



WHY WE CHOOSE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness”

– *George Washington, 1786*

It could be argued that our public schools are the greatest public institution of all time and are still today the US’s most important civic institution.

In its long history, our interwoven network of public schools has had staggeringly positive effects on the history of humankind. Through progressively educating more children across the last 150 years, we have fueled the vision of education and opportunity for all. (As late as 1940 half the populace completed 8th grade. Today the rate of college enrollment is 69%.) Through progressively more available education, the US became one of the few places and times in history where anyone could get an education, use that education to gain access to a better life, and then contribute to the discoveries, inventions, and innovations that have continued to expand the potential of our society.

Whether you are considering:

- Patricia Goldman-Rakic, who mapped the frontal cortex for us to understand the brain;
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who rearranged our moral psyches;
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who opened doors for women;
- David Lobell, MacArthur Genius Grant recipient and food security climate scientist;
- Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, whose teenage visions we wear on our wrists;
- Gladys Mae West, whose mathematical modeling of the shape of the earth made GPS possible; Lloyd C Blankfein, of Goldman Sachs;
- Jay Z or Busta Rhymes;
- or Meredith Kopit Levien, of the New York Times -

It is difficult to imagine what our world would be like without the talents nurtured in our public schools.

Great as those and other individual contributions are, the more powerful benefit is far simpler. On any given December or May night in thousands of cafeterium and gyms across the nation, family members and friends sit in shared pride and connection at the school concert, play, or showcase. They come together in the local schools they support and provide for their children. They come together to share in the pleasure of what their children have learned, the friends they have made, and their new-found skills. As neighbors they are of different political parties, different faiths, different ethnic heritages, but in those moments, we are a profoundly connected community.

That connection is not something that can be replaced by disruptive innovation. It is not something we dare do without. In short, our schools are an asset beyond price or leveraged acquisition.

“I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised, for the preservation of freedom and happiness.”

- *Thomas Jefferson, 1786*

