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The Problem with Diversity

By [Robert VerBruggen](#)

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Neal McCluskey has [a great post](#) about why public schools can't handle diversity. An excerpt:

A quote from New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg captured the essence of the problem:

One of the problems you have with a diverse city is that if you close the schools for every single holiday, there won't be any school.

There you have the basic conundrum in a nutshell: Whenever you have a diverse population — whether in a hamlet, city, state, or nation — and everyone has to support a single system of government schools, you cannot possibly treat all people — or even most of them — equally. Either there are winners and losers, or nobody gets anything.

Understanding why public schooling can't handle diversity — why, simply, one size can't fit all — is really basic common sense. So why isn't there more outrage over, or even just recognition of, the utter illogic of our education system? Mohamed Elibiary, President and CEO of the Freedom and Justice Foundation, illustrated the attitude that likely causes lots of Americans to wear blinders:

I'm a little torn. I want Muslims to be getting the same recognition as other Americans, but at the same time I don't want to see public education systems be a battleground between religious identities, because then we're missing the point of why we have a public education system to begin with.

No doubt many people truly believe as Elibiary does: that a major purpose of public schooling is to bring diverse people together and, by doing so, unify them. It's a fine intention, but also a classic case of intent not matching reality. Indeed, the reality is often very much the opposite. Rather than unifying people, public schooling has repeatedly forced religious conflict (as well as conflict over race, ethnicity, political philosophy, curriculum, and on and on).

McCluskey argues that the solution is universal school choice. In such a system, everyone could pick a school that recognized his preferred holidays.

The problem here has to do with a word McCluskey doesn't use, though his proposed solution entails it: segregation. We have a rather sordid history of forced segregation, which causes voluntary segregation of the type McCluskey proposes to be seen, rightly or wrongly (I say wrongly), in a negative light.

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