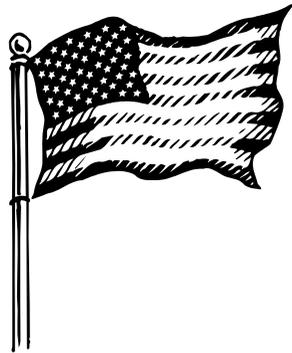


PUBLIC EDUCATION



...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE®

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PUBLIC EDUCATION

...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

A DEMOCRACY IS ONLY AS EFFECTIVE AS ITS CITIZENS, WHICH IS WHY CIVIC EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVING OUR DEMOCRACY. ONLY BY ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN, AND HOW OUR COUNTRY WORKS, WILL OUR COUNTRY CONTINUE TO THRIVE IN THE FUTURE.

ONE WAY TO APPROACH CIVIC EDUCATION IS BY DISCUSSING “AMERICAN VALUES.” THESE ARE EXEMPLARY BEHAVIORS OR CHARACTER TRAITS THAT HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VALUED AS IDEAL FOR AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENSHIP. “AMERICAN VALUES” ARE SEPARATE FROM “HABITS.” HABITS ARE ACTIVITIES THAT AMERICANS MIGHT FALL INTO, BUT ARE NOT “VALUES.” BY DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE TWO, VALUES AND HABITS, DISCUSSION GROUP MEMBERS WILL BE ABLE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY APPRECIATE MOST ABOUT OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION AS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS.



DEFINITIONS

Why definitions? Words are extremely powerful, and dictionaries are always very precise about what vocabulary they use in their definitions. Look at the definitions of “public” and “education” below and think about how they fit together and how they differ. After looking them over, list out the words frequently used. What terms seem to be the most important? What terms change? Which fit most closely with what you have heard or think about public education? As a group, come up with your own definition for public education, paying close attention to what the group wishes to include or exclude.

Public Education—education at a school as opposed to being ‘privately educated’; also education at a PUBLIC SCHOOL as distinguished from a private school. (Oxford English Dictionary).

Public—adj. 1. of or pertaining to the people as a whole; that belongs to, affects, or concerns the community or nation; common, national, popular. 2. In various phases (mostly obsolete) rendering or suggested by the commonwealth or state; the common or national good or well-being. 3. Done or made by or on behalf of the community as a whole; authorized by, acting for, or representing the community. 4. That is open to, may be used by, or may or must be shared by all members of the community; not restricted to the private use of any person or persons; generally accessible or available; generally levied (as a rate tax). (Oxford English Dictionary)

Education—n. 1. The process of nourishing or rearing a child or young person, an animal. 2. the process of ‘bringing up’ (young persons); the manner in which a young person has been ‘brought up,’ with reference to social situation, kind of manners and habits acquired, calling or employment prepared for, etc. 3. the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life; by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adult age. Also, the whole course of scholastic instruction which a person has received. Often with limiting words denoting the nature or the predominant subject of the instruction or kind of life for which it prepares, as *classical, legal, medical, technical, commercial, art education*. 4. Culture or development of powers, formation of character, as contrasted with the imparting of mere knowledge or skill. Often with limiting word, as *intellectual, moral, physical*. (Oxford English Dictionary)

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DEFINITIONS CONTINUED

Public—adj. 1. of the people as a whole. 2. open to or shared by all. 3. done or existing openly. 4. (of service, funds, etc.) provided by, concerning, or serving the government (The Oxford Essential Dictionary, American Edition. New York, 1998).

Education—n. 1. systematic instruction, schooling, etc. 2. particular kind of or stage in education 3. development of character or mental powers; formative experience. (The Oxford Essential Dictionary, American Edition. New York, 1998).

Public—adj. 1. Of, concerning, or affecting the community or the people: *the public good*. 2. Maintained for or used by the people or community: *a public park*. 3. Capitalized in shares of stock that can be traded on the open market: *a public company*. 4. Participated in or attended by the people or community: “Opinions are formed in a process of open discussion and public debate” (Hannah Arendt). 5. Connected with or acting on behalf of the people, community, or government: *public office*. 6. Enrolled in or attending a public school: *transit passes for public students*. 7. Open to the knowledge or judgment of all: *a public scandal*. (<http://dictionary.com>, 2005)

Education—n. 1. The act or process of educating or being educated. 2. The knowledge or skill obtained or developed by a learning process. 3. A program of instruction of a specified kind or level: *driver education*; *a college education*. 4. The field of study that is concerned with the pedagogy of teaching and learning. 5. An instructive or enlightening experience: *Her work in the inner city was a real education*. (<http://dictionary.com>, 2005)

Public— adj. 1. exposed to general view 2a. Of, relating to, or affecting all the people or the whole area of a nation or state <*public law*> b. of or relating to a government c. of, or relating to, or being in the service of the community or nation 3. of or relating to people in general 4. of or relating to business or community interests as opposed to private affairs 5. devoted to the general or national welfare. 6a. Accessible to or shared by all members of the community b. Capitalized in shares that can be freely traded on the open market—often used with *go* (Merriam-Webster Online—<http://m-w.com>)

Education—n. 1a. The action or process of educating or of being educated; *also* : a stage of such a process b. The knowledge and development resulting from an educational process <a man of little *education*> 2. the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools (Merriam-Webster Online)

VOICES IN HISTORY

Quotations can help to point out values that are important to American society. The following collection of quotes indicate that public education has long been a part of our country's dialogue on government. Many other quotes can be found by encouraging group members to explore quotation sites on the Internet. Ask the group to discuss the relationship of education and democracy in light of these quotes.

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what was and never will be."
-Thomas Jefferson

"Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day." -Thomas Jefferson

"Education: A debt due from present to future generations."
-George Peabody

"A republican form of government, without intelligence in the people, must be on a vast scale what a madhouse would be without superintendent or keeps would be on a small one." -Horace Mann

"The free common school system is the most American thing about America."
-Adlai Stevenson

"Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education."
-John F. Kennedy

"A child miseducated is a child lost."
-John F. Kennedy



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VOICES IN HISTORY CONTINUED

“Education is the transmission of civilization.”

-Will and Ariel Durant

“Education’s purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”

-Malcolm S. Forbes

“Democracy is about making wise collective choices, not individual consumer choices.” -David Tyack

“Education has in America’s whole history been the major hope for improving the individual and society.” -Gunnar Myrdal



HISTORICAL SOURCES & STUDY QUESTIONS

How does one decide what an American value might be? The soundest approach is by using core historical documents. Materials ingrained into American culture include the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, and the Constitution, as well as famous speeches, Supreme Court cases, and other events or ideas from American history.

Before moving on to the historical sources and study questions listed here, consider starting a group discussion by asking how the group might identify an American “value.” Have the group make a list of what it considers to be “American Values” and why. See if the values or sources they come up with are similar to those used in these study guides.

1) WHY PUBLIC EDUCATION?

THOMAS JEFFERSON, QUERY XIV, NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/JEFFERSON/ch14.html>

In the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, written in 1781-82, Thomas Jefferson outlined a model for public education. This model differs greatly from the one that we have today. Query XIV is the section of the *Notes* where Jefferson sets forth his arguments in support of public education. Jefferson remarks that “*the principal foundations of future order will be laid out*” in this public education. Although he states that “*the ultimate result of the whole scheme of education would be teaching all the children of the state reading, writing, and common arithmetic,*” he also places a particular emphasis on history. Jefferson stated that “*apprizing them of the past, will enable them to judge of the future...it will qualify them as judges of the actions and design of men.*” Jefferson concluded that teaching history was central to “*rendering the people safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty.*”

- 1) As you review “Query XIV” ask what the goals of our educational system are and how they compare to those set forth by Jefferson.
- 2) How does Jefferson’s proposed system compare to our system today? What are the community needs each seeks to meet? Do they differ and if so, why?

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HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

HORACE MANN, THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIVERSAL , FREE, PUBLIC EDUCATION (Web copy not available)

Horace Mann was an educational reformer who worked to establish and improve public schools in the 19th century. He served in the Massachusetts state legislature from 1827-1837. In 1837, he became the secretary of the newly formed Massachusetts Board of Education.

In *The Importance of Universal, Free, Public Education*, Mann writes that “education, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery.” Pointing to inequalities in his own state of Massachusetts, he observed that “by its industrial condition, and its business operation, it is exposed, far beyond any other state in the Union, to the fatal extremes of overgrown wealth and desperate poverty.” Mann argued that the solution to divisions between rich and poor is public education. Education he said, “gives each man the independence and the means by which he can resist the selfishness of other men.”

Like Jefferson, Horace Mann noted a correlation between public education and the preservation of a democratic system:

“The establishment of a republican government, without well-appointed and efficient means for the universal education of the people, is the most rash and foolhardy experiment ever tried by man.”

- 1) As you review Horace Mann’s essay consider what role public education plays in an industrial society. In a democratic society?
- 2) What are or should be the benefits of public education to the individual? To society? To community interests?
- 3) What do group members think are the major influences shaping public education today? What do they think should be the primary force that shapes education? Why?



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HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

2) DEFINING THE PUBLIC

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA

Legal Information Institute Supreme Court Collection:

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0349_0294_ZO.html

On May 17, 1954, the United States handed down its landmark decision in the case of *Brown v. Board*, overturning the more than half-century old separate-but-equal doctrine set in the 1896 decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The lawyers for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, led by Thurgood Marshall, argued that integrated schools were “*a fundamental right for all Americans.*” The court agreed to hear the case in June of 1952, offering a unanimous decision nearly two years later. The decision not only led to the desegregation of public schools across the nation but also helped to create a “*foundation for the 1960’s civil rights movement.*”

LITTLE ROCK HIGH SCHOOL

<http://www.nps.gov/chsc/lrchs/nhsindepth.html>

The decision of *Brown v. Board* in 1954 had many immediate effects. A plan for gradually integrating African-American students into Little Rock Central High School was adopted by the Little Rock Board of Education. In the fall of 1957, nine African-American students enrolled in Little Rock High School and were met with great opposition.

On September 2, the first day of school, the governor of Arkansas called for the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the nine students from entering the school. Over the next few weeks, angry mobs gathered outside the school, showing their opposition to desegregation and the governor of Arkansas appeared on national television, speaking in favor of segregation. The students were able to enter the school for the first time on September 23, after the Arkansas National Guard had been removed. The angry mobs of protestors, however, remained outside and it was not until the 25th of September, when the students had been put under the protection of the U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division by executive order of President Eisenhower, that the students were able to begin class. The “Little Rock Nine” continued to face opposition and prejudice from their classmates. All nine students completed the school year and the one senior in the group obtained a diploma from Central High School.

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HISTORICAL SOURCES AND STUDY QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- 1) What role does equality play in public education? What defines the “public?” What other American values were involved in their decisions?
- 2) Why were students willing to undergo this for an education? What does the perseverance of the “Little Rock Nine” show about the value of public education?

3) BALANCING INTERESTS

WISCONSIN V. YODER

Legal Information Institute Supreme Court Collection:

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0406_0205_ZO.html

The state of Wisconsin took the Yoder, Yutzy, and Miller families to court over the age at which students can leave school. In Wisconsin, a student may not leave school until he or she is 16 years old. The families involved, however, were Amish, and in their faith, children are removed from school after the completion of the eighth grade. The Amish believe “that by sending their children to high school they would not only expose themselves to the possible censure of the church community, but also endanger their own salvation and that of the children” (1678). The Supreme Court of the United States decided the case in 1972, ruling in favor of Yoder.

The court called the Amish a “*highly successful social unit*,” and argued “*that the value of all education must be assessed in terms of its capacity to prepare the child for life.*” In the agrarian Amish community, the additional one to two years would offer the Amish student little preparation for life in his or her community. It is also argued that while the subsequent employment of the Amish children on family farms does fall within the concerns of child labor laws, this parent-supervised employment is an age-old tradition in the Amish community which “*does not present the undesirable economic aspects of eliminating jobs which might otherwise be held by adults...*”

- 1) The Wisconsin v. Yoder case raises the question of how governmental, economic, family, and individual interests are all affected by the public education system. In this case, how did the court balance these interests? What were the factors leading to this balance? How would the group define public interest, as applied to education? Why?

CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES

Public education continues to be a focal point of our national dialogue. Nearly every day issues related to public education are reported, debated, and discussed in the media and government.

As a group, go through a stack of newspapers or magazines, or browse the Internet and have group members point out articles that reflect concerns they have about public education. Discuss these in the context of the ideas and concepts already pointed out from the definitions and historical sources. Ask them how their views were shaped by their own experiences with schooling. Ask them to consider if the article or report is promoting a particular point of view. What is being reported and what is not? Why? What additional information would the group like to have?

Also consider having the group explore the concept of a public education system. What makes up that system? What factors have affected its evolution? What would the group like to see preserved or changed? Why?

The following are some examples of public education issues that are often in the news to help begin discussion.



PUBLIC EDUCATION...IS AN AMERICAN VALUE

CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/nclb/nclb_intro_overview.htm

<http://www.ed.gov>

In 2002, George W. Bush signed his educational reform, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), into effect. NCLB is based on four principles: *“Stronger Accountability for results, More Freedom for States and Communities, Proven Education Methods, and More Choices for Parents.”* The first principle is reflected in requirements that students reach proficiency on a series of standardized tests and schools reach Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The second and third principles were reflected in provisions on spending funds, choosing the standards to be met, and directing federal funds to programs found to be effective. The fourth principle allows parents to transfer their children out of schools which are performing poorly and into schools, including charter schools, which are meeting AYP.

In the Spring of 2005, Connecticut’s Education Commissioner began a protest against NCLB, threatening to sue the Federal Government over the mandate. The Commissioner, Betty J. Sternberg, has argued that NCLB *“needlessly duplicates many of their own accountability measure, which were put into place long before the federal law”* and has been quoted saying, *“we’ve got better things to spend our money on. We won’t learn anything new about our schools by giving these extra tests”* (Washington Post 8 May 2005). Since the beginning of Connecticut’s protest, several other states have also begun to protest the law and in April, the National Education Association *“joined with school districts in three states for failing to fund the law adequately”* (Washington Post 8 May 2005).

1) Who should be held accountable for public education? How do we determine how to “grade” a school system? Is the approach advocated by No Child Left Behind—test scores—the right approach? Should it be the only approach? How does the group think the promise of extra funds affects a school’s curriculum? What are the positive ways? The negative ones?

2) What forces led to the protest of NCLB? How has it changed the education system? To what extent does it address individual needs and interests?

3) NCLB continues to evolve. See PEN for more information:

http://www.publiceducation.org/nclb_actionbriefs.asp

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CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

SCHOOL VOUCHERS

<http://www.nea.org/vouchers/index.html>

<http://www.schoolchoices.org/roo/vouchers.htm>

<http://parents4publicschools.com/opinion.html>

Vouchers—a government-issued credit that can be used to pay for education outside of the public schools— have been proposed many times as the solution for failing public schools. The argument is made that vouchers direct money to the individual student as opposed to the school district. Supporters of vouchers, which can be provided by the government, private organizations, or a combination of the two, say that vouchers have the ability to improve the quality of education for all children. Others strongly oppose vouchers. They argue that vouchers lower the educational standard, creating “*a two tiered system,*” which has different standards for students in public and private schools. Milton Friedman, an economist who wrote extensively on policy and received the Nobel Memorial Prize for Economic Science, argued that vouchers would not help low-income students, saying “*it is essential that no conditions be attached to the acceptance of vouchers that interfere with the freedom of private enterprises to experiment.*”

1) Looking back at the material from Thomas Jefferson and Horace Mann, ask the group to consider to what extent if any vouchers serve the goals of a public education system? Is there a role for private enterprises in public education? If so, what role should private enterprises have in the funding of public education? Do private institutions have an obligation to meet government standards? Why?



CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

DOVER, PENNSYLVANIA— TEACHING INTELLIGENT DESIGN¹

<http://www.nytimes.com>

The questions brought up earlier by *Wisconsin v. Yoder* are still being debated in the 21st century. In 2004, the school board of Dover, PA voted to have intelligent design² taught in high school biology classes. Eleven parents in the Dover school district filed a law suit against the school board and their decision to include intelligent design in the curriculum. The case was tried in the Federal District Court in Harrisburg, PA. The ruling was made on December 20, 2005. The judge, John E. Jones III, ruled against teaching intelligent design in science courses saying “*it is a religious viewpoint that advances ‘a particular version of Christianity’*” (Goodstein). He argued that teaching it would be in violation of the First Amendment, “*which prohibits public officials from using their positions to impose or establish a particular religion*” (Goodstein). This case marks the first ruling on intelligent design.

The Dover case not only relates to *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, but it also has two notable precedents, the Scopes Monkey Trial (1925) and *Edwards vs. Aguillard* (1987).

Scopes: <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/scopes.htm>

Legal Information Institute Supreme Court Collection

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0482_0578_ZO.html

1) The Scopes monkey trial took place in Dayton, TN after John Scopes, a high school science teacher had been accused of teaching evolution in the classroom. In the spring of 1925, an anti-evolution statute was put in place in the state, prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the classroom. Two big names— William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow—were brought to Dayton for a trial which quickly gained national attention. Bryan argued that the teaching of evolution posed a threat to Christianity while Darrow argued the “*Scopes isn’t on trial, civilization is.*” As the trial drew to a close, Darrow requested that the jury find Scopes guilty, in order that he might take the case to the Supreme Court of Tennessee. In 1927, the Supreme Court of Tennessee overturned the original decision of guilty.

1. Goodstein, Laurie. “Issuing Rebuke, Judge Rejects Teaching of Intelligent Design.” *The New York Times*. 21 Dec. 2005.

“Intelligent Design Derailed.” *The New York Times*. 22 Dec. 2005.

Dean, Cornelia. “Helping out Darwin’s Cause with a Little Pointed Humor.” *The New York Times*. 27 Dec. 2005.

Goodstein, Laurie. “Evolution Trial in Hands of Willing Judge.” *The New York Times*. 18 Dec. 2005.

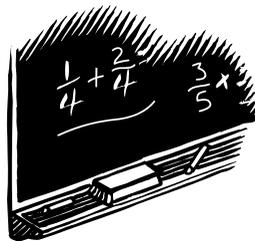
2. Intelligent design is the view that “life forms are too complex to have been formed by natural processes and must have been fashioned by a higher intelligence, which is never officially identified but which most adherents believe to be God” (“Intelligent Design Derailed”).

CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES CONTINUED

2) In 1987, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled to overturn a Louisiana law which required “Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science in Public School Instruction.” The law did not require the teaching of either Evolution or Creationism, but it stated that if one was taught, the other must be given equal weight. The Supreme Court ruled that this law was in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment which prohibits “the enactment of any law ‘respecting an establishment of religion.’” The three-pronged test established in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) was applied to determine whether the law was adopted with a secular purpose, whether the principal effect of the law was one that neither promoted nor inhibited religion, and that did not result in “an excessive entanglement of government with religion.” If a law fails to satisfy one of these conditions, it is viewed as in violation of all three prongs, ruling that “*The Louisiana Creationism Act advances a religious doctrine by requiring either the banishment of the theory of evolution from public school classrooms or the presentation of a religious viewpoint that rejects evolution in its entirety.*”

Justices Powell and O’Connor, both of whom joined in the majority opinion, wrote that although they found the Louisiana law to be unconstitutional, they “*adhere to the view ‘that the states and locally elected school board should have the responsibility for determining the educational policy of the public schools.’*”

3) All of these — Dover, Scopes, and Edwards — raise more questions that are central to the educational system. What concerns or interests were raised in these cases? What does the group believe? Ask the group what should or should not be taught in schools. Why? Who should make the decision? Should it lie with the parent, the business community, the government, or some combination? If the government, on what level should the decision be made? District, state, or federal? Why?



SECONDARY SOURCES

Below are links to websites and resources that address issues and questions concerning public education.

U.S. Department of Education

[Http://www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

Parents for Public Schools

[Http://www.parents4publicschools.com](http://www.parents4publicschools.com)

Southwest Educational Development Laboratories

[Http://www.sedl.org](http://www.sedl.org)

National PTA

[Http://www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

Public Education Network

[Http://publiceducation.org](http://publiceducation.org)

National Middle School Association

[Http://nmsa.org](http://nmsa.org)

Laboratory for Student Success

[Http://www.temple.edu/LSS](http://www.temple.edu/LSS)



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