attributed to this high dropout rate. To solve this problem, Ayers recommended a standards-based approach with authentic assessment. Since that time this same agenda has surfaced, departed, and reappeared a myriad of times. Each time the agenda became policy it was immediately reversed. The reason

for such reversal is given by Ayres himself: “It is apparent that if considerable numbers of the children entering school fail to be advanced regularly, the lower grades will become abnormally swollen by the damming of the stream of pupils through them” (p. 139). In fact if the current bill had been in effect prior to 2002 school year over 17% of Georgia’s third grade students would have been retained (Wilson, 2004). Horror stories of elementary school children being old enough to drive before being promoted scared legislators in the past into reversing this volatile issue (R. Noble, personal communication, June 14, 2007). So how is it that this particular idea continues to resurface and what was different about this agenda formation? Was it a pushy Governor, the national mood, or an idea whose time had finally come? This study will serve to analyze the agenda formation of the 2001 Education Reform Bill, and to give answers as to its longevity.

The study will begin with a historical look at the issue of social promotion. In this section, we will deal briefly with the pros and cons of tying promotion to high stakes testing. The section will serve mostly to show how the issue of social promotion was promoted into being a problem that policy makers could solve. Next, we will look at the literature on agenda formation. This study will rely heavily on John W. Kingdon’s (2003) framework for agenda formation. The study will look to see how his ideas of problem, policy, and politics work at the state level. Finally, the study will build a case study written from the three points of problem, policy, and politics in order to analyze the formation of this agenda. The study will conclude with ideas for further research.

Context of Study Initiation

In 1997, I joined the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE). This group considers itself to be a quasi-teacher's union¹, but with anti-collective bargaining laws in the state of Georgia it functions with very little power (Georgia, § 20-2-989.10, 2008). It does however, have a strong educational lobby that works to promote and block educational issues. My role in 1997 was to serve as a building representative for Windsor Spring Elementary School in Augusta, Georgia. I helped to recruit members in my local school to join GAE. In doing so, I worked to find issues important to the teachers in my building and to give information of agendas that GAE was lobbying for or against with the legislature. I served in this position from 1997 – 2000. During this time, issue discussion among teachers focused primarily on proposed accountability issues, and a discussion of incentive pay for teachers whose students made a consistent five-point increase on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills took place during this time.² In these discussions, one Fifth-grade teacher made this point, “if ‘little Johnny’ could just read, I could teach him (personal communication, 1998).”³

The 1998 gubernatorial election saw Roy Barnes (D – Mableton) as the new governor of Georgia. In his campaign, Barnes called education his number one priority. GAE endorsed Roy Barnes in this election and I closely followed his educational agendas. During Barnes first term as governor, Senator Casey Cagle (R – Gainesville, GA) introduced a bill that would base a student's promotion on a standardized test (Georgia S.B. 69, 1999). At the time, this issue did not get much press. GAE did support this agenda; however, the group dismissed the bill

¹ This comment was elicited by all three of the respondents that represent the Georgia Association of Educators. It is also the chief complaint offered about this organization in documents from other educational interest groups.

² To the extent these discussions were taking place statewide is not certain. These were simply the discussions that were taking place primarily within GAE and among Richmond County teachers.

³ This statement was made by a colleague during a faculty meeting in Augusta, Georgia. Whether the statement was from frustration or fact is not known, but many of the teachers present echoed in agreement.

knowing that the senate education committee would not allow a vote (J. Whitfield, personal communication, June 4, 2007).⁴ In the year 2000, Governor Barnes presented to GAE his A-plus Education Reform Bill, also known as HB 1187. This bill was very similar to the GAE platform and the organization responded favorably, but when the Governor added punitive measures to the accountability and worked to repeal due process hearings for tenured teachers, GAE refused to endorse the bill (B. Cribbs, personal communication, June 6, 2007).⁵ H.B. 1187 sought to amend the GA statute 20-2-1160. This statute listed seven reasons for why a teacher could be dismissed and also gave teacher a right to a public hearing.

At this time, I was serving as a legislative delegate for Richmond County Association of Educators (RCAE), an affiliate of GAE. In this position, I went to Atlanta to meet with legislators and lobby their support in defeating H.B. 1187. GAE, who typically supported Democratic candidates, began to support Republican candidates that were against the Governor's reform bill. This also allowed them to be vocal on issues that were a part of the Republican agenda. In a backlash against teacher accountability, GAE began to push for some student accountability. Ralph Noble, former President of GAE, responded that teachers felt "...if I am going to be held accountable for the CRCT (and at that time remember 1187 had very strict punishment for CRCT performance, it has since been removed)...if I am going to be punished for CRCT scores those kids are going to be held accountable" (R. Noble, personal communication, June 14, 2007).

⁴ This comment was elicited from the Georgia Association of Educator's chief lobbyist Jocelyn Whitfield. The assumption made by her is also backed up in comments from both Senator Richard Marable and Governor Roy E. Barnes. Marable served as the Senate Education Committee Chair during this time period.

⁵ This statement is based on legislative priorities released by the group during the floor debate on H.B.1187, and on comments elicited by Ralph Noble, former President, registered lobbyist for the Georgia's Association of Educators, and elementary school teacher.

At this time, I had just finished my master's degree and was considering possible topics to study in my doctoral work. One idea was that of untested subjects. I began to research high stakes test and focused on what the test did not measure. In my initial research, I became interested in political agendas and how certain ideas were successfully made into policy and others seemed to wither away in the sun. This interest led me to take courses in educational politics. In my course readings of John W. Kingdon's book on agenda formation, I decided to study how his ideas on political agenda formation affected the passage of H.B. 656 "The Education Reform Bill of 2001" and other legislation tied to banning social promotion.

Research Questions and Purpose

The purpose of this study will be to examine Kingdon's (2003) framework for agenda setting in terms of debate and legislative process between 1998 and 2001 surrounding the proposal to end social promotion in Georgia, and to create a case study that will identify successful tools in promoting and blocking educational policy. The following research questions will be addressed: (a) Who were the major actors involved in agenda-setting? (b) How and why did they define the "problem" at this particular time? (c) What were the major legislative coalitions? (d) Did their positions shift during this period? (e) Who were the major interest groups involved? (f) What were their positions? (g) What tactics did they use to either block or promote? This study will contribute to the literature on politics of social promotion and the power of gubernatorial agendas.

Methodology

For this study, I will be using artifact analysis, qualitative interviews, and historical data to produce a case study. The case was written from the three streams identified in Kingdon's

theory of agenda formation. Each of the streams was analyzed by the key players in the study. This analysis identified the window that allowed these streams to merge. A summary of the effectiveness of each key group will be provided. The methodology of case study was chosen because it allows for a holistic, in-depth approach (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). In case study, it is necessary to look at only one or two issues to help understand the system (1991). In our case, we will look at how each key player affected the agenda of banning social promotion. The case will identify policy alternatives, political tools, and problems that create windows.

The problem with any case study is the attempt to provide meaning and not just location (Tellis, 1997). It is this meaning that assures validity. In order for validity to exist in a case study, Yin (1994) writes that triangulation must be present. Triangulation is the process of gathering data from multiple methods in order to saturate the case and pull meaning from the data. Denzin (1984) characterizes this as data source triangulation in which the researcher looks for the data to remain the same within multiple sources.

This case study was written from the paradigm of understanding. According to Yin (1994) there are three types of case studies: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. This study will use the descriptive type. Yin states that descriptive case studies require that a theory be designed prior to the case. This is where we will use Kingdon's findings and see how they apply to state politics.

In the collection of data for this study I analyzed artifacts that included written speeches, minutes from meetings, editorials, position papers, emails between the Governor's staff and other media information. Each document was reviewed for themes and patterns defined by Kingdon (2003). From these documents and from the literature review, key players were

identified (See Appendix C). The key players were then categorized into the groups identified by Kingdon (2003). An open ended interview protocol was written for each of these groups. I based historical questions from the document analysis. I conducted each interview in person for one hour with follow-ups by email or phone conversations. Transcriptions were created and a synopsis written in order to analyze the meaning. The synopsis and the transcripts were coded to identify the tools proposed by Kingdon (2003) for agenda formation. Interview participants examined the documents and their responses recorded. I also reviewed newspapers and other media outlets to get a historical perspective on the issue.

Organization of the Study

After I collected and analyzed the data, I wrote the remainder of the study in the following manner. Chapter 2 will provide a brief history of social promotion agendas leading up to the 2001 legislative session and a review of literature discussing positive and negative effects on tying promotion to standardized testing. It will define the problem associated with this study. Chapter 3 will include a literature review on Kingdon's (2003) framework of agenda formation and other effects on education policy. Chapter 4 will identify the key players involved in this study. In Chapter 5, I will create the case study based on the viewpoint of the problem stream. Chapter 6 will be the case study from the viewpoint of the policy stream. Chapter 7 will provide a case study based on the political stream. The study will conclude in Chapter 8 with findings from each case study that relate back to the proposed research questions, an overall conclusion of the study, and recommendations for further study. In the findings, there will be a discussion of the events that caused each stream to merge. It will also identify key players from each case and discuss the tactics that were used in order to promote or block the agenda.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SOCIAL PROMOTION

Kingdon (2003) began his book with the statement:

The phrase “an idea whose time has come” captures a fundamental reality about an irresistible movement that sweeps over our politics and our society, pushing aside everything that might stand in its path. We feel that such an event can be recognized by signs like sustained and marked changes in public opinion, repeated mobilization or people with intensely held preferences, and bandwagons onto which politicians of all persuasions climb. Members of Congress are fond of trotting out the phrase whenever they are advocating a piece of landmark legislation. And policy activist of all kinds often attempt to account for the emergence of an issue to the forefront of attention with such comments as, “I don’t know – it was an idea whose time had come, I guess (p. 1).”

By the year 2001, this might certainly have been true of the idea ending social promotion. As was mentioned earlier, it was not a new idea. According to Lorrie Shepherd’s research, “it follows a seven or eight year cycle” (p. 1, qtd. in Kelly, 1999). Typically, states try to tighten promotion standards, but then loosen those standards when retention rates increase, but was this time different? For the first time the idea was catching on in many different areas including our federal government. In the 1999 State of the Union address, President Clinton makes a statement about ending social promotion, and draws attention to new policies in Chicago and Cincinnati (Clinton, 1999). The states of Texas and Missouri were quick to join in the fray with new legislation regarding promotion and retention of students. This led the United States Department of Education, under Secretary Richard Riley, to publish the book *Taking Responsibility for Ending Social Promotion: A Guide for Educators and State and Local Leaders* (1999). This book is written as a blue print for developing policies to deal with implementing the end of social

promotion and with ways to combat the negative effects caused by strict retention and promotion policies.

New Models for Retention Policy

The most notable model that deals with ending social promotion might be in the city of Chicago. In 1996, Chicago Public Schools reintroduced a retention policy. This policy tied promotion to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). What was new in this policy was the second chance clause. Students who were below grade level attended summer school and retook the test. Students passing after summer school gained promotion to the next grade. This idea of extra help was what set aside the Chicago policy from the historical trends of retention policy (Roderick et al., 2000). Chicago had reported some success in passing rates, but the most telling is of those students who were retained, 20% were placed into special education programs the next year (2000).

Other districts began to take Chicago's lead, and by 1999 state legislators had gotten in on the act. According to the Education Commission of the States, eight states had implemented some kind of retention policy, the most notable of which were Missouri and Texas.

No public school student shall be promoted to a higher grade level unless that student has a reading ability level at or above one grade level below the student's grade level (Missouri H.B. 889, 1999).

Starting in the 2004-05 school year...Eighth graders who fail to perform satisfactorily on the eighth grade reading and math assessments during the 2007-2008 school year will not be promoted to the ninth grade (Texas S.B. 4, 1999).

The Texas model was similar to that of Chicago. It also used a second chance provision, and the legislature provided many new programs to help students catch up. One significant

difference is that this time promotion was tied to a state test. Using the Texas Assessment of Academic Knowledge, instead of a standardized test (e.g. ITBS) allowed the state more control in the expectation of student knowledge. This test was already being used for school and teacher accountability, and it seemed like a logical step for promotion policy. One other difference is that Texas reformed schools as a part of a state plan. For the most part, local school boards set education policy, but states like to be involved because of the amount of state dollars spent on education. Legislatures have found it very difficult to manage education from a central location such as the capitol, and state reforms are much more difficult due to cost; however, certain state leaders saw the importance of educational reform at the state level. State leaders found that people mostly believe that students should not be promoted unless the student is on grade level, and that having a promotion test was a fair way to make this decision.

Support is even higher for statewide tests in English and Math as a requirement for promotion from 4th to 5th grade. Asked if students should pass a test in these subjects, even if they have passing grades, three-quarters of parents (73 percent) and the public (76%) say they should. Hispanics (86%), public school fathers (84%) and suburbanites (79%) are the strongest supporters of a 4th grade test. Mothers are among the least supportive, but even there, two-thirds (63%) favor the requirement...Again support for a 4th grade test increases to 81% of parents and 87% of the public if they are told that students are given extra instructional support in summer school and can retake the test (p. 2, Business Roundtable, 2000).

This and the national attention being drawn to programs was all the impetus needed. By the 2001 Georgia General Assembly legislative session, as many as 15 states had begun setting forth retention policies.¹

¹ This comment was elicited from Ron Newcomb, Governor Barnes' Education Advisor, in a discussion about how H.B. 656 was put together. Newcomb was referring to research that he had obtained from the Education Commission of the States.

Retention vs. Promotion

The question remains “does retention work?” To answer this question one has to decide what is being compared. Most people define social promotion as promotion for reasons other than achievement, and retention is the consequence of not performing to certain standards or benchmarks in a certain amount of time. Proponents of tight retention policies say that students must learn the material, and that promoting students not on grade level causes students to become a drag on the system. On the other side of that argument is the fact that continually retaining a student also leads to a swelling of the lower grade levels and leads to a higher dropout rate (Brophy, 2007).

The more difficult of these two arguments is in understanding exactly what the goal of the initiative is. Here, both groups agree. The goal is for students to achieve at or near grade level. Opponents of retention tied to test scores say that high stakes tests cannot give an accurate portrayal of achievement and that a simple repetition of a grade can increase student achievement (Brophy, 2007). Proponents of this strict retention say that without these high stakes tests we cannot adequately assess student achievement, and that students need to continue in the grade level until the students perform to a certain level. Most studies report that retention has a negative effect on students, and that those students who are retained most often come from lower socio-economic families and from families which have a lower educational attainment (Owens and Magliaro, 1998).

Since states have begun this renewed interest in tighter promotion retention policies, many studies have tried to analyze the data. The most exhaustive study has been in the city of Chicago.

Chicago Public Schools began a tight grade retention policy in the 1995 – 1996 school year. This was done by using a strict promotional standards set by using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills cutoff score. The program had no provision for exception; however in the Roderick, et al. study, it was noted that during the first year about 1/3 of the students who did not meet the cutoff were given a waiver (2000). These waivers came about due to schools circumvented the policy. This led to a tighter monitoring of retention. The system set up regions that would handle retention decisions. Roderick, et al. found that each region dealt with retention waivers differently (2000). This inconsistency makes this policy hard to research for effectiveness; however, when Roderick, et. al. looked at the groups of students that were retained; it was found that African-American students were disproportionately retained. The study also found that students who were retained were more likely to be retained at the second promotional gate and a high percentage of those retained were placed into special education (2000). Roderick et al., offers three hypotheses for this high percentage of placement into special education.

First these special education placements might reflect the fact that after students were retained, teachers identified previously undiagnosed learning disabilities. Second, they might reflect a mislabeling of students as learning disabled because teachers lacked an alternative explanation and strategy for the difficulties students were presenting. And, third, teachers and schools might have referred students to special education out of concern that, without that status and thus exemption from the policy these students would not be able to progress; in other words, special education could have been used as a means of getting struggling students around the policy and removing them from the accountability system. (p 28)

In the interpretive summary the Roderick, et al. report states, “Did retaining these low achieving students help? The answer to this question is definitely no.” (p. 52). In addition to this statement the report also agrees that social promotion does not show to have anymore of a

positive effect on struggling students. Data from Texas are treated in much the same way (Livingston, 2002).

Therefore, the question now becomes, which policy will lead to more harm. Several studies describe the negative effect of grade retention in graphic detail. Shepherd and Smith (1990) found that children found the prospect of flunking a grade to be more stressful than wetting in class or being caught stealing. In a meta analysis of 63 retention programs Dr. C. Thomas Holmes (1989) found that 54 resulted in overall negative effects. That among these were student achievement, attendance record, personal adjustment in school, and attitude toward school. With all of these negative results, one must wonder why states would be so quick to join the cause of ending social promotion.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON AGENDA FORMATION

“There ought to be a law!” This exclamation seems to be made every time an individual perceives a wrong to be committed. Strangely enough there probably is a law to correct this individual’s suffering, but the lack of enforcement or the knowledge of its existence is fogged by current political agendas, so one asks the question: “How does an idea become a law?” Is this just an obscure process that is controlled by the elected officials of our day? Are public opinion polls consulted when the legislature decides what is to be discussed each session? Maybe these issues stem from coalition or block-voting groups, and the individual is left to assert himself as a member of a concerned society.

Kingdon (2003) authored the book *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. In this work, Kingdon studied the ways in which ideas were transformed into agendas and public policies. Kingdon stated that policy is set forth in stages. First, the agenda must be set. Then alternatives are offered and discussed until an authoritative choice is put forth. From this choice a decision is made and implemented. Kingdon refers to this process as the three streams of problems, policy, and politics. It is when these streams converge that the greatest policy changes are made.

The Problem Stream

The problem stream is defined by Kingdon (2003) as the flow in which we become aware of issues that are affecting people. Government is constantly monitoring this flow by looking at various activities and events. These events do not always have to be traumatic. Most often it is simply the reading of indicators such as increased cost. Increased cost in certain areas tends to get the attention of politicians.

In our case, education is considered to be one of the most expensive items of the state government. Governor Roy Barnes worked to increase funding in education during his first two years of office. Governor Barnes administration was noted for its rhetoric on education spending. He pushed education spending to over 50% of the state budget during his first two terms (Mantius, 1999), and with House Bill 1187 he offered one of the most massive reforms of public education which also increased expenditures in education (Salzer, 2001). Barnes remarked in his interview, “that I told legislators that I would scrape the dome off of the capitol before I would cut one cent from education.” (Barnes, R., personal communication, 2007).

A change in indicators is how policy makers define a problem:

Policy makers consider a change in an indicator to be a change in the state of a system; this they define as a problem. The actual change in the indicator, however, gets exaggerated in the body politic, as people believe the change is symbolic of something larger and find that the new figures do not conform to their previous experience. Thus indicator change can have exaggerated effects on policy agendas (Kingdon, pp. 92 – 93, 2003).

However, this change is not always significant enough to coalesce the policy makers. In these cases, Kingdon (2003) noted that a nudge may be necessary:

Problems are often not self-evident by the indicators. They need a little push to get the attention of people in and around government. That push is sometimes provided by a focusing event like a crisis or disaster that comes along to call attention to the problem, a powerful symbol that catches on, or the personal experience of a policy maker (pp. 94 – 95)

It is this crisis that provides a way for the policy stream and the problem stream to merge. The system must respond to crisis, so therefore crisis means new policy. Problems open windows for ideas. These ideas are usually already in place and simply waiting for an opportunity. It could

be said that the problem is simply fertile ground for ideas to grow. In our case, the crises existed because the governor promoted it, and the national mood was focused on education. This actual policy had already been floated and even implemented, but the problem faded and no real changes were made; however, the streams had changed by 2001. In the previous years, a resurgence of tying promotion policy to a quantifiable test had been implemented in several states. President Clinton (1999) had mentioned this in his last State of the Union address, and with presidential hopeful Gov. George W. Bush touting his state's education reforms the stage was set for a merging of problem and policy. Fusarelli (2005) notes:

Despite some opposition, the endorsement of the goals of NCLB by an overwhelming majority of the nation's governors is attributed to four factors: consistency of purpose with state-level education reform initiatives, the use of NCLB by governors to leverage change within the educational system, the relative newness and lack of public awareness of the law itself, and fears of retribution from federal officials (ABSTRACT, 2005).

Roy Barnes stated that he was already concerned that Bush would use some of the State reforms that had passed in Texas. One of those issues was the ending of Social Promotion by tying promotion to the Texas Academic Assessment and Skill Test (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007)..

The Policy Stream

The policy stream is more of a series of puddles than streams. In these puddles lie the answers to unasked questions. The policy stream contains ideas that groups or individuals believe will improve situations. The reason Kingdon (2003) used the term stream is that these

policies are constantly being reinvented. Ideas do not simply go away. They fade in and fade out, but it is rare that we ever get a new idea in policy.

Many ideas are possible, much as many molecules would be possible. Ideas become prominent and then fade. There is a long process of “softening up”: ideas are floated, bills introduced, speeches made; proposals are drafted, then amended in response to reaction and floated again (p. 117)

Policies are created by communities. These communities are groups of specialists. The group might be inside the government, but more often than not the group is outside (Kingdon, 2003). Inside of every issue, groups coalesce to form policy. When a problem creates a crisis, politicians go looking for those policies. As stated earlier, the executive is responsible for setting the agenda, but a truer statement might be that the executive is responsible for defining the problem and highlighting the crisis. It is at this point that the executive goes looking for the policy to fit the problem. The idea that promotion should be tied to student performance is agreeable to the majority of the public (Business Roundtable, 2000), but policy makers could not see a way to make it “technically feasible”.

Many a good idea is sent back to the drawing board, not because it isn't a good idea, but because it isn't “ready” or “all worked out.”...Feasibility, as policy specialists talk about it, is heavily involved with implementation. The word “actually” constantly comes into their conversation as they discuss feasibility. “Will it actually accomplish what we want to accomplish?” (Kingdon, pp. 131 – 132, 2003).

This caused the idea to fade and reappear but never form into policy. Now, Governor Barnes sees a problem, highlights a crisis, and reintroduces a popular policy. Using the education

community, he works to make it “technically feasible” and brings this debate to the forefront, and the streams of problem and policy have merged.

The Political Stream

The political stream is more difficult to define. Kingdon (2003) mentioned that we are talking about that narrowest definition of politics in this stream.

Let us be clear of our language. When I use the word “political” in this context, I use the word in its colloquial Washington sense...The intra-Washington definition, implicitly is more narrow. “Political” factors in such parlance are electoral, partisan, or pressure group factors (p. 145).

This level of politics discussed here deals with factors of motivation. This motivation relies heavily on voter reaction, it is partisan in nature, and does whatever it needs to gain support of interest leaders.

Voter reaction is what political insiders call the mood. Kingdon (2003) was dealing with politics at the federal level so he uses the term “national mood.” Politicians must keep an eye on what is important to voters. This mood somewhat governs what politicians will consider important.

Governmental participants’ sense of the national mood serves to promote some items on their policy agendas and to restrain others from rising to prominence. As for promotion, their sense of national mood is one thing that creates the “fertile ground” (p. 147).

The mood may swing between issues or may just stay in a setting that allows for certain issues to be fore fronted. This mood cannot always be calculated based on public opinion polls or surveys. It does not always reside with the mass public. Politicians use communication to

sense what voters are reacting to. Representative Jeanette Jamieson made reference to this as she described the committee process.

Then we had an opportunity following his presentation for the members of the committee to have a few days where they would hear from their constituents the majority of whom were classroom teachers and of course that gave the members of the committee an idea of the concerns that were among their constituents which is of course who we answer to first and then once they heard those concerns they came back of course ready to prepare amendments to address those concerns (J. Jaimieson, personal communication, June 13, 2007).

This communication may be in the form of constituent mail, newspaper editorials, and the media. Non-elected officials then sense this mood from the politicians. This leads to a consensus of forces that go looking for a policy to fit the mood. In dealing with social promotion, the mood may have been calculated due to national events. This gave fertile ground for the policy to be resurrected. These two streams were then merging, but this merging will not last unless a problem exists to cause the flood. In the same idea, problem and politics will not wait for a policy to form; it will simply take what is in place and plug it in.

This theory relies heavily on the cognition of the key players. These players exist in multiple streams and are highly aware of the concepts: political, problematic, and policy. Kingdon (2003) categorized these players as to who is important and those thought to be important but turn out not to be. The most obvious of these players is the political administration of the executive branch of government.

According to Kingdon (2003), the executive branch is where the ideas are promoted. That is not to say these ideas are conceived, but that this group is responsible for establishing the ideas that are deemed important. In the United States Constitution the executive was not given

any real legislative power; however, its use of the bully pulpit allows the office holder the ability to demand certain issues are heard. Whether we are discussing a governor's role in state affairs or presidential influence on federal issues, the executive will always be heard.

People in and around federal policy making are often preoccupied with "the administration". When the administration considers a given issue a top-priority item, many other participants do too. And when advocates of a given proposal find that they do not have a receptive ear in the administration, they often must downgrade their chances for a serious hearing, at least for the time being.

One must remember that the executive branch is the only arm of government that seeks approval from the entire population of which it governs. The executive is able to control the agenda by three resources: institution, organization, and the bully pulpit. The effective use of these resources enable the executive the power of agenda setting; however, this does not always translate into policy formation.

The executive in this case would be that of the governor of Georgia. The executive branch of Georgia's government works similar to the President. As Kingdon (2003) put it: "The old saw goes that "the president proposes and Congress disposes (p. 23)." This statement is true, but Georgia and other southern states have been defined by very powerful governors who have an uncanny ability to get there way.

In Georgia this could be attributed to the strong majority the governor holds inside the legislature, but in Texas, Gov. George W. Bush was able to make headway with a Democratic controlled legislature. Former Governor Roy Barnes stated that if he would have still be able to get his ideas through the legislature even with a Republican majority (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007)., but it is important to note that in Georgia, the Democratic Party

held the majority in the legislature and the governor's mansion since 1880; however, Hayes and McKee (2004) found that in the south the Democratic majority was changing.

The party's [Republican] fortunes improved considerably between 1986 and 1989, with five Republican governors serving in each of these years. Republican advancement halted in the early 1990s, with the GOP in control of no more than four seats between 1990 and 1993. Republican growth resumed in 1994, however, and has persisted through 2002. Over the span of the last 29 elections, from 1994-2000, Republicans have held at least six of eleven Southern governorships in every year except 2001 (p. 4).

However, Governor Roy Barnes was still able to use his positional power to push through his legislation. This may be due to what is called the "Index of Formal Powers of Governorships" developed by Joseph Schlesinger. Using this index, Beyle (2002) found that southern governors have had steady increases to their powers since 1960 and that Georgia ranks 4th among southern states.

Inside the executive branch are also actors defined as Non-Elected Government Officials or staff. In Georgia, this group includes the executive chief of staff, communications director, and advisors. While the Governor presents the idea, it is the role of this staff to engage in the detailed negotiations. Barnes also used his staff to flesh out his ideas in legislative form. This staff person who had the greatest effect in this study was Ron Newcomb, educational advisor to the Governor.

To deal with the executive's proposals are the legislative bodies. According to Kingdon (2003), the legislative branch is considered to be the most powerful in the importance of agenda setting. This power is attributed to the group because of their ability not only to set the agenda but also enact policy according to that agenda. These elected individuals seem more likely to

have individualistic agendas and to be more closely aligned to public thought. Take for example, caucuses: A caucus is defined as a group of people united to promote an agreed-upon cause. Inside of an elected body, groups may form a caucus or voting block in order to create an agenda. According to Hammond, congressional caucuses began in 1959. This was in response to the complexity of issues facing legislators and the emergence of more individualistic agendas. (taken from Burgin, 2003). These organizations tend to be bi-partisan, created by junior members of the legislature and coalesce around external pressures. Examples of legislative caucuses are minorities, health issues, arts and entertainment, tax policy, and religious caucuses. Each group has their own core issues and work to create policy based on these agendas.

The legislature of Georgia is a bicameral system. The senate is composed of 56 members representing the districts of Georgia. Each senator serves a two-year term without any term limits. The senate is governed by the Lieutenant Governor who is elected by a majority of Georgia citizens. The Lieutenant Governor may or may not be of the same political party as the majority of the senate. When this is the case, the President Pro Tempore, the majority leader, balances power with the Lieutenant Governor. The senate has 26 standing committees. Each senator is required to serve on three committees and the majority party usually chairs the committee. The education committee of the Georgia Senate is made up of 10 members with the majority controlling the committee. The senator that held the position of chairman during this study was: Richard Marable (D – Rome, GA). The other legislative body in Georgia is the House of Representatives. This body is made up of 180 members representing districts in Georgia. It is governed by the speaker of the house who is elected by a majority of representatives. Tom Murphy (D-Carrollton) held the office of Speaker of the House longer than any other representative in Georgia history. The speaker is the moderator of the house and he

assigns members to committees. Most of the business is done by these 36 standing committees. The representative that chaired the education committee was Representative Jeanette Jamieson (D-Toccoa). Besides these influences each party also has floor leaders that push agendas of their respective party.

The governor also has floor leaders who help introduce and move legislation that is proposed by the governor. These leaders exist since the Governor cannot issue his own legislation in the General Assembly. Though the Barnes administration had many floor leaders, education legislation was primarily handled by one representative: Representative Charlie Smith (D – St. Mary’s).

Outside Influences

There are many outside influences that give lawmakers the mandate used to create the political agendas. Kingdon identifies these informal participants as “interest groups, researchers, academics, consultants, media, parties, and other elections-related actors, and the mass public” (2003, p. 45). The most prevalent of these outside forces are special interest groups and the media. Special interest groups are a coalition of individuals attempting to influence a legislative body in order to affect a political agenda. The use of the word individuals may be a misnomer because these groups tend not to hold a majority opinion. According to Kingdon (2003), special interest groups are more likely to represent a business or industry. These interest groups are formed based on a group of ideas. Most often these ideas stem to block an agenda that is perceived to be harmful toward the group. Though these groups are effective at setting agenda, one must understand that these groups have only informal power. In this case, the most

prevalent education interests are the Georgia Association of Educators, and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association.¹

Media

Though many outside influences exist, the single most influential group tends to be the mass media. The mass media has become so influential that a theory has developed around this group. The theory called the Agenda Setting Theory holds at its core that people who are exposed to the same media sources will identify the same issues as important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to Bernard Cohen “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (qtd. in McCombs & Shaw, 177, 1972). This theory does not say that mass media helps decide the way in which an issue will be viewed, but it determines whether the issue will be discussed. This is the first group that works in reverse upon the political agenda. Most other outside forces work from the bottom up. Individual issues become part of a greater concern causing a coalition to form and influence policy makers. Media works in reverse. The media highlights issues. The public becomes informed and then coalesces to promote or block the issue from the political agenda (Kingdon, 2003). The question that is left is how do the media decide what issues to highlight to the individual? According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), this is often left up to producers and editors. They may rely on focus groups and opinion polls, but more likely their agenda stems from the financing of their organization. Though many media outlets exist in Georgia, the most prominent would be that of the Atlanta Journal Constitution.

¹ This study did look at the influences of several other interest organization; however, while collecting data it was these two organization that were identified as trying to affect the policy.

CHAPTER 4

KEY PLAYERS

Governor Roy Barnes

Roy E. Barnes was born March 11, 1948 in Mableton, Georgia located in Cobb County. He states that he was a product of the public school system of Georgia, and he graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in law. As a young lawyer, he ran for the Georgia Senate in 1974 at the age of 26. He was elected and served until 1990. During his time in the senate, he served as Governor Joe Frank Harris's floor leader and was responsible for helping reform education with the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985. At the end of Governor Harris's second term, Roy Barnes ran for Governor in 1990, but was defeated in the Democratic primary finishing third to then Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller and former Mayor of Atlanta Andrew Young. Miller won both the primary and the General Election. Barnes returned to his law practice in Cobb County. Due to redistricting in the Georgia General Assembly, a new house seat was created for Cobb County, and Roy Barnes ran and was elected to the House in 1992. Barnes stated in his interview that as a freshman representative who had served in the legislature for 15 years, he was highly sought after for his political opinions and strategies (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007).. It was here that he developed a strong working relationship with Representative Charlie Smith from St. Mary's, Georgia. This political relationship would continue to develop and would be responsible for many of Barnes' educational reforms. In 1998, Roy Barnes ran for Governor and was elected by defeating then Secretary of State Lewis Massey in the democratic primary, and Guy Milner in the General Elections. Barnes started his administration saying that he would be a reformer in terms of education, health care, and state government. In his first year, Barnes called for a resolution to

create the Governor's Education Reform Study Commission (GERSC). This committee was made up of legislators, business leaders, and educators. It was chaired by Barnes himself and was given the commission to reform the state's public schools system. From this commission, most of the ideas for the 2000 Georgia House Bill 1187, "The A+ Education Reform Bill" were set up into law. One aspect of this legislation was to repeal the Fair Dismissal clause for Georgia Teachers (Georgia Statute, § 20-2-1160, 2000). This policy, which Barnes referred to as teacher tenure, allowed for teachers to have a hearing before being dismissed. Barnes and other education official considered this unnecessary job security for teachers and considered it to hamper real education reform. This led to Barnes famous address where he said, "...Good teachers do not need tenure, and bad teachers do not deserve tenure (Wooten, C7, 2000). The bill passed and teachers lost this right. The following year, Barnes had his staff and floor leader Charlie Smith (D – St. Mary's) draw up House Bill 656. House Bill 656 was designed to address problems created by H.B.1187 and to end social promotion. Before this bill could be introduced, Roy Barnes directed the General Assembly to deal with the confederate symbol on the Georgia State flag. Business leaders were concerned that black leaders would call for a boycott, so they pressured the Governor to make a change (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007).. In what would become one of the most controversial acts of his term, the General Assembly in a close vote changed the flag (Hayes and McKee, 2004). This caused House Bill 656 to be introduced later in the session and also after Barnes had created some division between himself and his own party which held the majority in the legislature. Unlike H.B. 1187, Barnes did not run a massive media campaign to introduce H.B. 656 and most of the items were not as controversial. The media did pick up on the Social Promotion aspect of the legislation and identified the problem called the discriminatory effect. This was the idea that this legislation

would cause African American children to be retained at higher numbers than their white counterparts. This caused Roy Barnes some problems with the Legislative Black Coalition, but with some negotiations he was able to bring them around and the bill passed; however, with H.B. 1187, H.B. 656, and the flag issue, the perfect storm for Barnes' defeat was created (Hayes and McKee, 2004). In 2002, Barnes ran for reelection against a Democratic Senator turned Republican, Sonny Perdue (R – Perry). Perdue ran on the ideas of local control and smaller government, but his primary rally cry was the change in the state flag. He told the people of Georgia that they deserved to choose their own flag, and that if he were elected, he would put that choice to a vote. The election of 2002 was won by Sonny Perdue mainly to a lackluster turn out of minority voters, and a strong turnout of white voters upset over the flag issue. Though Barnes will not concede that educators were upset by his reforms and therefore refused to vote for him, polling data shows that educators did not show up to vote for this election. One other factor that may have led to Barnes's defeat could have been a resurgent Republican party. This was mentioned early in the research of Hayes and McKee (2004). They noted that in 2002 seven of the eight southern gubernatorial elections were won by Republican candidates.

Ron Newcomb

Ron Newcomb was also from Cobb County and a graduate from the University of Georgia. He graduated with a degree in political science and as part of that degree he served as an intern with the General Assembly. During this internship, he met and worked with then Representative Joe Frank Harris. Harris would go on to be elected Governor in 1982. Newcomb graduated and enrolled in graduate school at the University of Georgia where he also taught some political science courses. During this time, Harris approached him about helping with his gubernatorial campaign. Newcomb agreed and worked on speeches and other issues for the

Harris campaign. After Joe Frank Harris became governor he asked Newcomb to accept the position of special assistant to the Governor. He accepted and began to work with Harris's administration on communication and education reform. Newcomb was responsible for many of the negotiations of the 1985 Quality Basic Education Act, and also worked closely with then Senator Roy Barnes. At the end of Governor Joe Frank Harris's two terms, Newcomb left political life to help run a newly established technical school in the North Metro Atlanta area. For the next eight years, Newcomb states that he had no political dealings with either the Miller administration or with Roy Barnes, but once Barnes was elected Governor, Newcomb was asked to serve as one of his educational advisors. Though Newcomb was not the only education advisor, he took a chief role in educational policy. He was responsible for negotiations with the legislature and special interest groups. For both House Bill 1187 and House Bill 656, Newcomb would hold meetings with different groups and work with legislators on any language changes in the bills. He would also bring concerns back to the Governor. The one weakness in the Newcomb's role was that he had little effect on policy outcomes. The Governor had made up his mind on certain issues, and it was Newcomb's job to make those ideas reality. After Barnes' defeat, Ron Newcomb returned to his role at the technical school.

Representative Charlie Smith

Charlie Smith graduated from the University of Georgia in 1974 and returned home to St. Mary's Georgia to practice law. St. Mary's is located at the southeastern most tip of Georgia in Camden County. He specialized in real estate law and served in that capacity until 1992. Not much is known about Smith's political agenda during these years, but it is safe to say that he was a typical conservative Democrat. In 1992, Charlie Smith ran for the Georgia House of Representatives for St. Mary's Georgia. He was elected and went to Atlanta. Smith states that

when he got to the General Assembly, he asked then Speaker Tom Murphy for a seat in the front. He was rewarded with a seat in the back with all the other freshman legislators. It just so happened that his seat was beside one of his college classmates Roy Barnes. At the same time, Smith's wife Trisha Smith ran and was elected to the local school board for Camden County, Georgia. Both Smith and his wife had many ideas about how to reform public schools in Georgia, and Charlie Smith shared most of those ideas with his legislative colleague Roy Barnes. It was during this time that Smith introduced legislation to end fair dismissal rights of school administrators. This legislation passed even though education special interest groups strongly opposed the measure. This led Smith to acquire more power and respect from the members of the General Assembly. He went on to submit legislation dealing with remedial education, length of the school year, and even to change the constitution so that the State School Superintendent would be appointed rather than elected. Of course most of this legislation was not passed, Smith was definitely becoming known as an education reformer, and when his friend Roy Barnes was elected Governor in 1998, Smith became his administrative floor leader. Though Barnes had many floor leaders, Smith would be primarily responsible for education reform issues. It was Smith who brought forth House Bill 1187, and House Bill 656. Smith was responsible for introducing this legislation, getting it passed out of committee, and negotiating the conference committee reports between the Senate and the House. Smith was also responsible for introducing the Governor's flag proposal. He remarked that when he was asked by the Chief of Staff to look at the new flag proposal, he literally got sick to his stomach (C. Smith, personal communication, June 26, 2007). He knew this legislation would kill Barnes' and many others' chance of reelection and in 2002 he left the legislature.

Senator Richard Marable

Richard O. Marable was born March 23, 1949 in Floyd County. Floyd County is located in the Northwest Georgia. Marable went to a local college called Berry College and earned a degree in Education. He began work for the Rome City School system where he taught special education. In 1990, Marable ran for Georgia State Senate for the 52 District. Marable served four terms in the state senate and was defeated in 2002. During his 12 years, Marable served on many committees most notably the K-12 education committee and the Rules Committee. In 1994 Lieutenant Governor Pierre Howard appointed Marable to be the first classroom teacher to hold the position of the K-12 Education committee chair. Marable also served as majority whip during his service in the Senate.

Marable's leadership style is important to this study for two reasons. First as committee chair, Marable was known for creating many sub-committees. This process caused bills to stay in committee longer and gave a greater chance that the bills would be amended in committee. Marable was also known for asking hard questions. For example during Zell Miller's administration, he would not go along with a bill to extend the minimum drop out rate from 16 to 18. Marable's philosophy was, "[You] Just can't come up with the idea and not have all the makings to make it work (R. Marable, personal communication, June 14, 2007)." This is the same reason he gave for stopping the Cagle Bill, S. B. 49, in 1999. These two points put him at odds with not only the Miller Administration, but also the Barnes administration. During the debate on H.B.1187, Marable caused many changes before he allowed that bill to come out of committee. Marable was defeated in 2002 and contributes his lost to the flag issue.

Representative Jeanette Jamieson

Jeanette Jamieson is an accountant from Toccoa, Georgia. She was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1984. Before the General Assembly, Jamieson served on the Stephens County Board of Commissioners. During the time of this study, Jamieson served as the chairman of the House Education Committee. She was known for holding bills in front of the full committee instead of creating sub-committees. Though this took more time, it did provide less of a chance of a bill being blocked by one legislator. This is very important with House Bill 656, in which one member of the House Education Committee, Carolyn Hughley (D-Columbus) had been approached about blocking 656 if her sub-committee was assigned the legislation. Jamieson was also named to most education conference report committees. It is here that she showed her power by changing the Governor's Education Reform Bill, H.B.1187, to reinstate vocational education. She was able to hold up the conference report until Barnes allowed the money for vocational education to be put back in. One unidentified government official referred to Jamieson this way, "She is like the intersection named for her: pretty to look at and hard to cross."

Ralph Noble

During the time of this study Ralph Noble served as President of the Georgia Association of Educators. He is a veteran teacher of 31 years at the fifth grade and middle grade levels. Noble is from Ringgold, Georgia located in Walker County in Northwest Georgia. Previously he served as Vice-President of GAE. House Bill 1187 was passed during his term as Vice-President and House Bill 656 was passed during his term as President. Ralph Noble became active in educational politics to reform the way teachers were treated. He and former GAE President Essie Stewart-Johnson created a four-year education plan for the Georgia Education

Association. Noble was a member of the GAE governing board that voted to endorse Roy Barnes for Governor. As President, he served as a full-time lobbyist for GAE, and he attended the legislative sessions and state school board meetings.

Herb Garrett

Herbert Wiley Garrett, Jr. was the Executive Director of the Georgia School Superintendents Association during the passage of House Bill 656. Garrett who started his teaching career in 1968 admits to being apolitical during his early career. During his time, teachers mostly joined an organization called the Georgia Education Association at the behest of their principal. As to the political affiliation of this group, Garrett was not aware any major stand; however, during his time as administrator Garrett admits that Governor Joe Frank Harris's Quality Basic Education Act was a sweeping reform that he approved of. He states that for the first time funding was dealt with based on what it cost to educate a specific type of child and not just based on a count of students, but the problem was that it was just too expensive for the state at that time. As administrator, Garrett joined the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders and became the President of that organization in 1990. This was the time of Zell Miller's administration and his level of political activism basically meant reviewing legislation and reporting to the organization. It was during Miller's administration that Herb Garrett moved to the Superintendents office and finally became Superintendent of Schools for Jefferson City Schools, and then Henry County Schools. During this time, his political activism stepped up as he served as the legislative committee chair for the Georgia School Superintendents Association and then as President of that organization in 1998 – 1999. Garrett admits that the GSSA was not very vocal with Barnes' first education reform bill due to the ill treatment that they received during Miller's administration. In some ways they were just glad to be at the table. He became

the executive director of the GSSA after his predecessor had served in that position for only 8 months. His was serving in this role in 2001 with H.B. 656 was presented. Garrett was very concerned about the Social Promotion legislation as a matter of personal convictions. GSSA was more concerned with the positive changes like the early intervention program, but did not take any stance on the promotion/retention language. Garrett responded that the Barnes team requested local policies on retention policies, and Garrett sent him examples of less drastic remedies to social promotion. Garrett states that he was just trying to show the Governor there was other ways to do this; however, Garrett admits that once Barnes starts something he rides it like a steam roller, and there was very little chance that he could change their minds.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY: THE PROBLEM STREAM

This case study will begin by identifying with the characters of the problem stream. We will consider these characters as a group or stream. From this group's story, we will analyze how the agenda rose to the level of public awareness.

The Early Years

As we discussed in the literature section, the debate over how to hold students accountable has been taking place over the last century, and every Georgia Governor since the 1960's had dealt with some level of education reform. Governor Barnes stated it this way:

Listen you don't have to worry about an invasion...You don't have to worry about Social Security. You don't have to worry about generally anything else but one thing: Education is your job everyday. If you don't get up as Governor and say what am I going to do for education today, then you are not doing your job (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007)..

In many ways Governors of Georgia believed that it was their role to drive education.

The earliest debate over the promotion and retention issue occurred in Leonard Ayres (1909) book *Laggards in Our Schools*. Therefore, it was no great stretch that this stream emerged and became part of the national debate. In Georgia, the first legislative emergence of this problem appeared during Governor Joe Frank Harris's term in office which was from 1984 – 1992. According to Ralph Noble, an elementary school teacher at the time, the public was beginning to focus on student reading levels (personal communication, 2007). It was believed that many students were not reading on level and people attributed this to slowing down other student's progress. This debate led then Governor Joe Frank Harris to direct the State Board of

Education to tighten promotion standards. Under direction of State Superintendent Werner Rogers, the board decided to tie promotion in the third grade students to the criterion reference test. This policy required students to score 182 points out of 300 points on the reading test and 184 points on the math test. Students were given three chances to pass the test. The entire battery took six hours to administer (Laccetti, 1986). The test was effective in retaining students at this level, but due to the rise of overage kids in elementary school it was soon reversed.¹ Governor Zell Miller had the policy reversed during his first term. Then Senator Roy Barnes responded that because the policy did not have the weight of the legislature it faded from debate and was easy to reverse (personal communication, 2007). Using the Kingdon (2003) model, we can deduce that the initiative failed because only two of the three streams merged. The problem was present and the political stream was active, but the policy never materialized that would form the agenda.

Smith and Barnes

In my research, I expected this problem to resurface during then Governor Zell Miller's administration. Zell Miller served from 1992 – 1998 and many people in Georgia referred to him as the education governor. Miller's administration focused mainly on teacher-focused reforms such as salary; however, in Camden county Georgia two things would bring about different education reforms: (1) a local lawyer, Charlie Smith, Jr., was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives and (2) his wife was elected to the local school board in Camden County. These two would work to push accountability reforms back to the forefront of public debate. Another unlikely scenario was that Roy Barnes who had run against Governor Zell

¹ Ralph Noble, former President of GAE and elementary school teacher, responded that during this time, he had several fifth grade students who were fourteen and fifteen. This was due to multiple retentions. Georgia also had a pre-1st program for students not judge ready to begin school. This along with the 3rd Grade promotion test led to multiple retentions.

Miller and lost was elected to the House of Representatives. Representative Barnes and Representative Smith would be seated beside each other during their time in the House of Representatives. Smith and his wife were concerned with education and the fact that the retention rate was so high in secondary schools (see Appendix A). It was their opinion that the lower schools were not preparing students to an adequate level and those students were hitting a wall once they reached middle school and high school.

The numbers were something like this in the 6th grade and 7th grade and 8th grade in each of those years approximately 2500 students were being held back in each of those grades. In the 9th grade, the first year of high school, about 12500 were being held back. I can't imagine any clearer evidence that in middle school people were being kicked up into high school. They were being gotten rid of when they didn't know the material that one statistic alone was a clear indication that we needed to do something about social promotion (C. Smith, personal communication, June 26, 2007).

Smith would take his ideas and share them with Representative Barnes; however very little legislation to address these concerns was introduced during their terms together, but the policy stream was beginning to trickle.

National Awareness

1999 became the big year for the promotion versus retention problem to rise to the forefront again. This problem was placed on the radar screen of then President Bill Clinton, and this was the year when the first data were reported from the Chicago Public schools. Because that data looked promising at first, President Clinton jumped on the bandwagon of ending social promotion in our schools. This is evidenced by his 1999 State of the Union Address and in a directive to the Secretary of Education to draw a plan helping states to end Social Promotion.

First, all schools must end social promotion. Now, no child should graduate from high school with a diploma he or she can't read. We do our children no favors when we allow them to pass from grade to grade without mastering the material...If you doubt this will work, just look at Chicago, which ended social promotion and made summer school mandatory for those who don't master the basics. Math and reading scores are up three years running -- with some of the biggest gains in some of the poorest neighborhoods. It will work and we should do it (Clinton, 1999).

Politicians in Georgia wanted to capitalize on this issue and Senator Casey Cagle introduced a bill. Senate Bill 49, the ABC initiative, would require students to read on grade level before being promoted. Here was a situation where a problem and a policy were merging, but Cagle failed to get the political stream flowing. Cagle was unable to break through into the Democratic Party. Senator Richard Marable was then chairman of the Senate Education Committee in the General Assembly and said that there was no way Democrats would allow a Republican to sponsor a bill of such magnitude (Marable, R., personal communication, 2007), but though the agenda failed to form, the problem did not grow dormant.

Barnes Administration

Representative Roy Barnes was elected Governor in 1998 and in his inaugural address he made the statement that he would be the education Governor.

In our new Georgia, mothers and fathers struggling to educate their children will no longer fear the schools that should bring them hope. In this new Georgia, we will not settle for second best...Only when all of our children receive a superior education, when all of our workers are trained, and every one of us has the opportunity to test our limits can we fulfill our promise and nourish our humanity. (Barnes, 1999)

He also named as one of his floor leaders Representative Charlie Smith. The promotion debate was still going strong, but earlier data that had looked positive were now showing that

tighter promotion policies were having a negative effect on students²; however, Barnes and Smith thought they could overcome these negative effects with the policy that they had developed over the past eight years. These developments included an early intervention program for students who were identified as being below grade level in Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade. Their policy also touted that it would look at other items besides test scores in determining promotion. Students who did not pass would be given a chance to retake the test, and students who fail would have the option of summer school and an additional retest³ (R. Newcomb, personal communication, July 30, 2007). The first round of reforms began in the 2000 legislation session. House Bill 1187, The A+ Education Reform Act, was an accountability legislation that created a wedge issue between teachers and the general public. Schools would be graded by high stakes testing. Failing schools could face restructuring, and teachers would lose one of their most cherished benefits, the right of fair dismissal. Though the bill had many opponents, this agenda was the perfect storm for formation: a problem that said that education needed to be reformed, a policy which was developed outside of the problem, and the political machine of Barnes, Smith, and the Democratic Party of Georgia. Two years later they decided to try it again with House Bill 656, The Education Reform Act of 2001.

Policy and Problem Merge

House Bill 656 was a little more subtle than its predecessor, but it was still a perfect storm in agenda setting theory. The bill focused on four areas: (1) It created an early intervention program (EIP) that would focus on students not on grade level; (2) funding for

² These statements come from a review of many different pieces of literature. At the time the Roderick report had emerged saying that the policy in Chicago was only causing more students to be placed into special education classes at the very little real change was taking place within the system. Dr. C. Thomas Holmes had also released a study that shows harmful effects on students that were retained.

³ This is a summary of the bill as well as a summary of Ron Newcomb's, former education advisor Roy Barnes, comments.

foreign language education at the elementary level was created; (3) academic learning time in middle school was extended from 250 minutes to 300 minutes; and (4) ending social promotion by creating a promotion policy based on the CRCT and other quantitative data. The EIP program would allow for after school tutoring, summer school, and other transitional programs to help struggling students. The foreign language program was a special interest for Governor Barnes.

I think every child had to be exposed in this world today to a foreign language, particularly Spanish. I know it is not popular, but I think it is reality. That is what I was trying to do I was trying to create a funding strategy that I would introduce foreign language to every elementary school. I would have liked to start in kindergarten or even in Pre-K (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007)..

During his interview, he stated that all students need to speak a foreign language and that research shows that the elementary level has more success at teaching that language. With the academic time extension, Barnes had hoped to create an extra period during the day to help struggling students in middle school⁴. Barnes believed these three issues were important, but the problem that would raise this policy structure to the level of public debate was the ending of social promotion.

Before doing so they needed data that would identify this problem. The Department of Education had the retention data. These data showed that a small percentage of students were retained in K-8, but that in grade 9 the retention rate exploded. The Governor's office took these

⁴ In the interview with Governor Barnes, he stated that it was the middle school language that he thought to be the most controversial. He stated that you never know what the media will pick up on in legislation; however, Barnes did begin the State of the State address in 2001 with the statement, "The time has come to end social promotion." Barnes was right that the middle school language would be controversial, but only with a group that had been marginalized during the 1187 debate: the teachers.

data and added its comments (See Appendix A). Now the policy had a problem it could merge with and with the political machine in place. The agenda was unstoppable.

Of course the problem stream is only one facet of agenda formation. We must also look at this case from the viewpoint of policy. Kingdon states that policies are created without problems because the policy has to be ready to go when the problem presents itself.

CHAPTER SIX

CASE STUDY: THE POLICY STREAM

Policy is defined as a course of action that is created to solve a problem¹; however, in political agendas the policy usually needs to be created prior to the problem arising to public debate. We stated earlier that problems are simply fertile ground for policy. Politicians try to divine what problem will be popular next, and then create a policy that will be ready to go.

Wholly new ideas do not suddenly appear. Instead, people recombine familiar elements into a new structure or a new proposal. This is why it is possible to note, “There is no new thing under the sun,” at the very same time change and innovation are being observed. Change turns out to be recombination more than mutation (Kingdon, p. 124, 2003).

This seems to be what happened for the agenda that formed around House Bill 656.

The Idea

Charlie Smith and Roy Barnes spent six years sitting literally right next to each other in the General Assembly of Georgia. Barnes was a career politician that was first elected to the Georgia Senate in 1974 at the age of 26. He served in the Senate until 1992 and then after being defeated in the gubernatorial race ran for the House of Representatives. Smith was simply an eager freshman representative who was fueled by his wife’s passion for education reform. This allowed ample opportunity for the two to share ideas and create an education reform policy. Why Barnes did not offer these ideas in the form of legislation is not known.

Barnes’ initial education reformation took place in 2000 with House Bill 1187, The A+ Education Reform Act. According to Governor Barnes, “It was my theory that with a changing world, a competitive world, and the boundless competition that exists now; either we had to

¹ Definition paraphrased from dictionary.com

improve education or the essence of being an American would be lost and we had to improve that public education is available to all of us.”² Of course Barnes and Smith are not solely responsible for the mammoth reforms offered in H.B.1187.

Governor’s Education Reform Commission

Governor Roy Barnes admits he went into education reform with his own ideas, but he tried to keep an open mind. His first step would be to get the public opinion and listen to any opposition. Barnes created an Education Reform Commission made up of one-third educators, one third business leaders, and one third legislators. To this 63 member committee, he directed:

Don't waste any more time making excuses. Don't suggest any more expensive new programs without equal cuts of ineffective programs. Don't make this just another thick study to be used as a doorstop. It will be up to you to determine why we are failing our children (Cummings, 1999).

He personally chaired each of these sessions. Everything was on the table from attendance requirements to school uniforms. Along with this commission there was also an 83 member staff to assist. The group toured schools and held public meetings to find out how to fix Georgia’s schools. Most of the policies that were created by this group were implemented within House Bill 1187: increase school accountability, increase funding, identification of at-risk students, lower class sizes, incentive for national board certification, and ending fair dismissal rights of educators. This last item becomes the impetus for getting the policy to move into the agenda stream. The governor states that principals and school boards were saying teacher tenure is standing in the way of real reform.³ Governor Barnes took this information and

² This was Governor Barnes response to the question “Why is public education so important to you?”.

³ Newcomb and Barnes both stated that as they visited schools around the state that administrators would express that the problem with accountability is that it was too hard to dismiss someone who was not pulling their weight.

began a public debate on teacher tenure. This led most people to understand that H.B. 1187 was simply a bill to end teacher tenure. It became the problem to promote the policy. It is my opinion that this same idea occurred in H.B. 656. A policy on early intervention programs, foreign language, and academic time had been created, but there was no way to move these policies into the agenda stream. So Barnes resurrects an idea from his Education Reform Commission and comes up with the idea of ending social promotion, another problem people could argue about, and an idea that had already been floated. Like teacher tenure it was a wedge issue and the groups lined up on both sides to debate the merits of ending social promotion. In my interview with Gov. Barnes and with Representative Smith, I introduced this theory and received these two responses:

Well let me tell you something. You never know what the press is going to pick up on. I never thought they'd pick up on tenure [in 1187]. You know this is not a union state. I never thought it was that important. I did it, as I told you; I backed into it because of principals. And, I probably made a mistake about that as I've said. I should have come in from another way. 656 what I was trying to do was stop gap 1187...here I have to have some check on you that you're really doing 1187. 656 the most important part was extending the day, but that Social Promotion was to back stop to make sure that they were implementing 1187 – and I should catch it if they know there is a day of reckoning. With administrators and with anyone if we know that there is not a true penalty out there, we'll say will try to do it but it is not a great intention so I had to put a little penalty out there (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007)..

Well you are asking me about strategy that I'm not sure I want to tell you about...Sometimes you put in bills some things that you may need support from one group that this provision helps, and you know you can count on them if you have this provision in. Normally because you think it is a good idea, not just to get there support. Sometimes you put stuff way down at the end of a long bill when you know they ain't (sic) reading anymore and you get

all that simple stuff up front, and I'm not saying we did that with 1187, but read it sometime and see what you think. (Smith, C. personal communication, 2007).

What we see with these two responses is the process of framing and coupling. Kingdon (2003) refers to coupling in this way:

In the policy stream, proposals, alternatives, and solutions float about, being discussed, revised, and discussed again. In contrast to a problem-solving model, in which people become aware of a problem and consider alternative solutions, solutions float around in and near government, searching for problems to which to become attached or political events that increase their likelihood of adoption (p. 172).

Smith gives us some insight into the idea that this bill was less about ending social promotion, and more about attaching a proposal that would make the overall legislation more popular. One unidentified respondent said this, "Ending social promotion is sexy. Extending the school day or funding foreign language does not sell many papers (personal communication, 2007). This debate gave the Governor his movement to roll out his new policy. Now, this is not to say that the social promotion policy was not thought out, but that the policy was not the real issue at hand. In fact, Barnes admits that social promotion was not the idea at all.

The idea is this...to stop the drop out. If you push them on, by the time they hit 16 they are going to be gone, and I was trying to stop the drop out. What I was trying to do, if you really wanted to know the truth, was to create almost a year round program for those kids...If you remember I allow them to take the funding for...an extra 20 days of instruction, and I really wanted to go to 6 weeks to create a longer track. Now, to keep those kids from being stigmatized I was going to...start extending the year for acceleration...I really think we have to have year round schools. We know that when kids are out more than 6 weeks you spend the first 30 days of the next year reteaching them what they missed last year. So I know year round is a very controversial subject and you have to start out voluntarily, but for those kids who are behind I

think it is necessary, and for those kids that want to accelerate we have to get them a track too. And that was my first step and the way that I was going to do it was to say you have to be on grade level (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007)..

Ron Newcomb and Non-Elected Government Officials

The major thrust of the social promotion policy began in 2001. Barnes' staff, headed by Ron Newcomb, began the process by looking at promotion/retention policies around the local school boards. Up until this time promotion standards were set by the locals. What they found was an assortment of policies. In the metro areas, systems such as Gwinnett already had tight promotion policies based on student test scores. In the more rural areas, systems such as Walker County approached promotion/retention with a more qualitative manner. The Walker County policy ends with this statement: "Under no circumstances shall a pupil's retention be based on a single evaluative instrument (Walker County, 1996)." It was obvious that these conflicts would have to be worked out before any type of policy could be put in place. Governor Barnes' educational staff then began to look at how other states had ended social promotion.

The staff looked at legislation from Texas, Missouri, Delaware, New Mexico, and Virginia. Each bill was examined for weaknesses and effectiveness. One education official summarized the findings in this statement: "The states that 'claim' to have ended social promotion around the country and the South have made an effort, but the real policy of ending social promotion is a 'claim' at best (personal communication, 2007)." Not only did Barnes advisor have the data from local and state policy makers, but by this time many educational researchers had looked into the debate over promotion versus retention. In my investigations, I was able to find at least three documents that were examined by the Governor's staff which told

of harm of retention policies based on high stakes testing.⁴ Newcomb began looking at ways to alleviate these harmful side effects.

The first was to decide how to deal with the effect that when students are retained it lowers their self esteems and causes discouragement. The Barnes administration felt that if they could provide additional help to these students in the form of summer school, EIP, and retaking the test that it might offset the discouragement factor. The policy provided for 20 additional days of instruction to students who did not pass the CRCT. It was the hope that students who did pass could also use that 20 additional days for acceleration, but this idea did not make it into the final bill. The second hurdle was the high stakes test scenario. Tying a student's future to one test took on one day could be detrimental. At the time that this policy was being written only two states were looking at requiring students to repeat a grade solely on the basis of a failed score on a test. This problem was solved by the 50% solution:

Taking a page from a local school system in Johnston County, NC (their superintendent, Jim Causby, spoke to the first year commissions Accountability Committee and the Governor) we could add conditions that could "override" the test as the sole factor in passing. Or, we also could take the position that whatever tests are selected for the state policy that these test make up a certain percentage of the student's end of course grade – something like the test would count for 50% to 66% of the grade in that subject area and grade level. That would allow (and I would suggest that any legislation should "require" them to establish the policy for their districts in writing and passed by the local board) the local systems to develop policies that could impact the "no pass" state policy. This would provide a balance to the state control vs. local control argument of a state policy based solely on the state CRCT test result. But, it would also weaken the argument

⁴ The three documents were: 1) Matthews, J.(2001). "State Tests Are Becoming A Graduation Hurdle". The Washington Post. January 30, 2001. 2)A position paper from the Center for Children and Education entitled High Stakes Testing Will Hurt Our Children dated February 23, 2001. 3)A document of unknown origin entitled "A Report Card On The Texas Accountability System.

that we ended social promotion in Georgia (email from unidentified governmental official to Ron Newcomb, 2007).

With these factors accountable, the group was ready to recommend a policy on social promotion to the Governor (See Appendix B). Now, the Governor's ideas about middle school and foreign language could piggyback on the promotion policy. Promotion was already a problem that had risen to debate and with the Governor's political machine could easily merge into the agenda flow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CASE STUDY: THE POLITICAL STREAM

The political stream in this case begins with the Governor. Kingdon (2003) used the statement that, “The executive proposes and the congress disposes.” (p. 23). Of course he was writing at the federal level, but this is often the case at the Georgia level.

The Governor

The executive branch in Georgia is very strong due mostly to the fact that the state has a part time legislative branch (Beyle, 2002). This limits what the legislature can do and allows the Governor to focus on issues that he is concerned with passing. Unless the Governor is concerned with the bill it is very unlikely that the bill will make it out of committee or to a vote. This also has something to do with the fact that the majority political party controls the governor’s office, the house, and the senate. According to former Governor Roy Barnes, the Governor’s role is personality driven. He must get to know the legislators on both sides of the aisle. Even though the Governor may be from the same party as the majority without help from Republicans life can be very complicated.

Roy Barnes was even more unique because of the amount of time he had spent in Georgia politics. Barnes believed that you had to court the legislature. Being a part of both sides of the General Assembly, he was better equipped to do this. For example, at the Sheraton Hotel close to the Capitol, many Representatives would gather in a suite to eat breakfast and have conversations. Barnes showed up at those informal meetings. He also would be in the cloak rooms during the legislative sessions. It was in these informal conversations, that Barnes could develop relationships to help him move his ideas. The Governor also knew that he had to work both parties. Every Monday, Barnes held meetings with the majority and every Tuesday he held

meetings with the minority party. He admits that these meetings were primarily gripe sessions, but it did allow him to be close to the legislature. Governor Barnes was also available every morning between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. to talk to legislators without appointment. Legislators were allowed to have five minute meetings about anything. He also would give a special number for either party to call to set up special 15 minute session with him at an appointed time of the week. Barnes would only grant these meetings if the legislator called in person. Though it cannot be stated that these meetings allowed Barnes to do as he wanted, he definitely shows a belief in the idea that politics is personal. To use his words, “You look after them and you can’t make them vote for something they are absolutely opposed to, but you can make them vote for some painful things. Education reform is a painful thing (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007).”

Where Barnes would say that he was simply courting the members of the General Assembly, he critics would say he used these times to strong arm legislators to support his policies. One special interest member accused Barnes of using quid pro quo to get legislators to vote to repeal fair dismissal rights for teachers (personal communication, 2007). In Barnes’ interview he addressed this accusation by saying that you deal with legislators

“..a little through persuasion a little through reminding what you have done for them and a little bit of threat. It’s a mixture. It’s heavy on persuasion. It’s heavy on I’ve always taken care of you trust me and then at the end it’s you are either with me or against me. And if you are against me don’t come here asking for something (R. Barnes, personal communication, July 3, 2007).”

Though this is not a strong rebuttal of the accusation, Barnes seems to be saying that it works both ways.

Compromises

Compromises may be the most often tool used in the political process. To understand the use of compromise for this policy, we must take a look at those who worked to block the policy. Of the four aspects of House Bill 656, the group that should have worked the hardest to block this policy was the African American or minority groups. One of the strongest African American groups in the General Assembly is the Legislative Black Caucus. Though this group does not vote in a block, the group does tend to coalesce around issues. The black caucus was concerned about the discriminatory effect of the promotion policy in H.B. 656. Barnes was able to deal with this by meeting with members of the caucus and having his staff address their concerns, he was able to make compromises in order to secure their support.

The Governor's Staff

Though the Governor states that his role is personality driven, it is often his staff that really make significant changes. In the case of the Legislative Black Caucus, Barnes entrusted Ron Newcomb and others to work on the compromise. Newcomb states that he was also concerned with this idea of discriminatory effect, and he went to the Legislative Black Caucus and said this:

We made the point over and over that (A) consider the alternative; do you really want students to just keep on getting promoted all the way to high school? What do you think is going to happen? I mean the graduation rate for black males is lower than any other groups and for minorities lower than whites, so where do you want and how do you want the system to step in and say there is extra attention needed for these students...and (B) this is a good thing because if more minority students get caught up in this ending social promotion than a majority of students...in that sense it has more effectively picked up the identified needs of minority children and done something about it early on (R. Newcomb, personal communication, July 30, 2007).

During the floor debate, Newcomb went on to meet with members of the legislative black caucus to work out these compromises. With these compromises, Barnes gathered an enormous block of support within the legislature.

Interest Groups

The second group that worked to block this legislation was the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE). GAE was concerned with H.B. 656 for two reasons: 1) GAE has many African American members and was concerned that a tighter retention policy would affect African Americans at a higher rate; 2) GAE was concerned about having principals and parents strong arm teachers into promoting regardless of standards. GAE first effort was to block the bill in committee. According to Ralph Noble, Carolyn Hughley (D – Columbus) was opposed to the social promotion language in H.B. 656.

GAE has a lot of African American Members and there was tremendous concern on what would be the impact on minority students and we felt like we probably could kill the bill in subcommittee and the reason we could was because the way the house education committee was setup Carolyn Hughley was going to chair the subcommittee that bill had to go through and Carolyn was an African American and she was very concerned about the impact (R. Noble, personal communication, June 14, 2007).¹

Whether anyone was aware of this tactic is not known, but the bill which should have been assigned to her subcommittee, Education Finance and Facilities, was instead assigned to Representative Dubose Porter's subcommittee that dealt with Regional Services/State Board of Education. This of course thwarted GAE's efforts to block the agenda. This action also may have been a mute point due to the compromises that Barnes had Newcomb broker with the

¹ This comment was made by Ralph Noble, former President of GAE, when asked about GAE's response to the social promotion language in H.B. 656. There is no corroborating evidence that Hughley would have been able to block this bill if it had been assigned to her committee.

Legislative Black Caucus; however, GAE's second concern may have been of greater importance. The legislation allowed for the parent, the principal, and the teacher to meet and promote the student if they felt it was in the best interest of the student. Ralph Noble, president of GAE, noted that,

In my experience as a classroom teacher what happens is administrators want the kids passed on so they don't have to fool with them. Parents don't understand, so the biggest fights I've had were retaining students that needed to be retained (R. Noble, personal communication, June 14, 2007).

Barnes' staff was able to address this issue by writing that the committee was to be unanimous if a student was to be promoted. This gave teachers a final say, but created a new source of conflict for the Governor.

Just as GAE was prepared to try to block the legislation without the unanimous promotion policy, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of Georgia, wanted to have the committee to be majority rule.² Representative Mayetta Taylor (D – Columbus) proposed an amendment on the floor to change the unanimous decision to 2 of 3 members. The amendment failed primarily due to the strength of the Governor. Former education lobbyist Bob Cribbs stated that it is almost impossible to amend the Governor's bill from the floor, but a more effective technique is to amend the bill in the conference report (B. Cribbs, personal communication, June 6, 2007). This tool can only be used by powerful legislators and is very effective. Whether PTA was not powerful enough to use this tool is not known, but no member of the conference committee reported feeling pressured to do so.

² This comment was elicited from Governor Roy Barnes, Ralph Noble, and Bob Cribbs. An unidentified PTA official stated that though it was a concern that parents not be shut out the process; the group does not take part in any official lobby within the legislature.

The Role of the Legislature

The General Assembly of Georgia is a weak legislative branch. Some of these weaknesses lie in the fact that legislators do not enjoy the broad public base that is given to the Governor, and the legislature of Georgia is part time. The General Assembly is in session for only 40 days. The legislators are also limited in resources such as staff and research. Most members share the staff and often this staff is made up of only one person. Each branch has its own research office, but again funding and resources of this office are very limited.

Each session there are over 1000 pieces of legislation introduced in the House and Senate of the General Assembly of Georgia. To help filter this legislation, many committees are set up to filter through these bills. Senator Richard Marable (D – Rome) put it this way:

We had about 2000 pieces of legislation that go through the legislature every year that's a great deal of reading and all of those bills have got to go through and you try to pick out the ones [that have merit.] All of them have merit, I am not saying they don't have merit, but some of them have more thought placed in them, and some of them are great ideas, but don't have all the preparation to get there... (Marble, R., personal communication, 2007).

It is in these committees that legislation becomes complete. It is often a tedious process and filled with compromises and changes. Governor Barnes had hoped to keep his education reforms intact and rely on these committee chairs to shepherd his ideas through the legislature. House Bill 1187 saw many changes, but one must consider the massive reforms that Barnes was trying to push through.

Georgia House of Representatives

Since Representative Smith was the floor leader that Barnes used for education legislation, most of his education bills originated in the House. This meant they were assigned to House Education Committee Chairman Representative Jeanette Jamieson (D – Toccoa). Though Jamieson had set up subcommittees inside of the education committee, she decided to hear H.B.1187 in front of the full committee. By doing this she could control the changes made and keep other legislators from blocking these pieces of legislation³; however the committee did make 126 changes before passing the legislation out of the committee.

I've been there 23 years and I've never seen a perfect piece of legislation yet. Members of the committee were starting to hear from constituents. Teachers were very concerned about 1187. They took it as a slap in the face to teachers at large and it was not. The Governor's intent was that it address those non-producing teachers...the second time the governor's floor leader came to speak to the full committee the members were really into the questions and concerns that had been expressed to them from back home so to speak, mostly from teachers...We made 126 changes to House Bill 1187 in my committee, so if people weren't happy with the final version they should have seen it before we made those changes...and then what we did...We got down to the final actions by the committee...I went around the table...and any question they had the opportunity to ask it and then we did it again and we did it until there were no more questions to be asked...and then we passed out our version of 1187 (J. Jaimieson, personal communication, June 13, 2007).⁴

³ Representative Jaimieson did not say that this was a blocking tactic, but by doing this she reduced the chances of a sub-committee blocking the bill. By holding it in the committee of the whole, she could guarantee that it would get an up or down vote from the education committee.

⁴ This was Representative Jamieson explanation of the committee process.

Once the legislation clears the committee, it moves to the Rules committee, where it either sits and dies or gets called up for debate and a vote (New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2005). H.B. 656 followed a slightly different path.

As we have discussed the first political hurdle it faced was being blocked in sub-committee. It was thought that the bill would be assigned to the Education Finance and Facilities sub-committee chaired by Rep. Carolyn Hughley. This was avoided by Jamieson assigning the bill to Rep. Dubose Porter's subcommittee that dealt with Regional Services/State Board of Education; however, no evidence exists to prove that this was done to keep Rep. Hughley from blocking the bill, but the Governor was aware of her objections to the bill.⁵

Though the education committee could amend bills very few changes were made to H.B. 656 unlike H.B.1187 which had 126 changes in committee.⁶ Representative Mayetta Taylor (D - Columbus) was very concerned about the promotion consequences of the Governor's bill. Taylor served as the vice-chair of the House Education Committee. Representative Taylor offered an amendment to strike the social promotion section of the bill. This effort was ruled out of order by the chair (Salzer, 2001). The education committee approved the bill 11-7.

The second hurdle this bill faced was being changed from the floor. There were three separate House amendments offered to House Bill 656 from the floor. It is very unusual for a Governor's bill to be amended from the floor, but it is possible.⁷ These types of amendments come from the opposing party, and are easily defeated. In federal legislation, amendments may be used as tools to attach other agendas to a more popular one. Once an issue seems to be moving, everybody with an interest in the subject leaps in, out of fear that they will be left out

⁵ Governor Barnes named Carolyn Hughley when asked who the biggest opponents of H.B. 656 were.

⁶ This information was provided by Rep. Jeanette Jaimeson in her interview.

⁷ This was deduced by comments elicited by all participants in the study. It does not mean that no amendments are offered only that it is very difficult to pass such an amendment from the floor.

(Kingdon, 2003). For example, in 2007, we see the Democrats attach a minimum wage hike to a military spending bill. Here they took an agenda that would surely be vetoed by the President and attached it to an agenda that he could not live without. At the state level, amendments simply serve to change or substitute parts of a bill.⁸ Of the three amendments offered, two were written by Republican legislators, and one was offered by a Democratic member. It is the Democratic one that concerned the Governor.⁹ As we have already learned Mayetta Taylor (D - Columbus) was very concerned about the promotion consequences of the Governor's bill. Though she had been thwarted in committee, Taylor's battle was not over. Next, she offered an amendment to the bill stating that the promotion/retention committee decision to promote could be a simple majority. This amendment would pit two powerful special interest groups against each other.

GAE and PTA

In the state of Georgia education has limited special interest players. That is not to say that you do not have groups interested in education, but just that their ability to organize in the traditional way is limited. For House Bill 656, there were four major interest players: (1) business, (2) the Georgia School Superintendent Association, (3) the Parent Teacher Association of Georgia, and (4) the Georgia Association of Educators. The latter two would actually go head-to-head on H.B. 656.

The Georgia Association of Educators is the closest that this case will get to a labor interest group. At the time GAE was made up of about 44,000 administrators, teachers, and other support personnel in public education. During the 2001 legislative session, there were

⁸ This was elicited by Representative Jeanette Jaimeson as she described the legislative process in Georgia.

⁹ Noble and Cribbs had already told the Governor that any change to the promotion/retention committee language would mean a loss of GAE support.

three paid lobbyists working for the GAE, and before this group was highly sought after for campaign funds and endorsements. This group rose to the highest prominence during the Miller administration when it lobbied for back to back 6% pay raises for teachers. This win raised Georgia to the top 16% for teacher pay. At the end of Miller's term, GAE had many concerns over whom to endorse for the next Governor. It settled on two members of the field, Secretary of State Lewis Massey and Representative Roy Barnes. Ralph Noble states that GAE was split over the two, but in the end Barnes won the endorsement. Noble believes that this late endorsement started Barnes and GAE's relationship off negatively. Of course Barnes won, but he faced a run off with Massey, and a hard general election against Republican millionaire Guy Milner (Hayes and Mckee, 2004). Governor Barnes did name four GAE teachers to his Governor's Education Reform Study Commission. Former Director of Government Relations for GAE, Bob Cribbs stated, "the first year in the '99 session was good. We got, I got, a bill that I had worked on for three years, and that was the right for classroom teachers to remove unruly students in discipline and have discipline control (B. Cribbs, personal communication, June 6, 2007)." Cribbs remarked that he felt that he and Governor had a close relationship and that because of this relationship Governor Barnes called Cribbs before introducing the mammoth education reform bill 1187.

...so I sat down and he said you are going to be very pleased with this bill and he held up a copy of the GAE legislative priorities that I had written. (Cause I did that every year. Outlining the legislative priorities and in there, there were like 27 priorities: legislative priorities things like lower class size, things like better funding, teacher pay raises, [and] so forth)...and he said I have included in this bill about 21 of your 27 priorities. And he did, I mean it was tremendous. So he walked through this whole thing, and then he got to the end and he said now I am going to make you uncomfortable because it does include one thing that is going to be

controversial with your group, but I want you to listen and give me an opportunity to talk about it and he disclosed that he was going to take away tenure for teachers (B. Cribbs, personal communication, June 6, 2007).

Ralph Noble, vice-president of GAE at the time, remembers this conversation and that Roy Barnes gave GAE 48 hours to come up with an alternative. Knowing that there was not enough time, GAE's legislative committee voted to oppose H.B.1187. This battle would become very bitter between the Governor's staff and GAE. In the end GAE lost and the rift between the Governor and GAE would become permanent.

When Barnes was ready to present his second round of education reform, he sent Ron Newcomb to talk to GAE. Normally this conversation would have taken place with Bob Cribbs, but due to the fight over 1187 Newcomb and Cribbs could not reconcile differences.¹⁰ Ralph Noble, who had recently been elected President of GAE and was looking to repair the relationship with the Governor, met with Newcomb to address concerns over 656. Noble mentioned that teachers did not want to see another fight like 1187, but did have the concerns about funding issues in middle schools and the promotion aspects. In terms of promotion/retention GAE wanted to make sure that students would have the opportunity to retake the test, that additional help would be given, and that a committee could decide to promote regardless of the outcome. The one sticking point for GAE was that the promotion/retention committee had to be unanimous or they would not support the bill. Newcomb and Barnes conceded these changes, and not wanting to see another fight, GAE signed on to support the bill.

The Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA) does not consider itself to be a political group, but rather an advocate for children. They do not endorse or financially support any

¹⁰ This comment was provided by Ralph Noble. In my interview with Bob Cribbs there were negative comments regarding Ron Newcomb.

candidates, but do develop a set of legislative priorities for each legislative session. PTA's initial concern with H.B. 656 was that it tied promotion to one test. Since it could not block or change this language, PTA began to work with Maretta Taylor to get parents and students some ways around the process. The initial bill had a special retention/promotion committee built in, but the committee had to be unanimous in order to promote a student who did not pass the CRCT. They were able to get Taylor to offer an amendment from the House floor that would allow the committee to promote based on a majority vote. Though PTA would not respond to this tactic, GAE accused them of trying to pit a parent and principal against the teacher. If this amendment had passed, GAE had warned the Governor that they would work to defeat this bill. The Governor had other plans to change the amendment in the Senate or to change it in the conference committee report. The amendment did not pass, and the bill went on to pass the House with a vote of 171 – 1. The bill moved to the Senate Education Committee and Senator Richard Marable (D – Rome).

Georgia Senate Education Committee

Senator Richard Marable was known for a thorough investigation of education bills. He also used many sub-committees that slowed down legislation. This put him at odds with many of Georgia's governors. Zell Miller was upset because he could not get legislation through the Senate that would raise the dropout age to 18. Barnes was subsequently upset because he would not pass H.B. 1187 without major changes to the legislation. H.B. 656 would not be much different. When the education committee received the bill, there was a large concern over what would happen to minority students. Barnes staff referred to this as a discriminatory effect and had had conversations to minimize this effect; however, Marable's committee wanted to make sure that the school system had everything in place in order to help students before students were

to be retained. The committee was able to amend the bill and send it on to the full Senate for consideration. Now, the bill had two more hurdles: a coalition of black legislators and a conference committee.

Legislative Black Caucus

At the time the bill was passed out of committee, it had only four legislative days to be passed before it would die, and due to the close House Education Committee vote, many people thought that 656 would have a difficult time making it through the House (Salzer, March 2, 2001). The reason for this thinking was the response from Civil Rights groups regarding the retention language. The most prominent of the groups was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Former President of this group the Rev. Joseph Lowery responded to the Governor and the House Education Committee in the following way: "Our governor is getting bad advice about what makes a quality education...We may have to put the governor into a remedial class to teach him what a quality education is (Salzer, March 2, 2001)."

These criticisms may not have been unwarranted. The AJC also found that:

Research and test results show that on average black students do more poorly on standardized exams than any other racial group. More than half of the 60,000 children held back a grade in Georgia public schools last year were African-Americans. And almost all of the schools that state accountability officials identified recently as having extremely low pass rates on the Criterion- Referenced Competency Test last year are predominantly black (Salzer, March 2, 2001).

The feeling was that the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus would create the largest amount of debate and possibly be able to reverse the position. The Governor's political machine was ready for this. Early in the process relationships were being built with members of the black caucus,

and after speaking to one House member of the Legislative Black Caucus, the Governor received the following message:

The fears and worries in the African American Community can be greatly addressed if these provisions are added: (1) automatic retest, (2) automatic additional instruction prior to retest, (3) multiple criteria on retesting rather than a single test of standardization (personal communication, 2007).¹¹

Most of these aspects had been added into the bill. The Governor also had another ally in Senate Majority Leader Charles Walker (D – Augusta). Walker was essential in getting the Senate members of the Legislative Black Caucus on the H.B. 656 agenda. Walker convinced black lawmakers that it was necessary to do this because:

It's got to be better than what we've done in the past. We cannot keep doing the same thing in our community and expect better results...Black children are not performing as they should and can. Black children across the board are being left behind. We say we don't want to do it, but we do...I believe the time has come to stop making excuses (Salzer, J. March 16, 2001).

Of course with a strong Democratic majority, the Governor could have passed his bill without this help, but it would have been a bloody fight.

Conference Committee Report

The conference committee is one of the most powerful positions inside the legislature of Georgia. When two different versions of a bill are passed by the House and the Senate, the conference committee is appointed to hammer out the differences. In Georgia, these appointments are made by the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor. Usually,

¹¹ This was a handwritten note from a member of the General Assembly to Governor's Barnes education advisor. This member is an unidentified member of the Legislative Black Caucus

these committees are made up of the Governor's floor leaders and the originating committee chairs. The reasons these positions are so powerful is due to a limited number of legislators of which you have to negotiate, and because there is pressure to get the legislation passed, and once the committee agrees no other changes can be made to the bill. The bill is then sent back to both houses and is voted up or down.

To demonstrate the power of this committee, one can look at House Bill 1187. Jamieson tells the story of a late night meeting of the conferees on Barnes's massive education reform:

It was about 2:30 in the morning and the conferees were still meeting. We started meeting at 5:30 in the afternoon and we finally finished about 3:00 the next morning. We took breaks along the way, but when we got down to right at the end of everything, extended day and those vocational teachers were still out of the conference committee report. They had not gone back in, and so I simply told the Governor's floor leader, I said call the Governor and tell him I'm not signing the conference committee report. Let him go to Stephens county and tell (name stricken from the transcript), he doesn't have a job because I don't intend to do that ... So they called the Governor's office and said well you better hunt 6 million dollars cause Jeanette Jamieson just folded her tent (J. Jaimieson, personal communication, June 13, 2007).

Of course the Governor did find the money and Jamieson signed the Conference Committee Report, but this shows the level of seriousness that comes from this committee. Of course the Governor could have said no, but it would have meant losing his reform package and having to start over.

The Governor can also use the Conference Committee to his favor. Often things will be added or deleted to a bill during the legislative process that can be amended during the conference. This happened with H.B. 656. Both the House and Senate made changes to the bill in the education committee. The House made minor changes in the education funding initiatives

of the bill by allowing the extended day program to be used for grades 6-8. It also added a new area to the bill by changing the language in the HOPE and PROMISE scholarship eligibility. The Senate made changes to make it mandatory that local school systems provide the early intervention program (EIP). It added foreign language at the elementary level, and created changes in the parental notification process for students in danger of retention.

Of these changes, the Governor was most concerned with the House extending extended day to the middle school level.¹² This change would steal money from the High School extended day and in the opinion of the Governor it would severely weaken the program. The conferees were able to strike this section from the bill in the committee. The Governor also mentioned that he was worried about an amendment that was submitted both on the House side and the Senate side. That was the change from a unanimous decision by the placement committee to a 2/3 majority rule. The amendment was defeated twice, but the Governor had made plans to remove this during the conference committee if need be.¹³

The Conference Committee Report was accepted in the House by a vote of 171 – 1. The report was accepted in the Senate by a vote of 44-4. The Governor signed this bill into law. Of course this battle was not over. In 2004 the first round of retentions for third graders were set to go into effect, and the legislature took up the agenda again. Barnes was no longer governor after being defeated by Republican Sonny Perdue and the Republicans also held the majority in the Senate. The group leading this fight was Representative Bob Holmes. Holmes had been named the new chair of the House Education Committee and wanted to see the implementation of H.B. 656 delayed. It was his belief that Perdue's administration had not followed through on the early

¹² Response elicited by Governor Roy Barnes in talking about the Conference committee report on H.B. 656.

¹³ I asked the Governor, "What would he have done if this change had been made to the bill? His response was that he would have signed it because vetoing the measure would have shown a complete lack of leadership.

intervention that had been put in place with H.B.1187 and H.B. 656 (Holmes, B., personal communication, 2007).¹⁴ Though this agenda received lots of press it never materialized in the political stream and failed. The policy and agenda of 656 has now become law and has been implemented in Georgia schools for better or worse.

¹⁴ Holmes compared this to taking a loan out on a house and being asked to pay for it before the house was even built. Senator Marable was also concerned that this might happen, but by the time of implementation Marable was no longer in the Senate.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, FURTHER STUDY

This section will attempt to answer the research questions associated with this study.

From these findings, the study will draw an over all conclusion based on the agenda formation process in State-level politics. It will also give recommendations for further study in this area.

The questions that this study investigated were: (a) Who were the major actors involved in agenda-setting? (b) How and why did they define the “problem” at this particular time? (c) What were the major legislative coalitions? (d) Did their positions shift during this period? (e) Who were the major interest groups involved? (f) What were their positions? (g) What tactics did they use to either block or promote?

Major Actors

It is not necessary to reintroduce every actor involved in the agenda formation surrounding H.B. 656, but to answer the research question it is necessary to identify the major players who affected the process. By looking at the case study, the actors that most affected the legislation were: Governor Roy Barnes, Education Advisor Ron Newcomb, House Floor Leader Representative Charlie Smith, House Education Committee Chair Representative Jeanette Jamieson, Senate Education Chair Senator Richard Marable, Senate Majority Leader Senator Charles Walker, former Georgia Association of Educators President Ralph Noble, the Georgia Association of Educators, Georgia School Superintendents Association Executive Director Herb Garrett, the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders, and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association. There were other actors involved but these people were unsuccessful at changing the course of the agenda. The most notable was Representative Maretta Taylor and other unidentified members of the Legislative Black Caucus.

The discussion of these major actors must begin with the executive. The strong leadership by Roy Barnes is notable in looking at his legislative initiatives, but our most prominent finding in the case study is the personal approach that he took with the legislators. Barnes states that he knew how to court the legislature by being a member of that body for such a long amount of time. This is evident by his open door policy with the legislature, and from the interview data respondents elicited that he was in constant contact with them. This Governor also knew the tactics necessary in order to keep his ideas intact throughout the legislative process. This is evident in the way he manipulated the House Education Committee and the Conference Committee Report. Barnes educational staff also played a strong role in this agenda formation. Ron Newcomb's and his team researched every aspect of this legislative agenda. The group was able to spot potential pitfalls, negotiate with opposition, and keep allies in the fold. Research that was negative to the agenda was not ignored, but rather manipulated to fit the model for the agenda. This will be discussed more in the terms of how the Governor framed the issue of banning social promotion.

Outside of the Governor's office, we see how political allies in the House and Senate were necessary. Both education chairpersons, Representative Jeanette Jamieson and Senator Richard Marable, had strong potential to change the course of the agenda. In both committees the bill had major changes; some to the Governor's dislike, but in my conversations with both actors they held the Governor in high regard. Their respect for his education reform agenda is evidenced in how well and how fast the bill moved through the committees. The case study shows that the late introduction of the bill limited the amount of debate and negotiation of the bill. This may be seen as a positive, but often late legislation is simply not passed due to lack of

time. Because of Marable's and Jamieson's shepherding of this bill, it was able to make it through both houses.

Of course, the case study also identifies the strength of House Floor Leader Representative Charlie Smith. Though the agenda was the idea of Governor Roy Barnes, the case study shows the effect that Smith's ideas for education had on the Governor. Again, this is evident in the framing of the issue. We see that the Governor states that his chief goal was not to tighten retention but to create an atmosphere of year round schools that could better monitor student's progress, but Smith states simply that he was concerned with ending social promotion. It was also necessary to have a member like Smith involved to keep the political stream flowing. The case study showed that after the bill cleared the House Education Committee it had only four legislative days to be passed by the House. This meant that Smith had to get the Rules committee to schedule a hearing, and he had to keep the floor amendments to a minimum in order to get a House vote.

What is a surprising finding of this study is the lack of special interest involvement in the agenda formation. The lack of this special interest may be because of the popularity of the issue with the public. Kingdon (2003) states that... "When the public isn't interested in it, you have to deal with the vested interest (p. 47)." Could the opposite be true in this case? The public is always concerned about education because the topic is so close to the constituency; therefore the special interest might have been drowned out. This does not mean that no special interest group was involved in this agenda formation. We see from the case study that the Georgia Association of Educators and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association were heavily involved in the bill's negotiation. What is harder to identify is special interest groups that were in favor of the legislation. One interview respondent said "it was obvious that business was driving the agenda

(personal communication, 2007).” Though this may have been a valid statement proving the level of business is difficult. Other groups such as the Georgia School Superintendent’s Association and their parent organization of the Georgia Association Educational Leaders were noted in the case study as being involved in the policy stream and not the political stream.

One other surprise is the lack of motivation in the Legislative Black Caucus to block the retention policy of this agenda. From the case study, we can see the tool of compromised used to keep this group from blocking the agenda, but it is still difficult to understand why this group was not more vocal in their objection; however, it is evident that the group was a major actor in the formation due to the amount of time spent winning the group’s support.

One other actor that the case study identifies is that of media. Though not directly identified by the case study, it should be apparent from the level of citations that media was responsible for informing the public. This information campaign could be responsible for the suppression of the special interest voice. The most prominent of these media actors were print sources. Whether this information campaign is relevant to the agenda formation is not known; however, one of the Governor’s official believed that if this legislative agenda had had a stronger media buy, such as internet or T.V. sources, the public opinion may have formed in a different way (personal communication, 2007). One must also note that with the flag change issue taking place at the same time, the news cycle was preoccupied and not fully invested in dealing with education reform.

The Problem: How and Why?

In the literature review, the study found that the promotion and retention agendas have surfaced many times in the history of public education. It is also apparent from the case study that a legislative solution to this agenda has been offered many times. What the case study

showed in the agenda of H.B. 656 is the perfect storm of problem, policy, and politics. Never before in Georgia had all three streams merged on the issue of banning social promotion. The public had focused on the problem of what to do with at risk students but it seemed that there was no valid solution. Later we see the legislature provided a solution with Cagle's Senate Bill 69 in 1999, but there was no political machine available to carry the policy; however, in 2001 we have with a change in the national mood regarding retention, the election of a reform minded Governor, and a strong political machine in place. This allows for all three streams to merge and the agenda to form and become policy.

Tactics

This study helped identify many tactics in agenda formation. At the policy level, the case study shows the need for stronger research. This does not mean that all research has to support your agenda, but it is necessary to know both the opposition and the support for your ideas. Knowing and understanding both can allow for manipulation of the issues. One must understand that this manipulation is not necessarily negative. This study notes in the literature review that there is little evidence to support a retention policy based on a single test (Roderick, et. al, 2000); however, the Governor and his staff were aware of this research and manipulated the issue by saying, "We are going to go about it differently."

There are certainly those who oppose the latest education package in Georgia, saying that basing student-promotion and -retention decisions on the results of one test is unfair, especially to minority students who have traditionally performed worse than their white classmates on standardized tests...Gov. Barnes and other supporters of the new legislation say that because the plan includes an appeals process, in which the principal, the classroom teacher, and a parent must unanimously decide whether the child should be held back a grade, other factors in addition to the test score will be considered. They also say the legislation will enable struggling

students get help, through smaller classes, more instructional days, and early identification of academic weaknesses (Jacobson, 2001).

This kind of manipulation allowed the Governor to refute studies that show negative outcomes by saying, “This is different than Chicago, New York, or Texas.” So this study shows that Barnes did not only use the idea of recombination, but also of mutation of the idea to fit into the agenda (Kingdon, 2003).

The most successful tactic we see in this study is that of the Governor’s building personal relationship with the legislature. From the literature review, the study identified that the Governor of Georgia is very powerful; however, without Barnes’ personal relationship with legislators and some special interest group leaders, the agenda would not have survived in its final form. From the interviews, respondent’s stated that the Governor was a nice guy. Even those who accused the Governor of using strong arm tactics responded that they had respect and some admiration for him and his ideas. It is apparent from the case study, that he used this likeability factor to promote his agenda.

The most unsuccessful tactic apparent in this study is agenda-blocking. This is usually the role of special interest groups. Though no special interest group expressed being vehemently opposed to the policies of H.B. 656, Georgia Association of Educators and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association did try to block parts of the agenda on two fronts. Both groups were thwarted by the strong political machine in place.

Other Findings

This study also discovered one additional finding that was not addressed by the research questions. That finding was the use of the Governor’s prerogative in framing the agenda. We have already stated that governors of southern states have more power in their executive role.

Joseph Schlesinger created the “Index of Formal Powers of the Governorship” in 1960. This power index was based on the following six attributes: separation of elected officials, tenure potential of governors, governor’s appointment powers, governor’s budget powers, governor’s veto powers, and gubernatorial party control (Beyle, 2002). The state of Georgia ranks fourth among the 14 southern states with an index average of 3.2. When you join this power with the national mood toward education reform, the study finds that southern governors were able to have a wide berth in implementing educational policies. However, in Georgia this study shows a different technique at play.

In the case study, we find that Governor Barnes states that ending social promotion was not really the idea. He gives a longer explanation that he was more concerned with creating a year round atmosphere so that students could be better evaluated and deficiencies address immediately. Strangely this type of reform is backed up by more positive research.

Existing evidence implies that student achievement in year-round schools is either equal to or superior to that of student achievement in traditional calendar schools and that its positive effects may be particularly strong for disadvantaged students (McMillan, 2001).

So why not frame the agenda in this format. This study shows that Barnes chief ally in the House of Representatives, Representative Charlie Smith, believed passionately about ending social promotion.

I can't imagine any clearer evidence (See Appendix A) that in middle school people were being kicked up into high school and were being gotten rid of when they didn't know the material. Those statistics were a clear indication that we needed to do something about social promotion. I don't know how you could reach any other conclusion (C. Smith, personal communication, June 26, 2007).

Here the study points out that we had two people working together but with different motivations. Could it be that Barnes could not have gotten the overwhelming support if he had framed his agenda under the year round school argument? Though we get no further information from the key players in this study, the literature may be able to suggest that it was simply a matter of simplicity. Alan Farstrup (2004) applied Professor George Lakoff's work (2002) *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* to the framing of education policies.

In the case of educational policy, framing instructional issues in the context of scientific certainty has proven to be a very powerful and persuasive way to promote certain education policies and the research sources that support them...Lakoff, I believe would argue that resorting to complex explanations and obscure language that fails to frame our issues and solutions simply is a sure formula for being disregarded (p. 8).

Unfortunately to adequately analyze the framing of this agenda one would need to look at further education agendas promoted by Governor Barnes. Due to his defeat in 2002, the study is not able to verify his year round school argument, but by looking at his reversal on teacher tenure in H.B. 1187 and the statement he makes about the retention policy in H.B. 656 there is an obvious pattern of simplification when framing his education agenda.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion that this study can draw is that Kingdon's ideas on agenda formation work at both the federal and the state level. The study identified the emergence of the problem, policy, and political streams and how these streams merged into the agenda. The study can also conclude that many of the key players of the federal level can be substituted at the state level. There are of course some players that are not as present, the most obvious being the

research participants. The study also backs up the idea of a strong executive role in creating ideas for agenda formation.

What the study provides as new material in the agenda formation area is the lack of coalition formation at the state political level. At the federal level, Congress had identifiable voting blocks. These voting blocks may be organized around party concerns, regional concerns, or cultural concerns. At the state level, these concerns are not as apparent. For example, one would expect rural legislators to vote as a block. The group should be concerned with how state legislation would impact funding. Though there may be some evidence that this is a concern, there is little evidence to show that this group votes together inside of the legislature of the General Assembly. The only major coalition the study identified was that of the Legislative Black Caucus; however this group voted with the Governor.

Another conclusion is the lack of special interest involvement at the state level. Many groups exist that should be trying to exert influence over policy makers; however, in this study there is very little evidence that any group was successful in changing the policy direction. This may be due to the popularity of the agenda and therefore no group saw it necessary to try to change or block the agenda. One other idea that comes from the case study is that the Governor was very successful in involving all areas of interest in developing the policy thus keeping them from acting in the political stream.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study would like to recommend further study be conducted in the area of legislative coalitions and special interest formation. From this study we dealt with the Legislative Black Caucus coalition and what kept this group from coalescing to block the promotion/retention agenda; however, other groups such as rural areas should have been concerned with the funding

issues that this policy might have created. Further research should be conducted to identify the barriers to coalition groups inside the General Assembly of Georgia. Do these groups exist outside of education agendas or do these groups exist at all? Why not? This study also indicates that further research be given to special interest involvement in education agendas at the state level. This study has identified many organizations that coalesce around the issue of education, but it did not identify traditional interest tactics. Was this due to the overwhelming public support of the issue or some other factor? Are special interest groups not that effective at the state level?

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Appendix A

Interview List

Ashe, K. Georgia State Representative. July 9, 2007.

Barnes, R. Former Governor of Georgia 1999 – 2003. July 3, 2007.

Cribbs, B. Former Director of Government Relations for Georgia Association of Educators
Retired, 2004. June 6, 2007.

Garrett, H. Executive Director, Georgia School Superintendent's Association. November 24,
2007.

Jaimieson, J. Georgia State Representative. June 13, 2007.

Marable, R. Former Georgia State Senator. June 14, 2007.

Noble, R. Former President Georgia Association of Educators 2000 – 2002. June 14, 2007.

Newcomb, R. Former Education Advisor to Gov. Roy Barnes 1999 – 2003. July 30, 2007.

Smith, C. Former Georgia State Representative. June 26, 2007.

Whitfield, J. Director of Government Relations for Georgia Association of Educators. June 4,
2007.

Appendix B

Retention Figures for Georgia Students Fall 2000

Latest figures on promotion/retention

The following table shows the total headcount of students by grade per the fall of 2000 and how many of them were retained from the previous spring

Grade	FTE Enrollment	Retained Students	
KK	110960	5149	4.64%
GR01	114049	5362	4.70%
GR02	114939	3208	2.79%
GR03	115691	2586	2.24%
GR04	116678	2057	1.76%
GR05	117973	1538	1.30%
GR06	116072	2853	2.46%
GR07	112249	3667	3.27%
GR08	109124	3143	2.88%
GR09	126793	16992	13.40%
GR10	99934	9160	9.17%
GR11	85910	6065	7.06%
GR12	72317	3296	4.56%
Totals	1412689	65076	4.61%

Comment: Note that although the CRCT given last spring said that 35% of fourth graders were not on grade level in reading, the retention rate was only 1.76%. Social promotion?

Comment: Note that although the CRCT given last spring said that 46% of eighth graders were not on grade level in mathematics, the retention rate was only 2.88% -- social promotion to the ninth grade, where the retention rate jumps fivefold to 13.40%.

Comment: Note the declining enrollment figures from eighth grade through twelfth grade -- a steady spiral downward as children give up and drop out -- 27,181 last year.

Source of date: GDOE, FTE 2001-1
 Comments by Governor's Office
 3/1/01

Appendix C

Synopsis of Social Promotion Legislative Language

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Goal: End Social Promotion in Georgia by end of the decade.

State Social Promotion Policy Implementation:

- Utilizing the state CRCT and local school board criteria, establish promotional policies that requires students to pass the CRCT exam in reading (Grade 3), in reading and math (Grade 5) and reading and math (Grade 8). For students in grades 3, 5 and 8, one-half (50%) of the final passing grade for promotional purposes shall be the score on the appropriate portion of the CRCT exam for that grade and subject. The other one-half (50%) of the final passing grade for promotional purposes shall be determined by local school board promotion standards and criteria policy.
- Local school boards will be required to establish, publish and distribute their local promotion policies that define the standards and criteria that will be utilized in promotion decisions for one-half of the student final grade.
- The implementation of the state and local social promotion policy will begin in the 2003-2004 school year with policies required by that year and implementing the policy by adding grade 5 and grade 8 in subsequent years, with the goal of ending social promotion by the end of the decade.
- For social promotion to be successfully ended, it requires that the intervention programs in the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000 be implemented and available to students that are identified as needing intervention assistance. The programs can include the Early Intervention Program (EIP), after school programs, extended days of instruction, summer school, intensive reading programs and other programs as may be provided by local school systems.
- Finally, when a student does not pass the CRCT portion of the exam that is required for promotion, the student must be provided additional, accelerated instruction to bring the student to grade level performance and then an opportunity to retest on the exam.

Timetable for Implementation:

School Year 2001-2002 and School Year 2002-2003– Fully implement the intervention programs, the assessment instruments and the state OEA report cards to support the ultimate ending of social promotion in Georgia.

School Year 2003-2004 – State Board of Education and local school boards must have social promotion policies adopted regarding grade 3, 5 and 8. Grade 3 promotion policy with state and local standards and criteria begins.

School Year 2004-2005 – Grade 5 promotion policy with state and local standards and criteria begins.

School Year 2005-2006 – Grade 8 promotion policy with state and local standards criteria begins.

School Year 2006-2007 and beyond - Social Promotion is drastically reduced and ultimately eliminated.