

# **THE GREATEST EDUCATION**

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From our colonial founding, Americans have placed a high priority on education. Starting with the Puritans in New England, education was not only universal but challenging. The Puritans required every student be taught as if preparing to attend Harvard, the seminary the Massachusetts Bay Colony established soon after its founding. The United States spends more money per student each year than any other country. There is no questioning our commitment to education.

In many ways, the system of public education as now practiced in the United States is an anachronism. It is a vestigial institution developed during our agricultural and mass-production past. It is wholly incapable of educating children to function in the information age. Additionally, it is not fitted to address the sociological disadvantages many children face concerning their education. In particular, public schools cannot effectively mediate for sociological issues related to their family setting. Whether or not religion is true, curing social problems is to some extent a crisis of the soul for which religion and faith are of vital assistance. Because of this, government cannot replace parents to solve social problems. It takes a healthy, faith-based nuclear family to develop full human potential. This includes maximizing academic achievement. Our most vulnerable students, the children in single-parent or dis-functional families, are further disadvantaged by the lack of educational choice.

Nobel-Prize winning author Gary Becker wrote a book titled "Treatise on the Family." In his work he describes how the family is the most efficient means to raise children. He includes a formula for which the key function is the altruistic love parents enjoy for their own children for which they will sacrifice.

**Strangers and hired help cannot make this emotionally-motivated investment. School choice promotes academic achievement using this altruistic motivation.**

**However, literacy is also a necessary public good. A republic requires literacy to maintain its freedom. We therefore have an obligation to maximize academic achievement. It cannot be sacrificed for any reason. That would be to sacrifice the republic itself. Thus the question: how do we maximize academic achievement?**

**The method here described was developed based upon the example of the development of stealth technology. Stealthy technology was desired by the U. S. Air Force to make it harder for opponents to track our aircraft on radar. They desired to reduce the signature of aircraft because the closer we could get before being detected, the more difficult our opponent's ability to scramble defenses. As with most attempts to innovate, the Air Force first considered ways to take the craft they had and reduce the signature. However, the contract to do this went to Lockheed-Martin. Martin decided that instead of using aircraft already extant, they would design stealthy aircraft from scratch. They determined the shapes and materials with the lowest radar signatures, then designed the B-1 bomber. This aircraft had one one-hundredth the radar signature of a B-52 bomber, roughly equivalent to a flock of pigeons. But the B-1 was just a quick fix. Lockheed-Martin continued, using sophisticated computer control and other innovations in design. They next developed the B-2 bomber. This aircraft sported a radar signature one one-thousandth of that of the B-52. A single pigeon! Thus our key strategic aircraft became invisible to enemy radar.**

**Now let us consider our public education system. The two key factors in academic achievement are the parents and the teachers. According to the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, parents enjoy influence 11 times greater than the next biggest consideration. Therefore, I propose providing parents directly with the resources to educate their children. Administration of education would pass from state legislatures and local school boards directly to parents. This does not mean all parents would become teachers, just that the parents would decide how, when, and where their children would be educated. The public school monopoly would be broken, the disadvantages of**

**geographically-based education would come to an end. As proposed in the attached amendment to the Texas Constitution, public school assets could be liquidated and arrangements for paying off current public school stranded debt would be considered by the counties.**

**To provide parents with the funding, each county would determine revenue applicable to education and divide that amount by the number of students in the county. The county would directly provide the resources to the parents per child. Each county would work out its own details of how this is actually accomplished. An innovative, flexible market for primary and secondary education would be instantly created.**

**Let's consider some examples of how choice improves outcomes. First, most appropriately, consider the example in the United States of our system of higher education. We enjoy both private and public institutions. Public funds are provided to individual students regardless the nature of the university. In each case, the student applies to the university which the student would like to attend, and the university chooses which applicants will be admitted. Because of this market of choice and mutual consent, the United States has a system of higher education which is the envy of the world. Education is the largest trade surplus of any category of product which the United States enjoys. Why not replicate this success in primary and secondary education?**

**Let us consider additionally our highway system. It is funded through the gasoline tax. Once you purchase your fuel you can drive almost anywhere in North America. This mobility is historically unprecedented. Yet it provides us the greatest freedom. Where we drive and when is not determined by any government institution. Each individual has complete control of when and where they travel. For example, if you desire to travel into the next county or state, you don't have to apply to a committee for permission, you can just drive anywhere. Why not provide that freedom to parents who desire the best education possible for their children?**

**Lastly, the cell phone now possesses all the information of the internet. Once literate, a student can learn just about anything one could imagine. Brick and mortar is obsolete, learning is available anywhere a signal is present.**

## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND DISCIPLINE**

**Freedom requires the possibility of failure, if you cannot fail, you are not free. However, the public interest in literacy is such that achievement of literacy must have some priority over individual choice. Markets operate at the greatest efficiency where there exists the greatest freedom. Therefore counties, in which the taxes which pay for education are levied, must maintain control of the quality of education. Counties may elect to have personnel who monitor children's progress and mentor parents toward better academic achievement for their children. Discipline for lack of achievement of students should not include mandating how children should be educated, but in cases in which there is insufficient achievement the parents should be prohibited from maintaining their children in that program. In some counties, formal accountability and discipline programs will be unnecessary. In others, sophisticated, vigorous truant programs may be necessary. It should be up to the county. Accountability programs should key on testing, parents should want to know how well their children are progressing compared to other children. The primary goal of accountability and discipline programs is to promote a culture for educational excellence with the parents. We desire to replicate the high priority the Puritans placed on education.**

**Problems addressed by this new system of education include:**

- 1) Teacher pay;**
- 2) Class size;**
- 3) Geographic discrimination in housing;**
- 4) Eliminating bad schools;**
- 5) Restoring religious freedom;**
- 6) Encouraging parental involvement in education (discouraging apathy by providing choice.)**
- 7) Encouraging education innovation in a new and vibrant market;**
- 8) Enjoying the discipline in quality only a free market provides.**
- 9) Restore local control to education. Who is more local than the parent?**
- 10) Restore the principal of individualism that freedom requires. The recipient of a government benefit should determine how that benefit is enjoyed.**

**Please see Appendix A for a detailed explanation for each solution.**

**Please see Appendix B for a response to common exceptions.**

## **APPENDIX A**

**How educational choice solves problems in public education.**

### **1) Teacher pay.**

**During the last 20 years, spending on public education has doubled, yet neither achievement nor teacher pay have improved. Most teachers are trapped in a straight-jacket of rules, regulations, and union instituted barriers which reduce pay and choice. If parents controlled the resources, it is difficult to imagine that teacher compensation would decrease. Teachers would enjoy an explosion of choices, including establishing their own school, if they desire. Consider a classroom of 30 students, for whom \$10,000 a child is spent per year. That is \$300,000 for the class each year. Average teacher pay is \$30,000 to \$50,000. Even if you have 20 students in the class, the compensation is still far below the spending. Can you imagine teacher compensation declining with parental control of the resources? Basically, resources would be shifted from administration costs directly to the teachers if parents control the resources.**

### **2) Class size.**

**Children are all different, and parents are in the best position to determine how each may best learn. Some will need constant attention while others will learn on their own without constant management. Young children need more attention than older children. Some are precocious, others are late-bloomers. In some cases, mass classes are efficient and useful. For others, individual**

proctoring most effective. Contrast this with public schools. The public schools must treat each child as a widget, publicly administered services are subject to a maze of controls and rules from which private individual judgement is not. Thus when these rules conflict with achievement, parents will be able to make better choices than school teachers and staff can. This is because privately controlled resources are spent for private benefit, public resources for political purposes. In addition, the cell phone now has access to the internet. Once a child is literate, they may learn anywhere they can get phone service.

### **3) Geographic discrimination in housing and quality of schools.**

Geographic distribution of public schools distorts property values and destroys the quality of education. Most home-buyers desire their property appreciate in value, and the quality of the local schools is the greatest predictor of whether that value will increase. If the value of a home is de-coupled from the quality of the local public schools, the housing stock will more likely be maintained and communities stabilized. In many parts of the country, the public schools are the most racially segregated and private schools most diverse. This is due to the geographic nature of the public schools.

### **4) Eliminating bad schools.**

Markets reward effective producers and punish bad producers. Bad schools will be eliminated as parents remove their children. Parents will have a cornucopia of choices from which they may choose the best education for their children.

### **5) Restoring religious freedom.**

Since faith based schools cannot receive public funds for education, taxpayers lose their freedom. All services, public and private, should serve the individual, including education. Since the public interest is primarily literacy, not social engineering, parents must be free to obtain the benefit of education, which they fund, as they desire. Currently, each dollar in property taxes paid is a dollar of freedom forfeited.

**6) Creates a culture of parental involvement.**

**The current system of public education discourages parental involvement. By moving control of educational resources to parents, they will be motivated to become involved in, and oversee, their children's education. Parents already dis-satisfied with their children's education will have a means to improve it, and academic achievement will increase as parents become more interested. Over the long run, education will improve for the same reason it did for the Puritans. We will create a culture in which parental involvement in education is the norm, rather than the exception.**

**7) Creates an innovative market for educational choice.**

**Educational freedom for parents will break the public school monopoly. As the example of the break-up of AT&T demonstrates, choice produces innovation in markets which governmental, administrative bureaucracies are incapable of producing. With the internet and smart cell phones, the classroom is now located where-ever the student is. Brick and mortar is now obsolete for educational purposes as well as commercial. As noted, choice will not only benefit the student, but also the teacher, as more choices become available to and their career path becomes more flexible and rewarding.**

**8) Enjoying the discipline in quality only a free market may provide.**

**Markets function well because the consumer may at any time fire a producer if a better opportunity comes along. A free market not only punishes bad producers, it seeks out and rewards the best producers. Currently, public schools, because of their political nature, must adhere to rules and regulations to which education placed in the private sector will not suffer. Private institutions must of necessity be immediately responsive to customer desires. This flexibility makes private education much more effective at improving academic achievement than public schools may be.**

**9) Restores local control of education.**

**Currently public education is subject to Federal, State, union regulations and limitations, a whole host of rules and regulations which limit the flexibility of providers. Parents who control their child's education will be able to immediately identify and respond to issues and opportunities which publicly administered education is not designed to provide.**

**10) Restore liberty to parents and education.**

**Exercise of freedom requires that as many goods and services as possible be provided with the consent and control of the served. The public interest in universal education is served by the policy that all must be educated. Public policy is bad, however, and academic achievement reduced, by the collectivization of education in the public school monopoly. Monopolies attract those who are ambitious for control apart from the interests of the served. Those interests can only be protected by creating a regime under which individual parents may fire the monopoly and seek a more effective alternative. Citizens and future citizens must in a republic be well-educated, a free market will maximize educational achievement. We are naturally pre-disposed to freedom rather than slavery, educational choice is the best policy to promote individual freedom and maximize academic achievement.**

## **Education Amendment to Texas Constitution**

**Political jurisdictions within the state of Texas (county, city, town, school district, or other taxing or political authority,) including the entire state by legislation of the Texas state legislature, may elect to return resources for education directly to parents rather than continue to administer education publicly.**

**Voters in school districts may by popular referendum and/or School Board choice vote to self-liquidate. Jurisdictions which abolish school districts may adjust property tax rates at their own discretion.**

**Jurisdictions may elect to provide parents funds but still maintain some public schools with remaining funds.**

**Jurisdictions which adopt parental administration of education funds will no longer be obligated to address state or federal mandates.**

**Funds provided to parents will enjoy pre-tax status, having no controls, regulations, or mandates. Funds will be provided equally per child in that jurisdiction each year. Parents may refuse the funds. Parents who refuse funds are not subject to any state or county regulatory obligation.**

**Jurisdictions which liquidate must make good all public debts and stranded costs in any manner they so choose, including liquidation of real and other assets.**

## STATEMENT of PURPOSE for EDUCATION AMENDMENT

The United States' social contract is based upon the premise that the purpose of government is to protect and promote the interests of the individual. This amendment is proposed so that individuals as parents may enjoy the greatest liberty in discharging their natural responsibility in regard to the education of their children.

Socially, our society recognizes the necessity of literacy in maintaining our freedoms. Literacy is a necessary pre-requisite for enjoying individual rights, thus is a legitimate end which government should encourage and promote. We cannot be equal if we cannot read the social contract and its laws. Additionally, we must read well with understanding since we have made administration of our social contract exceedingly complex. For these reasons, promoters of the Education Amendment fully support the mission statement in the Texas Education Code, particularly Chapter 4 Sec. 4.001 Public Education Mission and Objective 1: "Parents will be full partners with educators in the education of their children," and Sec. 4.002 Public Education Academic Goal 1: "The students will demonstrate exemplary performance in the reading and writing of the English language."

Social purposes of education beyond the simple aptitude of literacy and understanding, however, are to be considered "Social Engineering," a form of social control alien to the pursuit of the individual rights and responsibilities. Social Engineering is destructive to the ends of liberty. A system in which committees, rather than individuals, control the disposition of academic resources therefore cannot further a culture of liberty, nor maximize academic achievement.

The Information Age, with its unprecedented provision of access to information and communications, has rendered our current system of publicly administered schools obsolete. The system of public schools was established during our agrarian and mass-production industrial past. It is incapable of promoting the levels of academic achievement required to maintain our liberties. We now live in a world in which power is spreading to places where the primacy of individual liberties is not recognized. A direct line exists between maintenance of economic power, military prowess, and political freedom. To preserve our liberties, therefore, it is of utmost importance that maximum academic achievement is promoted by the American educational system. As former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates noted, our military prowess derives from our economic power. As our economy shrinks in comparison to our international competitors, our ability to protect our interests, and therefore our rights, erodes. The power and wealth necessary to protect our freedoms derives directly from our academic proficiency. We must introduce individual choice to maximize that academic proficiency.

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## **APPENDIX B Exceptions to "THE GREATEST EDUCATION"**

### **1) Some parents will waste the funds.**

**Reply: Yes, some will. However, this complaint is based upon a few erroneous assumptions. The first is that occupation in a building called a school with a person called a teacher actually educates a child. High drop-out rates indicate that many children physically present are not getting their minds fed, nor desire to. Second, not only are many children present in classrooms not getting educated, they are interrupting the education of the other students present. These students are now trapped in those schools, without relief. So financing the presence of apathetic or hostile students in a classroom not only does not necessarily educate those students but hinders the academic achievement of others. Removing those students from classrooms will increase the value of funds spent on other students whose achievement is no longer reduced from interruptions by uninterested students. For an anecdote supporting this contention, I refer to an interview with an adolescent gang member interviewed in Chicago.**

The reporter asked why he had joined a gang. He replied that he had no choice. He was required to attend school, and he was harassed and robbed by all the gangs at the school. Once he joined a gang, at least the members of that gang stopped attacking him, and additionally assisted against predations by other gangs. Please also consider that parents mature over time. You cannot be a parent for long without considering the future that your child might enjoy. An irresponsible parent may at any time repent and decide to make a priority of their children's education. Additionally, grandparents have an interest in their grandchildren's education. They may provide moral suasion to encourage a good educational choice. Counties may determine to include grandparents in educational choice as part of their discipline programs. This could include the ability to appeal the choice of their children to get their grandchildren into an effective educational program.

2) The public school monopoly is too politically powerful, opposing it wastes effort.

This is an argument Ron Paul makes in his book on "School Revolution." However, since literacy is vital to the preservation of the republic, and education is so important to the well-being of citizens, we have a moral obligation to make it as great as possible. Political winds shift, and weak policies based upon despair are self-defeating. We must adapt an optimistic demeanor and become leaders in the effort to free education from all chains and restraints. Teachers and administrators have children, too. I am one.

3) This program will create a chaotic mish-mash for education.

Answer: That is true, it will. But administrative order is destructive to the pursuit of excellence. If academic achievement is to be maximized, a market based upon the chaos of individual choice is a necessity. Administrative order seeks conformity and rules enforcement. This regulation in the public schools is the very thing destroying the quality of education. We support the concept of free markets, and their

**attendant benefits, in all other areas of life. Why handicap education with a system of rules which diminish academic achievement?**

**4) In many communities, the public schools are social centers for community interaction as well as educational institutions.**

**Answer: This is true. However, the Amendment provides that communities may continue to operate public schools. These may be funded both by the parents' contribution for attendees and additional local and state funds. But parents must be able to choose alternatives, in case the local public school is not the best educational choice for their children. In those communities, public education may actually be improved by the social nature of the institutions, creating less necessity for alternatives. But freedom and achievement require the choice be available. Social antagonism can also be of greater consequence in small communities. Let the people living in those communities decide what is best for themselves.**

**5) My tax dollars will support choices I don't like!**

**Answer: True, but whose children are they? Are your children primarily your responsibility or do they belong to the government? Arguing against parental choice kidnaps children to serve the ideologically motivated interests of strangers. However, government exists for the benefit of the individual, and support of government policies which we might not like is part of the cost of government. Where our interests and public policy diverge, we debate. That is why we have elections. Literacy benefits all of us generally. It is a necessity in our complex modern society. Maximizing academic achievement optimizes the potential for productive labor and increases public safety in many ways, both measurable and intangible. Your property is best protected in a well-educated society in which thieves, muggers, vandals, defrauders, and rioters are rare. Additionally, each of us repays the cost of our education through the property tax. The productivity we enjoy as educated citizens repays the cost of that education and**

provides for the education of future generations. In other words, the cost of our own education is amortized over our lifetime. Literacy promotes and protects property, therefore it is just for that cost to be born by property.

**6) Studies show public schools to be efficient.**

**Reply: Yes, but are they effective? Studies may be manipulated and often obscure basic assumptions. One of the real crises afflicting academia presently is the “Replication Crisis.” The results of half of published studies cannot be replicated. Think about why a study is done to begin with. Often an interest finances a study hoping for a finding which supports that interest. For example, if the teacher’s union is looking for justification for pay or benefit increases, it will fund studies which demonstrate increased academic achievement due to that extra cost. How the study is structured, how it “mines the data,” influences a finding either way. What is compared to what and how is often a function of the desired conclusion the author of the study wants to find. If the author gets the reputation for findings opposite that which is desired in the study, sponsors will be reluctant to fund his or her study. Additionally, as noted elsewhere, the increase in educational spending over the past few decades has not resulted in a concurrent increase in academic achievement. Therefore, by some measures, the public schools have become less efficient.**