
Let's fund some school for all children

Reduce discrimination in school funding

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By providing disproportionate financial support to children enrolled in government schools our state (and others) discriminates against quality, variety, innovation, and efficiency in the next generation's education.

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1. Where am I going?

I propose to reopen the issue of funding public education. Our current schooling scheme has been little debated in the last hundred years. I believe review is warranted. We now have evidence that our government run and financed schools may not produce a well-educated populace.

Education professionals make the bulk of the decisions in our current education system; not parents. Thus the supplier rather than the customer is specifying the result.

Since most public education is funded via taxation, I will emphasize the taxpayer's viewpoint.

I avoid curriculum specifics in favor of a general description of those goals important to the funding taxpayer.

But now some background.

2. Is competition in education desirable?

Competition within education has been an essential element for all of recorded history.¹ It has also been a significant factor in the choice of the institutions used to deliver society's information to the next generation.

Research throughout the country has shown that competition, between public and private schools, with charter schools, and even among government run schools has beneficial effects not only for the students, but for the efficiency of the public schools.²

The competition among public schools has been reduced considerably by the consolidation of schools and districts. This consolidation was pursued to achieve greater efficiency and more specialized and knowledgeable instruction.³ This consolidation was driven by educational

¹ Tom Verhoeff in [The Role of Competitions in Education](#) discusses the history and use of competitions within the school setting with particular reference to The International Olympiad in Informatics and the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest:
<http://olympiads.win.tue.nl/oi/oi97/ffutwrlld/competit.html> (Nov 1997).

² Lori L. Taylor in [Competition in Education](#) has a summary of the competition's effects across the U.S. She particularly emphasizes the role of well publicized testing in providing information to the parents:

www.dallasfed.org/research/indepth/2000/id0009.pdf

³ Joe Bard, Clark Gardener, and Regi Wieland in [Rural School Consolidation: History, Research Summary, Conclusions, and](#)

professionals who justified the consolidations citing lower costs, more specialized instruction, and a more extensive curriculum. Parents and local taxpayers often opposed these consolidations since it eliminated focal points for local communities. In the 50 years prior to 1980 the number of school districts across America dropped by 87% and the number of schools by 74%.⁴

These consolidations were done in spite of substantial enrollment increases. The result has met much of the professionals expectations, except the reductions in per student costs were very small and disappear when measuring costs per graduate.

The topic of an appropriate school size is complex, but it does appear that elementary schools of 300 to 400 students and secondary schools of 400 to 800 students are acceptable. The author attended a high school of 1,400 students and taught in a high school of 200 students. In spite of the limited offerings in the latter, I certainly felt that students from the smaller school were better prepared for college and outside life, if not immediately qualified for advanced placement in college.

Home schooling, and private schools have both shown excellent results and have a large number of customers in spite of the extra burden these parents encounter when they pay for both government schools and their selected alternative.

Charter schools are often run with the approval of, and funding through, the local school district. Therefore they are probably not as innovative as they would be if their

Recommendation summarize a lot of research, but the choice of school district size and school size depends strongly on the goals. With increase in school or district size the safe, nurturing environment, with few students left out of extra-curricular activities is traded for more specialized classes taught by more specialized teachers: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4126/is_200601/ai_n16410266/pg_1

⁴ Alan J. DeYoung, and Craig B. Howley in The Political Economy of Rural School Consolidation state “In 1930 there were 128,000 school districts and over 238,000 schools in America. By 1980, however, the number of school districts had dropped to 16,000 and the number of schools to 61,000.”: <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid=LL0p1xxFSpxNTppCVhRwj5GvfWTT8V2nj8GpbCfVJWzv6TFCSM!-1087522356?docId=95242405>

only accountability were to the parents. However some have proven successful.

There are several ways competition produces superior results:

Innovation. A school that has an actual or effective monopoly on providing a service does not have a strong incentive to search for, or try, the most innovative or productive techniques. The focus is on resource inputs (more money) rather than the output to input ratio (educational progress per dollar). The necessity of competing for students and the potential to make a profit is essential to fund and drive a serious search for quality and efficiency.

Comparison. If customers can compare the offerings of two or more possibilities they have a much better understanding of what is possible. In the monopoly situation there are few ways of measuring whether a school is doing an excellent job, or an abysmal job. Comparison also spurs the spread of successful innovations to other schools.

Efficiency. In a monopoly situation there are no rewards for better use of resources. Without the profit motive all focus is on persuading the funding agency to provide more money. In a profit-making situation, producing results more efficiently also enhances income.

Success or failure. The ultimate goad to innovation and efficient performance is the possibility of success or failure. A monopoly school stays in business no matter how poor their product because the customer has no choice. In a competitive situation schools can go out of business and their resources can be used by other educators.

Given the benefits of competing schools how did we arrive at a situation in which the government runs schools for the majority of Kindergarten through 12th grade students?

3. Comments on the history of American schools

Most of us have grown up with markets that competently supply the bulk of our needs (clothing, food, shelter, transportation, and repair services). We find the lack of choice, variety, quality, and price in government schools quite disappointing.

This was not always the case in America. Except for a few New England communities, schooling in the colonies and prior to our civil war was primarily a family responsibility. A variety of profit making lectures, private institutes, private colleges, membership libraries and charity institutions supplemented the ABC's taught by the family. Individual Bible reading was a major motivator and church sermons were often well-written, erudite and much discussed. The bulk of employment oriented training was done via apprenticeship or simple on-the-job training.⁵

The great Irish immigration of the 1840s and 1850s had a good deal to do with why funds were directed toward schools run by local school boards and governments. This large number of Catholic immigrants into areas of the country with overwhelming Protestant majorities caused fears that a cultural dilution would damage our unique form of government. The majority's response was to form government schools as a way of assimilating the children of these new immigrants into a largely Protestant culture. Ultimately the effort failed to make little Protestants out of them because the Catholics formed their own school systems. The penalty however was that they would have to pay for both sets of schools.

We now have much larger number of ancestral cultures represented in America. This variety plus the gradual homogenization of cultures suggests that the fears of 150 years ago no longer need be addressed. Thus much of the original justification for government run schools has evaporated and we are left with the opportunity to review the taxpayers role in helping to educate future voters.

Judging by the level of literacy in those early times (especially when compared to the present), America was well served in the language arts. The level of discourse evident in early writings, suggests that for

⁵ Robert A Peterson has an interesting examination of Education in Colonial America that discusses the first two centuries of schooling in America and the results achieved under a largely voluntary system: <http://www.fee.org/publications/the-freeman/article.asp?aid=1130> (Sep 1983). He points out that even as late as 1860 there were only 300 public schools, but there were 6,000 private academies.

these primary subjects, government schools were not necessary.⁶

It is not possible to extend that claim to the scientific and engineering subjects since knowledge in these areas was much less extensive than it has become in our world. Rather one must look to the colleges for evidence that both private and government schools can deliver a technical education.

It was gradually felt that an educated citizenry was of benefit to all citizens. This idea represented sufficient justification to ask all citizens to join in paying for that education. It was also felt that parents might neglect their children's education under the press of other expenses.

These justifications do not imply who should provide the education – only who it was felt would benefit enough to be asked to pay for it.

4. Why does the government use taxes to support some schools?

Generally parents are expected to pick up the cost of raising their children including food, shelter, medical care, clothing and guidance. However in the case of education, taxpayers are asked to pick up a major portion of the cost. Why did this become so?

Quite possibly because our Republic relies on the votes of its citizens for its ultimate governance, it considers a portion of their education to be of prime importance. Whether this concern is to be met with voter selection or education has gradually been decided in favor of the latter.

⁶ Ibid. Robert Peterson reports that a study in 1800 by DuPont de Nemours found only four in a thousand Americans were unable to read and write legibly. Unfortunately we cannot come even close to that standard of literacy today. Joseph S. McNamera in Confronting the Morality of MEDIOCRITY says that current American literacy is below 80% and the only countries in the Western Hemisphere that are this low are Haiti, Guatemala, Belize, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras. Estimates of public school productivity claim public school productivity fell by 2.5 to 3 % per year between 1967 and 1991: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1272/is_1998_Nov/ai_54879244/pg_1 (Nov 1998).

Limiting the pool of voters to exclude the less informed was tried for many years. At one time, landholding was felt to be an essential qualification to be a voter. The founders felt the people who voted for a tax should be the ones to pay it. At other times, people were excluded because they were female, because they were not literate, or because they had not paid a poll tax. Gradually the voters and the courts removed these restrictions on who could vote, often because the rules were abused and major groups of people excluded.

At the present time, very few restrictions remain. Institutionalization, not being a citizen (when enforced), or being too young, are three of the remaining restrictions on the ability to vote.

This suggests that if we are to be adequately governed, most citizens must learn enough to appreciate the issues that come before government. They must be able to select officeholders who represent their views and deal with governance in a responsible manner.

However, this does not justify (or make wise) asking that the entire cost be shifted to taxpayers. It has long been known that those items which are received with no effort are not valued. Primary and secondary education has fallen into this trap with its value considerably diminished by having its entire expense shifted to taxpayers.

Roman lawyer Pliny the Younger decided about 2,000 years ago that he feared paying the entire cost of a secondary school for his town because he was “afraid that someday my gift might be abused for someone’s selfish purposes, as I see happen in many places where teachers’ salaries are paid from public funds. There is only one remedy to meet this evil: if the appointment of teachers is left entirely to the parents, and they are conscientious about making a wise choice through their obligation to contribute to the cost.”⁷

There is also reasonable doubt that a fixed amount of formal schooling is the only route to an educated citizen -- President George Washington had about two

⁷ Quoted by Andrew Coulson in *Markets Versus Monopolies in Education: The Historical Evidence*: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v4n9.html>

years of schooling. In spite of this we generally find that states require school attendance up to age 16 (7 through 16 in Alaska).

5. What should be the goals of taxpayer financed education?

At present government schools⁸ attempt a wide variety of educational and social tasks. Many, if subjected to careful taxpayer scrutiny, might be frowned upon. These tasks are a significant expansion from the reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic of an earlier era. In part this expansion occurred because the customer was paying for only a part of the cost and he could ask for more services with little immediate personal impact. Also because in the absence of real profit/loss cost control, the bureaucracy has few limits on their mission. Their only serious limit was their ability to persuade board members, legislators, and citizens that they required more money. This pitted full-time articulate professionals against marginally informed part-timers. It’s usually no contest, unless the demands become clearly unaffordable.

Parents and students may have many differing goals for the schools they attend, but taxpayers as a group can probably only agree on a limited subset of these goals. It is very important to keep these goals limited as they are the basis for any testing program and hence can be expected to impose the stifling hand of bureaucracy on any program that uses public funds.⁹ It is instructive, therefore, to look at the basics necessary to educate informed future voters.

Self Education. The tools for self-education are by far the most important. The ability to read, and calculate are essential and surpass any other goals in their importance. The ability to express oneself orally and in writing are

⁸ I will use “government” in preference to “public” schools as I feel the former term is more descriptive. Public facilities have come to mean accessible to anyone who pays the price and observes the rules as in public accommodation, public transport, etc. Many private and charter schools are “public” in this sense. I therefore chose the less inclusive term “government” schools to describe those schools that are operated by government.

⁹ Sheldon Richman in his *Becker, Competition, and Education* describes the danger that any type of taxpayer financing poses to educational innovation and excellence: <http://www.fff.org/comment/vouchsxr0901.asp>

also important to the extent we value active participation in political affairs as opposed to just informed voting.

Introductory mental background. The other items are less important, but help produce important mental background for serious thinking about political affairs. It is apparent that most of us even with mastery of the basic tools of self-education find introduction to these subjects intimidating and difficult. It is therefore important to include serious introductions to a number of supporting areas in the basic education of a future voter. Among these would be: logic, history, economics, governmental structure, and science.

Omitted. Two major areas have been omitted from the above topics, each for a different reason. Omission in no way suggests that they be omitted from any school's curriculum, only they would not be subject to the state's purview.

Job training. The matching of each student with the training most desired/appropriate is often the major reason for choosing a particular school. It is also mercurial with requirements changing every year. There is very little chance that a necessarily bureaucratic organization like government could respond in an appropriate manner. Every citizen needs some sort of career and it is of benefit to the taxpayer that he become as productive (and taxpaying) as possible. However this is much too diverse a market to be addressed other than by providing excellent reading and computational skills. There is also no common thread through the various careers that might be selected, on which the state could test progress. The taxpayer is better off paying generously for skills in these basics and letting the market provide any type of specific career training the student is interested in pursuing.

Quality of life. Schools often provide courses in the arts, etiquette, music, physical training, health, and homekeeping. However, a good case can be made that any specific courses taught to enhance the quality of the individual's life either economically or socially are not the responsibility of the general taxpayer, but the parents of the child.

I have limited the goals of taxpayer-funded education very deliberately to provide focus. The other goals of any education program may diverge strongly in many

directions. However there is a core that taxpayers own and can measure. Their continued support should depend on success in the area of focus.

6. What portion of instruction should taxpayers finance?

Since the goal of taxpayer funding (as opposed to parent funding) of education is to create competent citizens who are able to help govern, emphasis must be on developing certain general skills. This is not to say that many other competencies are desirable. But, when spending taxpayer's money only a few specific skills and knowledge bases should be tested. Success in these areas should determine the availability of further funding.

Narrowly circumscribing and ranking these core competencies is important so that funding is directed towards those of greatest importance to the taxpayer. This also permits the government to focus on core competencies and provide generous funding for those areas. It also avoids the bitter disputes over taxpayer funding of religious education.

I rank the following core competencies in decreasing order of importance:

Reading. The ability to read English with comprehension is so important that it must always be emphasized in both the funding and testing sides. Writing and speaking in clear English will be a natural outgrowth of displaying competency in reading. However, in the interest of focus, writing and speaking should receive less emphasis than reading with understanding.¹⁰

Computation. While the competent citizen need not be a statistical genius, he needs real facility in arithmetic skills (including fractions, proportions, percentages, averages, and the numerical evaluation of the real world). He will also benefit from practice in some of the ways numbers are used in political deception.

Logic. Once again the purpose is not be to make expert logicians of each future citizen but to prepare them to evaluate political options that are often supported with

¹⁰ Daniel Hager in Competition in Education: The Case of Reading tells about the necessity for and growth of the remedial reading industry: <https://www.fee.org/publications/the-freeman/article.asp?aid=3602> (April 1997).

fallacious reasoning. Some facility in recognizing red herrings, ad hominem attacks, genetic fallacies, faulty appeals to authority, circular reasoning, loaded questions, bandwagons, and the many other logical tricks are worth every penny of the taxpayer's money.

Economics. Economists are known to cringe when they hear voters and politicians discussing the financial impact of government policies. This is one of the most neglected areas of instruction in our government schools and it seriously lowers the quality of political discourse. While much of this subject is an outgrowth of logic, the special examples it presents have many important details that easily escape the informed review of the untrained voter.

Also a comparative study of free and restrained markets can show why the United States has selected the former for most purposes. The future voter should be able to generally describe some of the legal framework that supports free markets.

History of the U.S. The possibilities of the future are best informed by knowledge of the major changes our country has undergone in the past. Emphasis should be placed on those changes that have the greatest impact on the present. The history of America from its initial settlement by Europeans 400 years ago is important to understanding our unique situation. Particular emphasis must be placed on the words, research, and writings of the men involved in writing our constitution, its first 10 amendments and its interpretation over the years. While the last 200 years has seen fantastic progress in the technical and scientific fields it is important for students to appreciate the incredible sophistication of political thought already present in our founding era. A significant competency to be included is an understanding of the structure of the various levels of government as they exist in each student's local area. The student should also know who are their elected office holders from the local to the national level.

History of Western Civilization. A history of Western civilization from the early Greek times needs to especially emphasize those ideas that were incorporated into American government and the bitter and often bloody wars that were fought over something that is now handled by a single phrase in our constitution. For example in just the 30 Years War (1618-1648) over religious issues 30% of the

population of the German States died.¹¹ We address this problem in the first amendment to our constitution with the simple phrases "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;"

Some attention needs to be given to the ways in which the shifting power from government to citizens has led to more growth, a higher standard of living, and less conflict between citizens. A vivid example from the last 30 years contrasts Ireland and Belgium.¹² A study in conflict resolution could show the approaches of the French in Switzerland and those in France and its application in our federal constitutional system.

History of the World. A modest amount of geological and prewritten human history should lead to brief pictures of the many non-western civilizations and the manner in which they differed from our own. Contrasting the evolution of Western civilization with that of the Arabic culture would help the student make sense of our present challenges.

7. Do government schools fit a non-socialist country?

America has followed the Prussian model of government schools, but with more flexibility. This flexibility varies considerably by state. Alaska is perhaps the most permissive, with policies appropriate to distance, correspondence, or home school options. It does, however, devote most of the taxpayers money to funding government schools.

A parent's selection of school type (government, private, home school, charter) includes that school's set of values. Graduates will most likely favor their type of school and may reflect many of its values.

However, because the government has overwhelming access to financial resources they inculcate their values in the vast majority of students. These values are necessarily

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years'_War

¹² A report by Brussels' leading think tank describes the remarkable growth of the Irish economy since 1984 after it cut down public spending, downsized their bureaucracy, and shifted the tax burden from income to consumption. They use their home country – Belgium, as the unfortunate contrast: http://workforall.net/EN_Tax_policy_for_growth_and_jobs.html

low-key to preserve a reasonable relationship with a diverse community, but they do exist. One value is clearly implied by the source of the government schools support. They are a monument to the fact that socialist institutions can be assigned some functions, even in a generally capitalist society.

Government schools tend to be more permissive than an individual family in the community because complaints are primarily received for acts of commission rather than omission. For example, teachers not very long ago paddled students for misbehavior. Some parents felt this was not appropriate and complained, so now paddling students is verboten. Since government schools are often considered the school of last resort, they find it hard to set stringent standards. Telling a parent to take their student elsewhere is truly unusual.

Behavior standards in government schools have drifted downward. This makes them both the most difficult schools in which to teach or which to learn.

Government schools have been a virtual monopoly for over a hundred years. Thus most teachers have never been in a non-socialist environment. Teachers in government schools tend to be more socialist than the general population if only as protection from mental discord. There also may be a limited amount of self-selection as those teachers who feel more comfortable in a capitalist environment gravitate toward private schools. In this sense an incestuous situation has developed in which successive generations of government school teachers may be moving farther away from the values of our capitalist society.¹³

The result is an institution out of phase with the values of the general population and the economy that has made the United States such an economic powerhouse.

The general public has the right to ask “Are government schools the best way to educate our children?” and “Do government schools reflect our own values?”

¹³ Ibid. Robert A Peterson reports Abraham Lincoln as saying “The philosophy of the classroom will be the philosophy of the government in the next generation.”

If the answer to either of the questions is no then the citizenry should reconsider their mode of support.

Should we continue funding this discrimination in favor of socialist institutions?

8. A proposal for taxpayer funding of education.

My proposal addresses the situation in Alaska, but with slight modifications may be appropriate in almost any state.

My proposals goals include:

Return control to parents (customers). Customers will be expected to pay part of school costs. They will also determine which schools receive their money and the taxpayer’s money. Control over taxpayer’s money will depend on satisfactory results.

Send only part of the bill to taxpayers. Taxpayers will fund that portion of the curriculum most essential to produce voting citizens. They will also receive independently tested results for those subjects.

Encourage more competition. Schools and individuals will compete on a level playing field for state money. State tests will determine success or failure.

Good results -- money for next year.

Poor results -- less or no money.

Alaska at present (2009) has the financial ability to cover the initial startup costs of this proposal. The benefit will be a much better educated group of future citizens. It may also reduce local taxpayer supported educational costs if more parents chose options outside the government schools.

9. Current state funding in Alaska.

Alaska supports its government schools with major funding from the state level and widely varying funding from the local district’s attendance area. This proposal concerns the state-funded portion only. Local funding and that portion of state funding that addresses cost differentials is not included. Even addressing the basic

state student funding represents a major change toward returning some control to the parents.

State funding is primarily based on a Foundation Formula¹⁴ that allocates funding to the school districts based on factors that attempt to take into account local costs. These costs are compared to costs in Anchorage, with a Base Student Allocation factor of 1.000. For example Fairbanks is 1.055, and Yukon Flats is 1.892. For the year ending 30 June 2009 the Base Student Allocation (BSA) was worth about \$5,500. Students with disabilities qualify districts for reimbursements that are a multiple of this amount.

Alaska is also rather unique in that through its correspondence programs it provides some funding to parents who do not attend government schools. These funds assist with the cost of the correspondence curriculum including some supplementary materials for students that may otherwise attend private schools.

Never-the-less this funding is limited to a portion of specific expenses and often has so many strings attached that private school parents are discouraged from applying.

10. Reducing discrimination in state funding.

Current state finance uses taxpayer's money to preferentially fund students who chose to attend government schools. The present proposal is intended to provide less discriminatory treatment of Alaskan children that do not attend government run schools.

I propose to reduce this discrimination by applying at least the state's BSA to the parent's educational choice – be it government school, charter school, private school, or home school¹⁵. Further, this

¹⁴ Current funding is contained in HB 273 which was signed into law on 3/28/08. A general explanation may be found in the Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force report at:

http://www.housemajority.org/coms/hlef/final_report_20070831.pdf

¹⁵ Dan Lipps & Evan Feinberg in Homeschooling: A Growing Option in American Education report that as many as 2 million children may currently be homeschooled and the number is growing 7 to 12 % a year. Surveys of adults who were homeschooled suggest that it leads to positive life

allocation is to be made by the parent each year and can be changed at any time. To minimize initial complexity, funds beyond the BSA will be distributed according to current procedures.

Continuation of this funding for each student can be made contingent on satisfactory completion of the state testing program each year. If testing places the student in the upper half of all students statewide, the parent will be permitted the full BSA for the subsequent year. The allocation will also remain intact if the student has shown average or above progress since their preceding annual test. If neither of the criteria are met the allocation may be reduced, terminated, or assigned to the another school.

With the state's funding applied in a more equal manner, parents will have an incentive to select options that best fit their children's needs. Freed from the compulsion implied by the current very unequal funding, we can expect the marketplace to produce an enhanced variety educational solutions.

Because this represents a significant change in the way the State of Alaska funds and tests education it is recommended that it be applied only to grades 11 and 12 in the first year and then be expanded by 2 or 3 grades in each subsequent year. This will allow time to set up an extensive state testing program to evaluate progress and assure the taxpayers that their expectations for future voters are being met.

11. Is the taxpayer getting real value?

Each educational institution will have its own goals against which they wish to test progress and competency. However, the part of the curriculum that is taxpayer funded must be more limited in scope.

That scope should be those skills and the basic knowledge for self-instruction necessary to becoming a competent voting citizen.

outcomes. Tests of over 20,000 homeschooled students by Lawrence Rudner at the University of Maryland found their scores to superior to public or private education, Typically at the 70th to 80th percentile:

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Education/bg2122.cfm> (03 Apr 08).

Within that more limited scope, the agency providing the funding should periodically test individual students who receive support. To fail to do this deprives the taxpayers of any information about what their money is buying. Without measurement there is no justification for using taxpayer funds. Currently fraudulent or minuscule results are still funded.

To avoid fraud, testing must be carried out independently of the schools. Since testing is frequently falsified by having the wrong person take the test, every test taker must be biometrically identified.

An age-appropriate initial test should be given before or soon after the student starts school. This test, in conjunction with all subsequent tests, will be to:

- 1) assess a schools performance,
- 2) determine the students relative standing,
- 3) evaluate the student's progress, and
- 4) determine the funding destination.

Testing should be no less frequent than once a year. More major subject areas and greater depth can be added in subsequent grades.

To insure interested participation in testing after the final year the results must be tied to a student award. A modest strings-free grant should be awarded with amount in proportion to the score.

12. In conclusion.

A good part of our system of government financed education was imported from Prussia over a century ago. It has been modified a great deal, but removes the bulk of the educational decision making from those most interested in a child's welfare (parents). In addition individual students have been moved from small locally controlled school districts and have become a mere statistics in a large bureaucracy.

This proposal moves significant control back to the parent and makes them the primary representative of the customer. In this respect it has similarities to a voucher system. Unlike a voucher system, however, it does not envision state taxpayers funding the entire curriculum.

Because the state is defined by this proposal as the representative of the taxpayer, it also has a crucial role in defining and testing that aspect of education deemed critical to future voters. Focusing funding and testing on as narrow an area as possible is critical to allowing schools latitude in their approaches to other areas.

Many think that the quality of education currently being offered in the US is inferior to that previously available. Results of international testing comparisons suggest they may be correct. The reasons offered are many. Probably there are as many reasons as there are people complaining. The best way to resolve this dispute is through market competition. If experience with other markets is correct, this will lead to significant improvements.

This proposal offers parents access to a greater choice of options to serve each child's educational needs. It is hoped that even more innovative choices will become available as less affluent parents feel able to select from a greater variety of schools, opt to home school, or chose a combination appropriate to each individual student.