

The Original Sin of American Public Schools - Poisoning of the American Mind: Pt 2

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SUMMARY

John Papola explores the historical roots of public education in America, tracing its origins back to colonial times and the influence of Puritan beliefs. He argues that the current educational system is a product of early government interventions and models from Prussia, which prioritized obedience and conformity over creativity and individualism.

- Early American education was primarily home-based, with community schools for the poor.*
- The Puritans established the first public school, the Boston Latin School, to promote literacy for religious purposes.*
- Massachusetts passed laws in the 17th century making education compulsory, with state oversight over parental teaching.*
- Horace Mann, known as the father of the common school, advocated for universal public education influenced by the Prussian model.*
- The Prussian education system emphasized obedience and loyalty to the state, shaping American public schooling.*
- Mann's reforms led to a standardized education system that persists today, promoting conformity rather than creativity.*
- The Pledge of Allegiance, created by socialist Francis Bellamy, reflects the militaristic and nationalistic ideals embedded in the education system.*
- The current educational framework is critiqued as a mechanism for indoctrination rather than fostering independent thought.*

Hey there friends, John Papola here and I want to welcome you back to the second week in our exploration of the poisoning of the American mind. We are going to spend this Friday looking at the history of public education, its origin story. And so let's get in that time machine and head back to what I hope isn't our kids' future.

If we as parents ever want to fix the education mess of the present and create a better future for our kids, we have to first go back to understand our past. So, let's get in a time machine and visit the early days of America. Because, believe it or not, a shocking amount of what we do wrong in education today began hundreds of years ago before there was a United States of America. People lived here and of course they had children. So how were those kids educated? Well, schooling back then wasn't like it is now. In most of the colonies, learning like reading, writing, and arithmetic happened at home. There were some local community schools, mostly for very poor families, but especially in the middle and southern colonies, education was voluntarily handled by free

people. This was before the industrial revolution, and a lot of kids lived on farms and in small villages. So they'd learn the basics either from their parents or another elder and then by the time they were teenagers, they'd be working on the farm or taking up some other trade in apprenticeship. That's how life worked through most of colonial America.

However, there was an exception and it would prove to be the place where the seeds were planted for big government education, New England. More specifically, the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The colony was founded by Puritans in about 1630, a reform movement within the Church of England that wanted to purify the church of its Catholic practices. Anti-Catholicism pervades the history of public school. But I digress. One of the Puritans leaders, John Winthrop, famously called the colony a city upon a hill, and their goal was for it to reflect their religious beliefs. As economist and historian Mary Rothbart wrote in his book, *Education Free and Compulsory*, Winthrop believed that natural liberty is a wild beast which must be restrained by God's ordinances. Correct civil liberty means being good in a way of subjection to authority. Winthrop regarded any opposition to the policies of the governor, particularly when he was governor, as positively seditious.

Keeping in line with that, the Puritans saw education in a much different way. Like everything else, it was about religion. The first free public school in America, they were called common schools back then, was the Boston Latin School, founded by Puritans in 1635. Unbelievably, it's still open today. The goal of the school was to prepare boys for college. Harvard, especially another Puritan creation, established in 1636. Because we're gentlemen of Harvard. Harvard, all Harvard men.

But they also wanted people to be literate so they could read the Bible, spread the gospel, and maintain Puritan traditions. Again, as a Catholic side note, all of this is ironic given the central role the Catholic Church played in creating the university as an institution. But back to the Puritans, it wasn't long after that when education, for the first time in the English-speaking world, started to become compulsory, a fancy word that means required by law. In 1642, Massachusetts passed a law that forced parents to make sure their kids could read. That sounds reasonable, but it was also flatout creepy. Because if the state judged that parents weren't teaching their kids properly, officials could seize the children and put them in other homes to make sure they taught them the right way. The law read in part, "For as much as the good education of children is of singular behoof and benefit to any commonwealth, and whereas many parents and masters are too indulgent and negligent of their duty of that kind, it is ordered that the select men of every town shall have a vigilant eye over their neighbors to see first that none shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to endeavor to teach by themselves or others their children and apprentices. That sounds like Hillary's *It takes a village* mixed with the crucible. It takes a village.

In 1647 came another Massachusetts law with an ominous name, the Old Delu Satan Act. Satan. The basic idea was that one of Satan's goals was to stop people from finding God through scripture. So according to the people who passed the law, the best way to block Satan in his quest was to make sure people were literate. The act required every town in Massachusetts with 50 or more families to hire a teacher. Towns with a 100 or more families had to have a grammar school. These were the roots of universal public schooling in America.

Once the United States were formed, prominent people supported universal public schooling, including some people that might surprise you, like the usually government-fearing and almost anarchist like Thomas Jefferson. TJ pushed for a universal publicly funded system in Virginia. Not compulsory to attend, but not exactly limited government either. In 1786, Jefferson wrote, "I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness." And I will say I can understand why Thomas Jefferson would feel this way because he was reading the great works of the West as his foundation. The same cannot be said of today's school system. Nevertheless, during this time and for decades afterward, there was nothing like uniformity when it came to education.

Whether it was homeschooling, iconic one room schoolh houses, private, religious, common, or anything in between. Since government had little to do with it, education came in all shapes and sizes, writes Samuel Blumenfeld in a 1979 issue of Reason. There were no accrediting agencies, no regulatory boards, no teacher certification requirements. Parents had the freedom to choose whatever kind of school or education they wanted for their children. There were private schools of every sort and size. Church schools, that prepared students for college, seminaries, dame schools for primary education, charity schools for the poor, private tutors, and common schools. And things were pretty good. One historian found that more than 90% of white Americans were literate in 1840. That's better than our current rate of 79%. Granted, we had massive problems.

Most enslaved black people in America weren't even allowed to be literate. But there's plenty of reason to believe that our system of educating kids would have been better if it was never a system at all. A functioning educational order had already emerged without the force of the state. Unfortunately for us, that emergent order was disrupted and largely replaced in large part due to an American politician named Horus man. Damn him. Damn that man. But before we talk about man, we have to go across the pond and talk about another country altogether. Prussia. Some of you may be wondering where the hell is Prussia or what the hell is Prussia? Well, Prussia was an empire best understood as a precursor to modern Germany. A country which almost everyone knows had a shall we say complicated role in history the last couple hundred years. Prussia's king Frederick William I ruled with an iron fist. He grew the power of the state, the military, increased meddling in the economy, and in 1717, Prussia became one of the first countries to ever put in place taxpayer-funded compulsory education.

It's been said of the Prussian king, he treated his kingdom as a school room, and like a zealous school master, flogged his naughty subjects unmercifully. Frederick's successors kept the trend going, strengthening government power. And by 1807, after Prussia's humiliating defeat at the hands of Napoleon Bonapart, Frederick III upped the ante a lot. School was to become the primary tool for creating loyal soldiers to the Prussian state. Private schools in Prussia were abolished, and to this day in Germany, homeschooling is illegal. I think I know why.

Then all teachers had to be examined and certified by the state. Then a bureaucracy was built to monitor all the country's schools. Sound familiar? All the while, and not coincidentally, the army was expanded and military service also became compulsory. The link between Prussian militarization and Prussian education cannot be

stressed enough. Petty officers with no educational background were often teachers in Prussia. The Prussian military in those days required a high level of literacy for lower ranks, not just officers.

There was even a saying, the battle of Kigratz and Sedan have been decided by the Prussian primary teacher. This is the jackbooted system, the Prussian system that so-called progressive education reformers in America looked to as a model with glee. Shut up. Enter Horus man, an American known as the father of the common school. In 1837, man became the first ever secretary of education in Massachusetts, a state no longer ruled by the Puritans, but still on the far edge of progressive education. Depending on your perspective, man was either a radical zealot or a fierce advocate for public schools, or both. Frankly, man thought education should be universal, that taxes should pay for it, and he viewed education as the key to creating citizens of intelligence and strong moral character. Man once said, without undervaluing any other human agency, it may be safely affirmed that the common school may become the most effective and benignant of all forces of civilization.

Man reportedly visited every single school in Massachusetts when he was education secretary. No micromanaging there. And in 1843, man took a trip overseas to learn about education systems in other countries. Take a wild guess which one caught his interest. Prussia. Prussia. Show me Prussia. That's right. The belligerent, despotic Prussia. A lot of what we recognize to this day as American public schools, its structures, its boot camp style structures, and the generally soul destroying experience come from this time period. Militant Prussia gave man all kinds of ideas, many of which he and his ilk implemented to go along with other terrible methods they had subscribed to, dividing students into grades by age. The lecture method where a teacher drones on at the front of the room to a group of half-listening students, written exams and report cards, obedience and promptness. After all, what conditions a person to be more submissive than responding to the sound of a bell? How downright Pavlovian that darn bell is. But don't mistake me for seeing horse man as some mustache twirling evildoer.

As much as anything, man loved the idea of bringing kids from all social classes together in one place. And he saw education as a way to help the poor. He once wrote, "Education, then beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance wheel of the social machinery. Sounds an awful lot like social justice, doesn't it?" By any measure, man and his allies won. The education system they put in place went far beyond Massachusetts, eventually to every state in the union and still dominates America to this very day. It should not surprise anyone that the rigid, uncreative, militarized form of education we accept as normal actually does come from a militarized protofascist Prussia where the goal was to pump out unquestioning zombie soldiers who would loyally serve the state in times of war rather than abandoning their posts in the face of a Napoleonic onslaught. I think this is all best summed up by this image. No, those aren't little Nazis. They are American school kids doing the pledge of allegiance to the flag. You might be thinking, what's with the awkward arm gesture? Well, the author of the pledge, Francis Bellamy, an avowed socialist, by the way, first wrote the pledge for a popular children's magazine. You heard that right. The author of the American Pledge of Allegiance, was a socialist.

The whole idea by one of the magazine's publishers was to instill kids with nationalism and for flags to be raised above schools. Francis Bellamy. Did I mention he was a socialist? Created the Bellamy salute to go along with

the pledge. Kind of like the way people put their hand on their hearts today. I pledge allegiance to the flag. Hence why these kids look like Himmler or Gobles pledging allegiance to their furer. Not surprisingly, they dropped the Sigle salute around the time of World War II.

Hitler of course made that arm salute along with the toothbrush mustache pretty tough for anyone to ever use again. Now look, the story of the Bellamy salute may seem like a strange footnote to history, but here's the bigger point symbolized by that picture. The vast monstrous education system that dominates America today was created long ago by people who had much more in common with fascist totalitarians than freedomloving Americans. It was also the foundation for the vast overwhelming corruption we see in education today and the dark delivery system for the poisoning of the American mind. All right, I hope you enjoyed this so far. This is episode two in our series, The Poisoning of the American Mind. So, if you didn't watch last Friday, I encourage you to check it out.

It sets the stage really well. And looking ahead to next Friday, we are going to be digging even deeper into the way that our federal government stepped in with the Department of Education and its myriad of interventions to make everything worse. So, if you don't want to miss that, be sure to hit the like button, subscribe to the channel if you haven't already, and don't forget to head over to dadsavesamea.com where you can find even more resources about how we can help educate our kids and avoid the poisoning of their American minds. Have a great weekend.