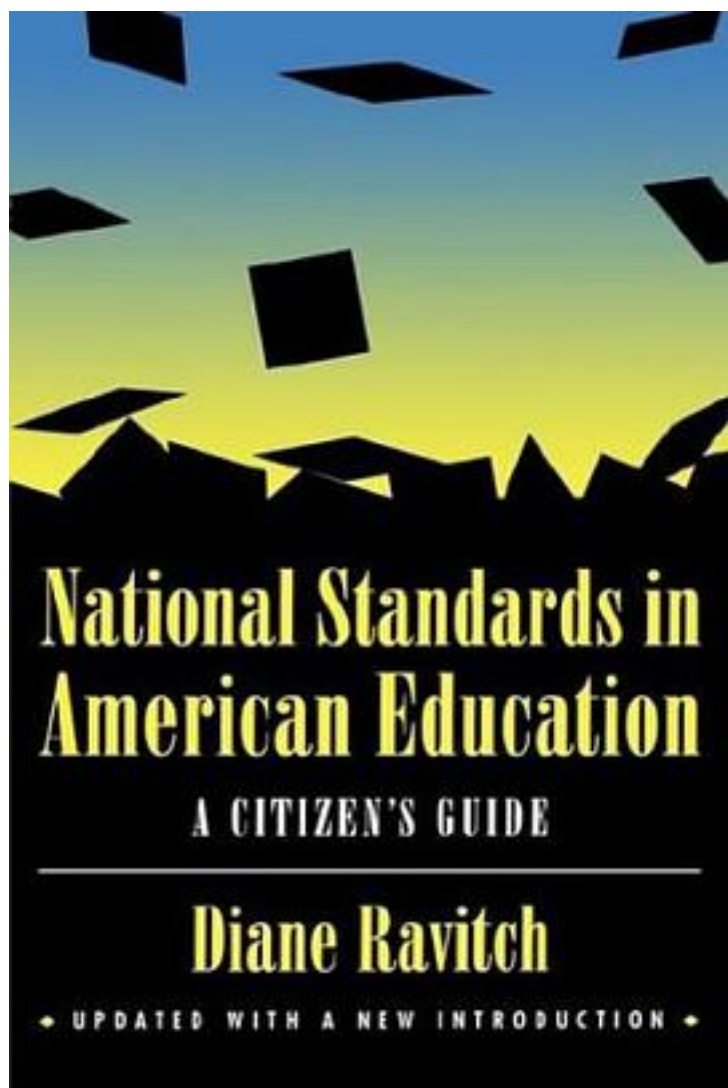


National Standards in American Education



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出版者:Brookings Inst Pr

出版时间:1996-6

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780815773511

In this book, nationally recognized education authority Diane Ravitch explains the origins of the movement to establish national standards and assessments; examines its rationale; defines what standards are and the purposes they might serve in education; explores the history of standards and assessments in American education; reviews evidence about student achievement in the United States; considers federal and state-level activities; and analyzes the prospects for a national system of standards and assessments. Ravitch asserts that raising standards is about raising the achievement levels not only of the best students, but of all students. She suggests that deciding what children should learn is the first step toward achieving this goal. National standards should not discredit unorthodox educational programs or dictate instructional methods, however. Ravitch makes recommendations regarding the role of states in setting standards for schools and districts, the role of institutions of higher learning and business in promoting standards, and the role of assessments in maintaining standards. Ravitch contends that a system of standards and assessments, no matter how reliable, will not solve all the problems of American education, but it will help to get the teaching and learning parts of the educational system right. Ultimately the improvement of American education depends on widespread cultural support for educational achievement.

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