

**The school privatizers often have no grasp of the efficacy of the public common school and are pushing state and federal officials to scrap the public good created by the public common school.**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, citizens of the nation struggled with the political decision of how best to educate youth for the fulfillment of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and the preservation of democracy. An array of schooling opportunities were available to some children in that era, such as pauper schools, charity schools, parochial schools, church schools, private tutoring and a hodgepodge of publically-funded schools. There was no standardization of schooling—no uniformity—no possibility for equity and adequacy of educational opportunities.

However, as early as 1819 the Ohio legislature began to work toward a publicly-funded common school system. Individuals such as Samuel Lewis in Ohio and Horace Mann in Massachusetts involved themselves in a common school movement. (In 1837 Samuel Lewis was appointed Superintendent of Common Schools in Ohio and Horace Mann was appointed Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts.)

The Delegates to the Ohio Constitutional Convention of 1850/1851 recommended and the people of Ohio approved a constitutional provision requiring the Ohio General Assembly to “secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state.” This provision (Article VI, Section 2) along with a 1912 amendment (Article VI, Section 3) that bolster the 1851 provision forced the state to establish, maintain, and protect the common system. For more than 100 years, the treasury of the state of Ohio was protected from any financial raids by the private education lobby. It is ironic that the privatizers now have a strangle-hold on Ohio legislatures such that education funding for private schools and privately-operated charter schools have a higher priority than for the public common school system.

Beginning with Economist Milton Friedman recommending school vouchers in the mid-1950’s and the so-called Fair Bus Bill in the 1960’s, Ohio has eroded the funding base for the public common school system as funds have been creamed-off for private education ventures.

Now, the privatizers are having some success in changing the education narrative. They are advocating that school choice (privatization at public expense) is the new era in American education; that the common school should give way to school choice; and that the common good must yield to personal choice and benefits.

Universal vouchers will eventually be a millstone around the neck of the private school industry and cause major reduction in educational quality and opportunities for most students.

Eventually the public will demand that private schools that receive public funds be regulated. Private schools by way of public regulations will lose their identity and the purpose for which they were formed. Fly-by-night private schools will come and go leaving students in a lurch. The choice frenzy will engender transiency among students. Voucher students will be moving among private schools. High teacher turnover will be the norm. This chaos will lead to regulations. Education policy that prioritizes choice will eventually effectuate regulations on the private school sector.

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Privatizers are tearing down the institution of the public common school without understanding its original purpose. They do so at their own peril; however, the real damage is to the bystanders—those who cherish common civic values, those who cherish community life with weekend high school football, basketball, musicals, etc., and those who value a sense of community.

The privatization of public education will result in segregating life in America into enclaves of economic, social, racial, and religious compartments. Tribalism will take root and *e pluribus unum* will be a relic of the past when the public good was cherished.