

Finding Aid for the New York State Education Department Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach Subject Files series.

Finding Aid Publication Date: Aug 17th, 2020

Online Finding Aid Record:

<http://iarchives.nysed.gov/xtf/view?docId=ead/findingaids/W0106.xml>

Overview of Records

Repository:

New York State Archives

Summary:

This series of subject files, compiled by the office of Gordon M. Ambach (1934-), documents his tenure as New York State Commissioner of Education during the period 1977-1987. Files are often grouped under major subject headings such as Higher Education, State Agencies, or Speeches, and then broken down into more specific headings. The bulk of the material is correspondence on these and related subjects exchanged between Ambach and relevant constituents and government officials, as well as speeches that Ambach delivered in his role as commissioner.

Creator:

New York (State). Education Department. Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach

Title:

Education Department Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach subject files

Inclusive Dates:

1958-1989

Quantity:

133 cubic feet of textual records

Series Number:

W0106

Arrangement:

Alphabetical by subject.

Administrative History:

Gordon MacKay Ambach was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1934. After graduating from the Providence school system, he went on to attend Yale as an undergraduate, and received several graduate degrees in education from both Yale and Harvard. He taught history in East Williston, New York from 1958 to 1961, eventually becoming President of the East Williston Teachers Association. He later served with the U. S. Office of Education in 1961-1962, and from 1961-1963 was a program planner and legislative assistant for U.S. Commissioner of Education Frank Keppel. In 1963-1964, he served as Executive Secretary to the Higher Education Facilities Act Task Force.

Ambach joined the New York State Education Department first as a Special Assistant, later becoming Assistant Commissioner of Education for Long-Range Planning from 1967 to 1970. From 1970 to 1977, he served as Executive Deputy Commissioner of Education. He was inaugurated as Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York in 1977, and served in that capacity until 1987. During these years, Ambach, working with the New York State Board of Regents, developed and implemented the Regents Action Plan, the most comprehensive school reform plan in the nation at the time. The Regents Action Plan enacted rigorous graduation standards and more stringent benchmarks for both teacher and school performance.

Ambach's work as commissioner also produced important changes in pre-kindergarten and adult education, as well as education technology. He played an important role at the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Science in 1979 and again in 1991. He also served on the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science from 1980 to 1985. Additionally, he continued the work of his predecessors in increasing access to education for minorities and the disabled.

In 1985, Ambach was elected President of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Consequently, in 1987, he left his post as New York State Commissioner of Education to become the Executive Director of the CCSSO and continued his work in education until his eventual retirement in 2001.

Scope and Contact Note:

This series contains correspondence, memoranda, reports, speeches, legislation, newsletters, press releases, appointment books, newspaper clippings, and other materials documenting

Gordon M. Ambach's career as New York State Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York, 1977-1987. Records remain arranged in the original order they were received from the Commissioner's Office. The commissioner's ongoing relationships with the Board of Regents, the Governor, and various state agencies are well documented in this series. Records of these relationships include meetings and councils, state budget discussions, and educational legislation that was proposed and passed. One of Commissioner Ambach's largest contributions in this regard was his implementation of the Regents Action Plan, with a goal of providing the most rigorous educational standards in the nation for New York's students, teachers, and schools. Included are revisions to the commissioner's regulations relating to the Action Plan, meeting materials from the Board of Regents' Ad Hoc Committee on the Implementation of the Action Plan. Additionally, Ambach dealt with several important issues in education during his tenure that are included in this series. His work on the continuing integration of schools, and on the improvement of handicapped education – including schools for the blind and the deaf – were part of efforts to increase access to education for minorities. Similarly, the multitude of files on vocational and occupational education highlight the commissioner's focus on improving non-traditional educational paths. Ambach's efforts in the improvement of standards were in tandem with his endeavors to improve the quality of teachers and schools. This series documents his advocacy for improving the quality and funding of libraries, and of the development and recognition of teaching as a profession. The usage of federal programs in education and teaching, as well as those of New York State, is also well represented. As commissioner, Ambach was asked to make appearances at schools, universities, and organizations all over New York. Therefore, his speech files, which cover the entire length of his tenure, help document his opinions and accomplishments throughout his time in office. Speeches were given at events such as commencements, school group meetings, professional conferences, workshops, and meetings with organizations with an interest in education.

Use of Records:

Access Restrictions:

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

Related Information:

Related Materials:

Series B1054, Photographic Prints and Negatives of Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach and Education Department Staff

Series B0563, Office of the Commissioner Audio and Video Tapes of Speeches and Interviews of Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach

Series B0442, Board of Regents Secretary Convocations Files

Series B1829, Gordon M. Ambach Education Policy Papers.

Access Terms:

Subjects:

- Education--Standards
- Educational planning
- Educational law and legislation
- Education
- Education--Finance
- Education

Corporate Names:

- New York (State). Education Department. Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach
- New York State Archives
- State University of New York
- New York (State). Education Department--Administration
- University of the State of New York. Board of Regents

Personal Names:

- Ambach, Gordon M.

Geographic Names:

- New York (State)

Functions:

- Monitoring education
- Supervising education

Detailed Description:

Contact repository for copy with container list information.

New York State Archives - <http://www.archives.nysed.gov>