

**Patricia Kokinos**  
**Author of**  
***Angel Park: A Novel***

**biography**



A former journalist, Patricia Kokinos was on a mission to change public education from Day One, when she took her first job as a **high school English and journalism teacher** in Central California. She taught literature and writing to all grades, 9 through 12, and all ability levels—basic, general, college prep, gifted, and Advanced Placement—for ten years, along with journalism. During that time she also worked as a public affairs director and work experience coordinator, developed a state-of-the-art computerized Writing Lab, and redesigned gifted and Advanced Placement courses. She was named **Kern County Teacher of the Year** in 1984.

In order to do more about “school change,” Patti became an administrator, starting out as an **activities director at a 2200-student high school**, where she involved students in community service and multicultural projects. She also expanded community support for student activities and coordinated the efforts of **six parent Booster groups**.

She was named to the Superintendent’s Task Force to design Project 2000 for the Kern High School District, which **partnered with Ford Motor Company** to enhance student outcomes in four local high schools.

Promoted to **Assistant Principal for Instruction**, Patti orchestrated a year-long planning process for school improvement, utilizing teachers as researchers to discover “best practices” about **restructuring school operations and integrating curriculum**. She implemented the first year of this comprehensive redesign plan, including an interdisciplinary curriculum—merging English with social studies, math with science—and **providing a personal support system for all freshmen**. The teachers worked in teams, aided by acquisition of computers and multimedia systems to bring new technology to the classroom.

After moving to upstate New York in the early ‘90s, Patti became the assistant

coordinator of **adult education programs** for a three-county regional office and, through that position, developed an ACCESS Center for Adult Education and Training in Cobleskill, NY. As a result of the success of this center, Patti became **one of 27 county coordinators for Governor Cuomo's GATEWAY project** (Gaining Access to the Expanded Workforce for Adults and Youth), merging workforce and economic development by joining government, education, business, and human services.

Realizing that these massive efforts would not be necessary if we could improve the quality of K-12 education, Patti went to work as a **district administrator** for a 10,000-student K-12 district in upstate New York, where she made numerous improvements, including a freshman academics-with-support team at the high school and "Showcase for Success" events for teachers. In addition, she developed the first phase of a **district-wide plan for raising standards and improving student achievement**, including work with K-8 teachers to connect the curriculum in major academic areas.

Another move took her back to Southern California, where she was determined to return to front-line duties, working directly with students and teachers at a school site. She became Assistant Principal at a high-achieving high school in Ventura County which was **named one of the top 100 high schools in the nation** by *Newsweek* magazine. Patti reorganized systems and staffing patterns and created a **"Big Picture" plan** to streamline school operations and place more emphasis on the academic work of the classroom. She brought in community artists to develop a **Performing Arts Academy** and expanded fine arts funding through the student activities budget.

Despite her 25 years of making changes that created **better teaching and learning**, Patti discovered—just like the thousands of other creative teachers and administrators in the country—that none of the changes were strong enough to reform the system. Her novel, *Angel Park*, is an inside story that reveals why public education seems stuck, and how deep we will have to go to make changes that last.

Patti is convinced that America needs a new perspective that will help us **reinvent the system itself** so schools can do a better job.

A former Regent's Scholar at UCLA, Patti holds two master's degrees in English and educational administration. She and her husband live in Southern California, near their three grown children. Her website [www.changetheschools.com](http://www.changetheschools.com) offers her own belief: **Changing the schools can change the world....**