

Correction: Responses from State Fair goers regarding their favorite teachers speak to the efficacy, strength, and staying power of the public common school system.

The Coalition /VHO had a booth at the Ohio State Fair to inform folks about the voucher scheme. **In the process, individuals were asked to write their favorite teacher on a Post-It note and put it on the “hero wall” hanging at the back of the booth.** 874 individuals did so, and most individuals smiled and immediately identified a teacher. Each was asked to merely write the name of the teacher on the Post-It note. Many added a few words of endearment about the teacher. People of all ages seem to have fond memories of the public school system.

The public common school system has had its foes and outright opponents since its beginning. Some religious groups resisted having their young people attend the public common school and demanded public subsidies for their schools (which government officials resisted for at least 100 years). Other groups and individuals resisted the idea of having their children attend the common school system for a variety of reasons. However, the common school concept eventually gained the favor of all but a small minority of citizens. Government officials at the local, state, and federal level staked their claim solely with the public common school system until recently.

The Ohio Constitution of 1851 mandated that the legislature secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools. For the next 115 years Ohio government funded only the system mandated by the Ohio Constitution. In the late 1960’s, however, legislation was passed that required school districts to transport private school students. From that foot-in-the-door legislation, public funding of private schools in Ohio has escalated to billions in the form of auxiliary services, nonpublic administrative cost reimbursement and vouchers.

The goal of education privatizers is to use all the public’s money appropriated for education to flow to the private sector (i.e.) to eliminate the public common school.

Beginning with the Reagan administration in the 1980’s, the privatizers recognized that the first step in the privatization goal was to turn the public against the public common school system. The public system has been under serious assault since 1983 when President Reagan issued the Nation at Risk report, but folks still generally support their local public school system.