

# Social Security-National Health Care-Public Education

## 3c. Public Education - Pre-school through grade 12

From its beginning, public education has struggled with competing philosophies as to who should be educated and what should be taught. Our first public school, the Boston Latin School, was founded on April 23, 1635. It offered free education to boys - rich or poor - while girls attended private schools at home.<sup>1</sup> Twelve years later, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony decreed that every town of fifty families should have an elementary school and that every town of 100 families should have a Latin school. The goal was to ensure that Puritan children learned to read the Bible and receive basic information about their Calvinist religion.<sup>2</sup>

Since then, the history of public education has been filled with examples of progress followed by darkness. While the march toward education for all is happening on one track, the denial of education to minorities, the working class and the poor has existed simultaneously. For example, in 1785, The Continental Congress brought into law the origins of the "land grant universities," the state public universities that exist today. And, in 1817, a petition presented in a Boston Town Meeting called for the establishment of a system of free public primary schools.

However, by the 1830's, most southern states had laws forbidding teaching slaves to read. And, in 1864, Congress made it illegal for Native Americans to be taught in their native languages. Native children as young as four years old were taken from their parents and sent to the Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding schools, whose goal, as one BIA official put it, was to "kill the Indian to save the man."<sup>3</sup> This back-and-forth battle between the forces of progressivism and darkness continues to this day. A brief synopsis of this struggle can be found in Appendix G.

### Current status

Over the last 40 years, because of a lack of commitment and religious and political interventions, there has been a slow steady erosion in our educational institutions.<sup>4 5 6</sup> This has resulted in an unacceptable state of affairs.

Teachers are undervalued and therefore underpaid. School curriculums have become subject to political and religious influences while important programs and activities have been cut.<sup>7 8 9</sup> Many classrooms are overcrowded, school buildings are in need of repair, and educational materials are in short supply. Additionally, the rise in college tuition has placed higher education completely out of reach for millions of Americans.

In terms of geography, the top seven countries in math, science, and reading are all located in Asia.<sup>10</sup> And, because the arts have been defunded (which stimulates the right side of the brain) the creativity needed to solve complex problems is no longer formally nurtured.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thefreedomtrail.org/freedom-trail/benjamin-franklin-statue.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/historical-timeline-public-education-us>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/historical-timeline-public-education-us>

<sup>4</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ684842.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-punishing-decade-for-school-funding>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-presidential-budget-2018-proposal/?utm\\_term=.29e51d1f50c6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-presidential-budget-2018-proposal/?utm_term=.29e51d1f50c6)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qwsk\\_Ha7i8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qwsk_Ha7i8)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxAjcvHv8FA>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGF9M4FIVdk>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/12/american-schools-vs-the-world-expensive-unequal-bad-at-math/281983/>

Consequently, the United States has fallen far behind other countries in terms of student success as measured by *The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*. The 2015 PISA results placed the U.S. at an **unimpressive 38th out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science**. Among the 35 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which sponsors the PISA initiative, the **U.S. ranked 30th in math and 19th in science**.<sup>11</sup>

### **Educational discrimination**

Discrimination based on age, race sex, and religion is no longer allowed. It is now time to eliminate discrimination based on poverty. This form of discrimination has created a two-tiered, unequal educational system: superior schools for the rich and inferior schools for the poor. Having such an unbalanced educational system not only produces devastating consequences for the children of the poor but also for society at large.

Most poor people live in low-income tax-based school districts. Since these districts receive less in educational funding than districts with high-income tax bases, underprivileged children are automatically deprived of educational and cultural opportunities available to the rich. And, in areas where high income neighborhoods are supposed to receive the same amount of public funding as schools in poor areas, the more affluent residents in the more affluent neighborhoods often give cash donations to their particular public school (disguised as “gifts”) to augment their schools’ budgets. This end-run around equal funding increases programs and services for children of the rich while depriving children of the poor of the same opportunities.

This two-tiered unequal educational system produces too many students that lack the skills necessary to provide for themselves and their future families. It produces too many students who will be unable to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy, and too many students who will be unable to go on to higher education and fully participate in the American dream. The long-term implication is an expanding and permanent lower class. This is unacceptable and represents a danger to our democracy.

### **The solution: Fully fund pre-school through grade 12 equally!**

To equalize educational opportunities for all students we need to create superior schools in each and every neighborhood. When this occurs, all students, no matter where they live or the income level of their family, will receive a first-rate education. Creating superior schools everywhere will level the educational playing field and pre-empt the need for parents to seek out schools outside their neighborhood in an attempt to give their children a better education. And, this can only be accomplished by the **full and equal** funding of pre-school through grade 12.

To fully fund and disperse our educational tax dollars equally, this proposal requires each state to create a Public Education Trust Fund. This fund must be fully funded, and used for the sole purpose of funding public education. Therefore, it specifically excludes monetary support for private non-profit, for-profit, or religious schools of any nature.

The Public Education Trust Fund will be funded from the 1% payroll tax found in Section 2.a.iv, Public Education (\$123 billion), the State Reimbursement revenue from Section 8. (\$185 billion), the revenue earmarked for Public Education from the Department of Education, \$103.3 billion,<sup>12</sup> and the revenue designated for the National School Lunch Program, \$11.6 billion, found within the budget of the Department of Agriculture.<sup>13</sup> This totals \$422.9 billion, and represents a 3½ fold increase in federal funding. When State and local revenue are added, the **full funding** of public education has been achieved.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/15/u-s-students-internationally-math-science/>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/federal\\_budget\\_detail\\_2015bs22015n\\_20#usgs302](http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/federal_budget_detail_2015bs22015n_20#usgs302)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>

To equalize the funding of public education, each state's Public Education Trust Fund is required to distribute its revenue to its Counties, based on each County's student population as a percentage of the state's total student population. At the same time, all schools are prohibited from soliciting or accepting any revenue of any kind from any and all other sources.

The full and equal funding of public education will be used to create superior schools for all students in all neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup> It will provide the revenue necessary to build new schools and repair and expand existing schools so that our children will never again be placed in overcrowded classrooms. It means that every student will have all the books, computers, laboratory, industrial, and technical support necessary to compete in an ever-changing world.

The full and equal funding of public education will provide all schools with all the guidance counselors, nurses, and physical education classes necessary for our students mental and physical health.<sup>15</sup> It will allow all elementary, middle, and senior high schools to have a library and a librarian. There will be sufficient revenue to provide all students with the option of taking classes in theater, music, art, and dance. No longer will there be any unfunded mandates, and all schools, rural, urban, and suburban, will be funded equally.

Additionally, the full funding of public education means that we will now have the revenue necessary to attract highly competent men and women to the teaching profession, and in turn, retain and reward the great teachers that already exist within our current school system.

### **The School Lunch Program**

It is an unfortunate fact that one in seven children will be born into poverty, and poverty is increasing.<sup>16 17</sup> Equally disturbing is the fact that millions of children go to bed hungry, and there is a direct relationship between inadequate nutrition, hunger, and the inability for the brain to develop properly.<sup>18</sup> When children arrive at school in a state of hunger, they cannot learn properly and behavior problems develop.<sup>19</sup>

In too many cases the foods children eat at home are often devoid of the nutrition necessary for proper growth and development. They are served too many highly processed meals that contain excess amounts of sugar, fat, salt, high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, artificial dyes, preservatives, trans-fats, MSG, and GMO's. This is a diet that promotes disease.

Unfortunately, the foods fed to most students through the current Student Lunch Program mirror these foods. In fact, "there is no set limit to the amount of sugar a child can consume in USDA's school lunches or breakfasts, or in competitive foods and drinks sold at schools."<sup>20</sup>

As pointed out in Section 3.b National Health Care, this type of diet leads directly to many medical conditions including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. The consumption of disease promoting foods will cost us, the taxpayer, trillions of dollars in future medical expenses, which can be avoided by switching the disease promoting foods found in most Student Lunch Programs to foods that promote health.

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<sup>14</sup> To ensure that all students have equal opportunities no matter where their school may be located, Section 3.c.vii. mandates that all categories of students and therefore all schools be funded equally.

<sup>15</sup> This proposal requires all students to take physical education classes from the seventh through the twelfth grade.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.children.org/global-poverty/global-poverty-facts/facts-about-poverty-in-usa>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2018/demo/income-poverty/state-level-child-poverty.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ourcommunityfoodbank.org/food-insecurities/the-link-between-learning-and-child-hunger-in-america/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.medpagetoday.com/pediatrics/generalpediatrics/54508>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nutritioncoalition.us/news/2022/12/14/sugar-loaded-usda-school-meals#:~:text=Overconsumption%20of%20added%20sugars%20is,and%20drinks%20sold%20at%20schools.>

Therefore, this proposal mandates that all students be fed meals based on the Mediterranean Diet. This is a diet that emphasizes fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, olive oil, fish, and other healthy fare. It is ranked #1 among all diets because it is relatively easy to follow, nutritious, safe, effective for weight loss, and protects against diabetes and heart disease.”<sup>21 22 23</sup> And, all foods that promote disease have been eliminated and prohibited from placement on school campuses.

### Stop shaming children

“For the past several years, reports have surfaced about the “shaming” of students for outstanding school meal debts. These students, often from low-income families, are being publicly humiliated because they have unpaid debt in their school meal accounts. Policies that shame students can include stamping on children’s hands or arms, taking their food away and dumping it in the trash or giving them stigmatized cold, partial meals in lieu of the regular hot lunch.”<sup>24</sup>

To solve this problem, “New York City’s public school system set an important national example when it made free lunch available to all of its 1.1 million students regardless of income level. The program ensures that more children will get proper nutrition during the school day. It will also relieve the sense of stigma and shame that often leads children to refuse subsidized meals — and go hungry — rather than let classmates find out that their families are poor.”<sup>25</sup> And, in California, as of January 1, 2018, school officials will no longer deny students their school meal or offer an alternative "shame sandwich" for unpaid meal fees.<sup>26</sup>

No child should go to bed hungry, go to school hungry, or be publicly shamed for not having enough money to purchase food. This proposals School Lunch Program goes a long way to solve these problems by providing free, nutritionally upgraded meals to all students for breakfast and lunch, and dinner to students in after school programs and latchkey kids. This will also stop the shaming associated with the current School Lunch Program.

### How much will the upgraded Student Lunch Program cost?

Currently, the average cost of a school lunch is \$2.60, and breakfast is \$1.51. This totals \$4.11 per day.<sup>27</sup> However, as the richest nation on the planet, we can easily afford to provide higher quality food so we should increase our food budget to at least \$12/day. And, since we will now feed almost 51 million students breakfast and lunch as well as dinner to 10 million latchkey kids and those in after school programs, the total cost could rise to \$76.97 billion. The cost breakdown is as follows:

#### Proposed cost of the improved Student Lunch Program

Meal	Cost/meal	Number of Children Served	Number of Days Served <sup>28</sup>	Total Costs
Breakfast	\$3.00	50.7 (M)	181	\$27.530 (\$bn)
Lunch	4.50	50.7 (M)	181	41.295 (\$bn)
Dinner	4.50	10.0 (M)	181	8.145 (\$bn)
<b>Total Cost</b>				<b>\$76.970 (\$bn)</b>

<sup>21</sup> <https://health.usnews.com/best-diet/mediterranean-diet>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cookinglight.com/news/us-news-diet-rankings-2019>

<sup>23</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30817261/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://theconversation.com/we-should-serve-kids-food-in-school-not-shame-81787>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/08/opinion/school-lunch-without-shame.html>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.cdfca.org/newsroom/updates/ending-school-lunch-shaming-in.html>

<sup>27</sup> <https://schoolnutrition.org/AboutSchoolMeals/SchoolMealTrendsStats/#5>

<sup>28</sup> [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708\\_035\\_s1s.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_035_s1s.asp)

As mentioned earlier, this plan commits \$422.9 billion at the federal level to fund public education. Subtracting the cost of the improved and expanded Student Lunch Program, \$76.97 billion, from this \$422.9 billion still leaves \$345.93 billion to fund other aspects of public education. Looked at from another perspective, this is a very small price to pay for the benefits received.

### **The benefits of providing highly nutritious food to children**

Numerous studies have shown that feeding children a nutritious breakfast increases school performance and overall health while decreasing discipline problems, obesity, and other illnesses. From an economic perspective, adding a school breakfast program (SBP) creates additional revenue streams, increases jobs, and brings outside capital into a community.<sup>29</sup> When lunch and dinner are added, these benefits will increase significantly.

It must be emphasized that nutritionally sound meals benefit children, parents, teachers, school districts, and communities in many ways. For example,

#### **Nutritional benefits for children:**

- Increased nutritional intake.
- Decreased daily intake of [bad] fat as a percentage of calories.
- Decreased stomachaches and headaches.
- Decreased obesity and blood cholesterol levels.
- Decreased risk for cardiovascular disease.

#### **School performance benefits:**

- Increased cognitive function and school performance.
- Increased attention spans.
- Decreased discipline problems.
- Decreased absenteeism and tardiness.

#### **Financial benefits**

- Brings additional funds to school districts and their surrounding communities.
- Creates jobs.
- Increases overall financial stability to food service businesses.<sup>30</sup>

The advantage of feeding millions of children healthy, highly nutritious food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner will manifest in improved cognitive abilities, decreased behavioral problems, and go a long way towards eliminating childhood hunger. Furthermore, feeding children only healthy, nutritious food from pre-school through grade 12, combined with the physical education classes now required of all students between grades seven and twelve, will create the lifestyle that will serve as the template for students and their families to lead a healthier life. This will **begin to negate and reverse the obesity and other health problems plaguing our society, and dramatically bring down the cost of health care.**

### **Free public college**

School is not really “free,” it’s paid for through taxes. Presently, kindergarten through grade 12 is free only because state, local, and federal taxes pay for it, and this revenue comes directly from us, the taxpayer. The questions become, “How will free college impact our society,” and, “How will we pay for it?”

As history has shown, the influx of millions of working-class G.I.’s who received a free college education proved to be the primary factor in our economic growth from the 1950’s forward:

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<sup>29</sup> [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/sbp\\_cost\\_benefit\\_analysis.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/sbp_cost_benefit_analysis.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/sbp\\_cost\\_benefit\\_analysis.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/sbp_cost_benefit_analysis.pdf)

As David Kennedy notes in *Freedom from Fear*, the G.I. Bill,

“roared on after 1945 as a kind of afterburner to the engines of social change and upward mobility that the war had ignited, propelling an entire generation along an ascending curve of achievement and affluence that their parents could not have dreamed.”<sup>31</sup>

Our colleges, universities, and economy grew even more and at an accelerated rate when, in 1958, Congress passed The National Defense Education Act:

“This program became one of the most successful legislative initiatives in higher education. It established the legitimacy of federal funding of higher education and made substantial funds available for low-cost student loans, boosting public and private colleges and universities. Although aimed primarily at education in science, mathematics, and foreign languages, the act also helped expand college libraries and other services for all students. The funding began in 1958 and was increased over the next several years. The results were conspicuous: in 1960 there were 3.6 million students in college, and by 1970 there were 7.5 million. Many of them got their college education only because of the availability of NDEA loans, thanks to Sputnik and to Senator Hill’s readiness to seize the moment.”<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, since then, the cost of higher education has skyrocketed to such an extent that in 2012, student loan debt reached over \$1 trillion.<sup>33</sup> This reflects the two major problems that affect students the most: federal and state de-funding of higher education, and tuition increases.

For example, in 1967, the yearly tuition at the University of Minnesota was only \$294 while by 2012 it had increased to \$11,650/year.<sup>34</sup> This 39-fold increase was primarily due to the decline in federal and state funding as reflected in the policies implemented by Ronald Reagan. Once he became President, Mr. Reagan began defunding higher education, a continuation of the policy he implemented when he was governor of California:

“No federal program suffered deeper cuts than student aid. Spending on higher education was slashed by some 25 percent between 1980 and 1985. In raw dollar figures, cuts totaled \$594 million in student assistance and \$338 million in Pell grants. Students eligible for grant assistance freshmen year had to take out student loans to cover their second year. For middle-class families, eligibility was changed as well. Low-cost, low-interest, subsidized federal loans were limited to families with household incomes of less than \$32,000, regardless of family size.”<sup>35</sup>

Providing a free college education to all qualified students will negate current funding policies that devalue education, and will build upon the tremendous economic effects the G.I. Bill of Rights and the National Defense Education Act had on prior generations. And, with the tuition free vocational/technical training that will now be available to all qualified students who do not take the academic route, our economy will expand and grow even more.

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<sup>31</sup><https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2014/julyaugust/feature/how-the-gi-bill-became-law-in-spite-some-veterans-groups>

<sup>32</sup>[https://www.cop.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Sputnik\\_Spurs\\_Passage\\_of\\_National\\_Defense\\_Education\\_Act.htm](https://www.cop.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Sputnik_Spurs_Passage_of_National_Defense_Education_Act.htm)

<sup>33</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/sherylnancenash/2012/03/22/student-loan-debt-1-trillion-and-counting/#13c2aeea7f18>

<sup>34</sup> <https://oir.umn.edu/sites/oir.umn.edu/files/tuitionumntc.pdf>

<sup>35</sup>[https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/02/my-students-pay-too-much-for-college-blame-reagan/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.c387ee6ad0ac](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/02/my-students-pay-too-much-for-college-blame-reagan/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c387ee6ad0ac)

## **Financing free public college**

As pointed out above, a thoughtful restructuring of our tax system combined with reprioritizing our spending policies creates the revenue necessary to allow all academically qualified students the opportunity to attend college free of charge. This means that all qualified students, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or sexual preferences may attend public colleges, universities and vocational institutions tuition free of charge.

For example, there will now be enough revenue to allow 22 million students the opportunity to attend a public college based on tuition of \$8,655 per student per year.<sup>36</sup> This will cost \$190.4 billion. Subtracting this \$190.4 billion from the \$345.93 billion left after paying for the improved and expanded Student Lunch Program still leaves \$155.53 billion (not including state and local revenue) to fund other aspects of public education.

This will effectively end the debate as to whether a college or vocational school education should be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it, or a right that belongs to every citizen. It will end the inter-generational debt incurred by parents who co-signed their child's student loans and thus sacrificed their standard of living just to send their kids to school. And, it will end the crushing debt which forces young adults to start their working careers in great financial peril,<sup>37</sup>

Allowing all academically qualified students the opportunity to attend college or vocational school free of charge, which a majority of the public is in favor of,<sup>38 39</sup> removes poverty as an impediment to future success, and is a most important first-step to undo the damage caused by present social and educational policies. Guaranteeing all students, a free, first-rate education through college or vocational school is the key to reducing the number of unskilled, poorly educated lower-class working people, and, by extension, increasing the number of highly skilled, highly educated, middle-class people. This is one of the most important factors necessary to stabilize and protect our democracy, and this proposal accomplishes that goal.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.aplu.org/library/fact-sheet-college-costs/File> (This is the average cost at public, land grant colleges.)

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.aplu.org/library/fact-sheet-college-costs/File>

Total student loan debt in the United States has been estimated at \$1 trillion, a figure that includes loans to parents and students from both the federal loan programs and private banks.

<sup>38</sup> <https://thehill.com/hilltv/rising/461106-majority-of-voters-support-free-college-eliminating-student-debt>

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.freecollegenow.org/polling\\_april2020](https://www.freecollegenow.org/polling_april2020)