Abstract: The landmark *A Nation At Risk* report of 1983 transformed American public education, marking a national movement toward standardized assessment in an attempt to tackle the nation’s “failing” schools. Using state and district policy documents, in addition to community accounts from local newspapers, this study explores how NAR shaped education politics and policy in the Rockford metropolitan area, a region with a history of urban-rural conflict and racial segregation.

“...the Illinois state government, constitutionally and morally responsible for the cities and counties within its borders, chooses to ignore its festering social sore.”
-Neal Peirce *Chicago Tribune*, 1981

Hypothesis: While the Rockford metropolitan area likely exhibited instances of urban-rural conflict as the current literature details, one might also expect to find unacknowledged instances of cooperation between local elites and between neighboring communities. Following the 1983 removal of home rule in Rockford, local authorities had less control over the allocation of funds towards municipal development, and with reinforcement by *Nation At Risk*, local schools became the new leverage point for the protection of elite interests, as well as the site of opposing community mobilization in the name of equality.