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## **“Are public schools necessary for a democracy?” asks Cato**

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Horace Mann, the father of American public education, claimed that public education is a societal good forcing interactions between students of different races and religions to interact with one another. The [Cato Institute](#) challenged this idea by hosting a panel entitled, “School Choice and Democracy: Friends or Foes?” The panel consisted of Corey DeAngelis, doctoral fellow at the University of Arkansas; Richard Kahlenburg, senior fellow at the Century Foundation; and Max Eden, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

For example, DeAngelis challenged argument that public education is the most effective vehicle to increase support for democracy. DeAngelis argues that public school participation has increased to 9 out of 10 students being educated in a public institution while respect for democracy among younger Americans has dramatically decreased.

Kahlenburg argues that although we are seeing a decrease in respect for democracy, public education did serve the purpose of protecting democracy. “In the 1940’s, Franklin Roosevelt talked about public education as a safeguard of our democracy.” At the time, around the world, fascism was on the rise in academic and intellectual circles but this did not take place in America. Some, such as Kahlenburg, credit the public education system. Kahlenburg is now worried about private religious schools claiming that “Private religious schools teach love for God, not democracy.”

In ending remarks, Max Eden said, “Our ethos is increasing towards pluralism and multiculturalism but the system we have in place was largely constructed to impose uniformity.”