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**Most Parents Are Not Idiots Or Negligent — So Why Do We Need Compulsory–Attendance
Laws?**

By Joel Turtel

Why do we need compulsory–attendance laws? Why compel parents to send their children to public schools? Wouldn't parents naturally educate their children without compulsion? Human nature and history prove this to be the case. All over the world, parents push to educate their children, with or without public schools.

In Japan, school is compulsory only up to the equivalent of junior high school (ninth–grade level). High schools in Japan, like colleges in America, are privately owned and charge tuition. Middle–school students compete fiercely for a place in high schools even though their parents must pay to get them in. Yet most Japanese parents push their kids to apply for high school and scrape up the money for tuition, without the Japanese government's pressuring them to do so.

In America, millions of parents voluntarily pay thousands of dollars a year in tuition to send their young children to private kindergartens, and their older children to a private college. Obviously, most parents think that educating their children is very important. So why do we need compulsory attendance laws for first through twelfth–grade education?

Compulsory–attendance laws imply that government has to force parents to educate their children. Common sense and history prove this notion false. Up to the 1850s, before we had public schools in America, the literacy rate was over 90 percent. Yet most parents taught their children to read at home. They did not need town officials to force them to educate their children. All over the world, most parents' want to give their children a good education so they can have a secure future.

Compulsory–attendance laws also imply that some parents are too ignorant or indifferent to their children's welfare to educate their kids. If this was not the case, then why compel parents at all? Local governments therefore believe they have to force these "bad" parents to deposit their kids in public schools, for the alleged good of the children.

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In effect, local governments and public–school authorities don't trust average parents to have the decency and common sense to educate their kids, unless public–school authorities force them to. That notion is as absurd as claiming that parents would not feed their children unless government authorities forced them to.

There is a saying that if you want to know the real purpose of a law or social system, follow the money. Who benefits the most from our public schools? Certainly not our kids. I submit that the real purpose of compulsory–attendance laws is to enforce a public–school system that benefits public–school employees.

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Children At Risk ---- 15 Ways Public Schools Can Harm Your Children

By Joel Turtel

Unfortunately, public schools, even in the "best" neighborhoods, can harm our kids in many ways. Here's a list of 15 ways public schools can hurt children (and parents):

1. Public schools cripple millions of children's ability to read by using the "whole–language" instruction method (now called "balanced reading instruction" by many public schools).
2. Many public schools spend almost 50 percent of the school day on non–academic subjects that waste children's precious time. The rest of their time is spent on classes such as sex–education, personal safety, consumer affairs, AIDS education, save–the–environment, family life, study halls, multiculturalism, homeroom, electives, counseling, or sports activities.
3. Public schools teach "new" or "fuzzy" math (sometimes called by different names). These instruction methods can cripple children's ability to learn basic arithmetic. Students who fear math are less likely to pursue good careers like computer science and engineering that depend on a love of and competence with math.

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4. These schools force children to read dumbed–down textbooks in English, History, and many other subjects. The textbooks are often geared to the slowest learners in the class and water–down the subject matter. Dumbed–down classes based on dumbed–down public–school textbooks therefore waste children's precious time. This is especially true for children who are quick learners, who must endure 12 years of excruciating boredom in public school classes.
5. Public schools force children to study subjects they might hate, can't learn, will never use in their lives, or which bore them. For example, many public schools force students to study a foreign language. Children learn better when they study subjects that interest them.
6. Author John Gatto, in his book "Dumbing Us Down" said that a child eager to learn can learn to read, write, and do basic arithmetic in about 100 hours. Yet our public schools keep children locked up for 12 years, yet can barely teach millions of kids to read.
7. Public schools force parents to pay heavy school taxes for an inferior, often mind–numbing education for their children.
8. Public schools are a government–controlled near–monopoly. Bad schools don't close down because compulsory taxes prop them up. Incompetent or mediocre teachers aren't fired because tenure laws protect them. That's why public schools will never improve and will always waste children's precious time.
9. Many public schools subject children to drugs, bullies, violence, and values many parents disapprove of.
10. Public schools pressure many parents who have bright, normal children to give their kids potentially dangerous mind–altering drugs to make the bored kids "behave" in class. Over four million allegedly "unruly" kids line up for Ritalin every day in public schools across America. Methylphenidate (sold as Ritalin) and cocaine are both listed in "Schedule II" of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's Controlled Substances Act (CSA).
11. Public schools are compulsory. They therefore violate parents' natural and constitutional right to control the education of their children. Public school authorities, whose salaries we pay with our taxes, force parents to hand over their children to government employees called teachers and to schools that give an inferior education.
12. Public schools can destroy children's love of learning and self–confidence as learners. This can cripple children's ambitions and desire to go to college. This in turn, can force these children to end up with low–paying jobs for the rest of their lives if and when they graduate high school.
13. Public schools force millions of Christian parents to hand over their children to public schools which are decidedly anti–Christian. For example, many social studies textbooks used in public schools have censored out references to such words as 'family,' 'marriage,' 'religion,' 'fidelity,' etc. Many textbooks today refer to a family simply as people choosing to live together.

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14. Public schools force children to witness sometimes shocking or obnoxious sexual material in sex–education classes, without parents' knowledge or consent.

15. The public–school near monopoly and compulsory–attendance laws cripple parents right and ability to choose a quality, low–cost school in an education free–market that has been squashed by the public–school monopoly.

Parents should consider taking their kids out of public school permanently. Parents can take advantage of quality, low–cost education alternatives available to them right now, such as the new Internet private schools that have low tuition costs.

Joel Turtel is an education policy analyst, and author of "Public Schools, Public Menace: How Public Schools Lie To Parents and Betray Our Children."

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