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AEFA offers educators conference, yearbook and journal.

American Education Finance Association: A Focus for the Education Finance Debate

by Nelda H. Cambron-McCabe

The American Education Finance Association (AEFA) was established in 1975 "to provide a forum for the discussion and debate of issues in educational finance, and to encourage and support experimentation and reform which will make education finance practice responsive to emerging needs." As the only professional organization focusing on educational finance, the AEFA attracts members from diverse groups in the education finance field including academicians, researchers, local and state school administrators, teachers, attorneys, political scientists, economists, and legislators. The association facilitates communication among these various groups through an annual conference, a yearbook, and the **Journal of Education Finance**.

The Association

Although the American Education Finance Association has a relatively brief history, its antecedent was the National Conference on School Finance established in 1958 by the Committee on Educational Finance of the National Education Association (NEA). Under the direction of NEA, these annual conferences drew state and local officers of NEA affiliates, state education agency personnel, and professors of school administration. The early conferences addressed wide-ranging issues, and many of the themes and topics are reminiscent of today's AEFA meetings.

Because of the changing structure and priorities of

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NEA, the organization sponsored its last school finance conference in 1972. The urgency of school finance issues and the expressed interest of previous conference attendees prompted the National Educational Finance Project to sponsor a national meeting in 1973. In 1974 the Institute for Educational Finance (IEF) at the University of Florida and Phi Delta Kappa filled the void, and in 1975 the IEF received funding under Title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to continue the meeting. To ensure continuation of the annual education finance conferences, supporters at the 1975 meeting established a professional organization and elected Professor Roe L. Johns as the first president. Later that year the AEFA was legally constituted.

With the formation of AEFA and the changing nature of education finance in the 1970s, the traditional interests expanded to include new and diverse groups concerned with financial reform. In contrast to the earlier NEA group, the largest percentage of AEFA's membership consisted of academicians and researchers, state education agency personnel and local school administrators with significant representation of legislators, legislative staff members, federal agency personnel, and teacher organizations.

In addition to individual memberships, the Association provides for sustaining and institutional members. The sustaining membership evolved from an interest and concern of other professional associations that an organization should exist for the debate of educational finance issues. These memberships have been significant in allowing AEFA to expand its activities. The American Association of School Administrators and the National Education Association are charter sustaining members and were later joined by the American Federation of Teachers and for several years by the Association of School Business Officials. These organizations have a representative on the board of directors and participate fully in all association business. The institutional membership (\$100 per year) was established for colleges and universities. The institutional benefits include four copies of the annual yearbook, two subscriptions to the **Journal of Education Finance**, and four student registrations at the annual conference.

Of particular interest to graduate students are the Jean Flanagan Research Awards recognizing outstanding dissertation research in school finance. At each annual conference, three awards are presented in the memory of Jean Flanagan, who organized the original NEA finance conferences and was influential in establishing AEFA.

Membership in AEFA

Membership benefits have expanded beyond simply the opportunity to attend an annual conference. Through the comprehensive association membership of \$70, members receive an annual yearbook, a subscription to the **Journal of Education Finance**, conference registration, and all organizational mailings.

In 1980, AEFA initiated its first yearbook, **School Finance Policies and Practices—The 1980's: A Decade of Conflict**. This series, published by Ballinger Publishing Company, has enabled the Association to provide an in-depth review of critical issues and to further accomplish its overall goals. Other yearbook titles are **Perspectives in State School Support Programs**, **The Changing Politics of School Finance**, and **School Finance and School Improvement: Linkages for the 1980s**. Editors include James W.

Guthrie, K. Forbis Jordan, Nelda Cambron-McCabe, and Allan Odden.

Another benefit of comprehensive membership is a subscription to the **Journal of Education Finance**. The **Journal of Education Finance**, published by the Institute for Educational Finance at the University of Florida, has been a part of AEFA membership since the organization was established in 1975. Through AEFA representation on the **journal's** board of editors, the association influences editorial and publication policies. Additionally, the executive editor of the **Journal** serves as an ex officio member of the AEFA board of directors.

The annual conferences focus on emerging and continuing issues in education finance. The 1983 conference addressed topics such as the federal role in school finance, fiscal condition of education, linkages between

education and business, and strategies for coping with declining state budgets. The theme of the 1984 meeting to be held in Orlando, Florida, on March 15-17, is "Financing of Educational Excellence." The program has been designed to explore a number of issues, but especially to examine the costs and implications of the national task force reports on education.

Requests for further information can be directed to the president of AEFA at 350 McGuffey Hall, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056.

1. Bylaws of the American Education Finance Association adopted May 12, 1978, p. 1.