

MAD SON LIBERTY FOREVER

Government-Sponsored Values

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Libertarians are often criticized for our position on public education—we're not fans of it! This isn't because we don't support educating children. We believe that public schools don't give children the right kind of education. I recently attended a talk by Neal McCluskey of the Cato Institute called "Government Schooling for a Free Society? It Sounds Wrong Because It Is Wrong." He stressed that while government-provided schooling is not in the best interests of the children at the schools, it is in the best interest of the government, and that's why the government continues to fund even poorly performing schools that everyone can agree are not doing much educating. By controlling how people are educated, the government can teach the values that it wants to and leave out the things it does not like. Though I do not believe the average teacher is out to indoctrinate students with government propaganda, it is true that they are provided with most of their material by the state. Some material is pretty uncontroversial—think algebra. But we've also seen lists of banned books, other books taught that parents disapproved of, evolution banned and then required, creationism required and then banned... decisions like these should be made by parents, not politicians. And through not everyone agrees about which contraceptive methods should be taught or if anyone should have to read *Catcher In The Rye* (but why wouldn't they?), everyone who pays taxes continues to support the system, like it or not. In contrast, in a free society parents could choose for themselves which schools deserve their money.

Any form of education, especially for children, is going to involve some instilling of values. Choosing which values are "best" is not a job for the government, which has problems practicing even the values it professes to approve of (Honesty? Responsibility?). Therefore, parents should have the right to support only the schools they want to, as long as they allow others to do the same. In this kind of system, there would be a wide variety of schools for parents to choose from, and schools would have to produce good results or risk losing their students and financial

support. It's true that parents don't always make the right choices—but we can usually rely on the government making the wrong ones.