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Friday, August 07, 2009

Don't Take Control, Give Credit [John Hood]

For decades, the Left has advocated a government takeover of early childhood education. While advocates tend to stress the potential benefits as participants move into elementary and secondary schools, the true reasons for the movement extend far beyond that, as secular government institutions seek to expand their revenues and power at the expense of families, religious institutions, and private firms.

The "potential benefits" of government preschool have proven extremely difficult to replicate in practice. Promising results from a few laboratory experiments do not accurately predict how large-scale government preschool programs operate. For advocates, of course, the shortcomings of Head Start and various state-level programs only prove the need for more tax money and control.

The Cato Institute's [Adam Schaeffer](#) has just released a new paper, "The Poverty of Preschool Promises," that is highly recommended for anyone interested in this issue. He also presents an alternative policy in great detail, a welcome step in my opinion:

Given that many states have already instituted pre-K programs, or are committed to doing so, this paper proposes model early education legislation aimed at maximizing their chances for longterm success. The Early Education Tax Credit aims to sustain any potential preschool benefits and establish a solid academic foundation for later success. The program would improve the quality and efficiency of preschool options by harnessing market forces and would pay for itself by using savings generated from the migration of students from public to private schools in grades K-4.

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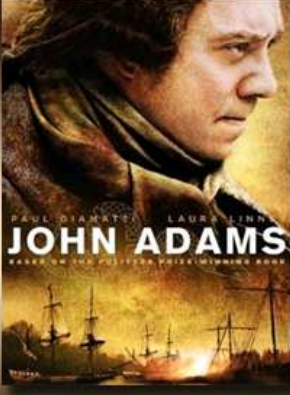
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