

Chapter I

The Big Rock Candy Mountain of Education

Jay P. Greene

Lyrics of Big Rock Candy Mountain

One evening as the sun went down and the jungle fire was burning
Down the track came a hobo hiking and he said boys I'm not turning
I'm headin for a land that's far away beside the crystal fountains
So come with me we'll go and see the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains there's a land that's fair and bright
Where the handouts grow on bushes and you sleep out every night
Where the boxcars are all empty and the sun shines every day
On the birds and the bees and the cigarette trees
Where the lemonade springs where the bluebird sings
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains all the cops have wooden legs
And the bulldogs all have rubber teeth and the hens lay soft boiled eggs
The farmer's trees are full of fruit and the barns are full of hay
Oh, I'm bound to go where there ain't no snow
Where the rain don't fall and the wind don't blow
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains you never change your socks
And the little streams of alcohol come a-trickling down the rocks
The brakemen have to tip their hats and the railroad bulls are blind
There's a lake of stew and of whiskey too
You can paddle all around 'em in a big canoe
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains the jails are made of tin
 And you can walk right out again as soon as you are in
 There ain't no short handled shovels, no axes, saws, or picks
 I'm a goin to stay where you sleep all day
 Where they hung the jerk that invented work
 In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

I'll see you all this coming fall in the Big Rock Candy Mountains

Asking market-oriented education reformers to describe the ideal educational or school choice system is a bit like asking hobos to describe the ideal country. You are liable to get an answer that sounds something like the Big Rock Candy Mountain. There will be trees that grow cigarettes, streams of alcohol, lakes of stew and whiskey, and hens that lay soft-boiled eggs. Or perhaps, if it is an educational fantasy we are indulging in, there will be no government-operated schools, no compulsory education, and no taxes or regulation. And why not? If you ask people to dream, they might as well dream big.

But that's silly, you might respond. Cigarettes don't grow on trees, you can't canoe on lakes of whiskey and stew, and there are no hens that lay soft-boiled eggs. Similarly, the government does, in fact, operate schools, does compel children to be educated, and does collect taxes and impose regulations. When we ask people to describe the best or the ideal, which constraints can they imagine away and which must still bind them for their answer not to be silly? Even the Big Rock Candy Mountain seems to recognize some constraints. The singer dreams of sleeping in barns full of hay, not in a waterbed with a down comforter. He recognizes the likelihood of going to jail, when he might just wish that he never broke the law or was never caught. In describing the best educational or school choice system, would it be any more unconstrained to wish that government wouldn't seek to reassert control over choice systems with burdensome regulations? Once we have broken the bonds of our current reality by imagining "the best," it's not clear where one must stop.

Describing the best also runs the risk of inviting futile debate over the particular characteristics of an ideal system that will never come to pass. Don't wish for cigarette trees, you might argue, because cigarettes are bad for your health. But can't one reply that in the ideal country cigarettes aren't bad for you? Or maybe you'll say that the

Big Rock Candy Mountain got it wrong because the lakes should be filled with vichyssoise and a nice white wine. Arguments over how large vouchers should be or whether transportation would be provided under the ideal education system are similarly futile. These are opportunities for plenty of fighting without obvious progress in enlightenment.

So how can we avoid the pitfalls of unrealistic fantasies and pointless infighting inherent in this exercise? First, we should not treat our ideal visions as if they were real things that will actually happen. We should keep in mind that they are just fantasies. Doing so will excuse some of our silly wishes while preventing us from squabbling over the details as if they were about to be enacted. But even comparing and discussing one's dreams can be very informative. From Big Rock Candy Mountain we at least learn that hobos have a taste for booze, good weather, and little work. Similarly, our educational dreams reveal something about us.

Second, our vision of an educational paradise serves as a road sign, indicating whether we are moving in the right direction and marking our progress toward that destination. We understand that in all likelihood we'll never reach the educational ideal, just as the hobo never arrives at the Big Rock Candy Mountain. But we can mark progress toward our ideal by that part of our vision that becomes reality. Done properly, the exercise of discussing ideal arrangements is not really about those arrangements but about the path that leads to better arrangements.

School Choice Paradise

With these guidelines in mind, here is my description of school choice paradise. Remember that I don't think this will ever happen, and because of that I feel free to be vague on certain details, since fretting over those details is pointless. The purpose of describing this paradise is just to point us in the right direction and describe what progress looks like.

At the heart of my vision is the understanding that education is simply an extension of child rearing. Educating a child is just a subset of all of the activities that are involved in raising him or her to be a successful adult. Parents have the primary responsibility for

raising their children; therefore parents should also have the primary responsibility for educating them.

How did parents come to have the primary responsibility for raising their children? In part, parents have this responsibility out of respect for their liberty and autonomy. Without parents there would be no children, so we cannot completely disregard their interests in this matter. When parents bring children into the world, they do so with plans and preferences for them, which deserve at least some deference.

Of course, parents do not “own” their children, so we cannot completely defer to their plans and preferences. Children have some plans and preferences for themselves and certainly will develop more goals and tastes as they become adults. Respect for the child’s development or future liberty and autonomy should also be a factor. The difficulty is that children are not capable or autonomous to take all of the actions and make all of the decisions for themselves. Someone else has to do it for them. But who?

This question has occupied great thinkers for centuries. How do we handle the half-way status of children as possessions of neither others nor themselves—persons not able to exercise their own liberty and autonomy but whose liberty and autonomy must be respected? Rather than rehashing the debates of great philosophers, I will make an empirical observation. Human beings have experimented with different arrangements for raising children over our entire history. Through a process of trial and error we have gravitated toward an arrangement that is the dominant practice in almost all places on earth and in almost all cultures: children tend to be raised by their biological parents who enter into a long-term relationship with each other. Those parents hold the liberty and autonomy interests of their children in trust until the children are able to exercise those rights for themselves. That is, we act as if parents “own” their children, confident that this arrangement is most likely to develop children into adults capable of having their own liberty and autonomy.

Throughout history people have tried other arrangements, but those civilizations have tended not to flourish. The experiences from alternative models for raising children aren’t exactly carefully controlled experiments, but they have large samples and long-run outcomes. Children raised by their mom and dad tend to succeed

while children raised by collectives or a single parent tend not to produce as much success.

Our confidence in the superiority of these arrangements is so strong that it is extraordinary for children to be removed from the care of their parents. In the absence of demonstrated gross incompetence or malevolence, children continue to be raised by their parents. This strong deference to parental care stems from a belief, supported by millennia of human experience, that children are better off being raised by imperfect parents than being raised almost any other way. In the absence of evidence of abuse or extreme neglect, we believe that parents—even ill-equipped parents—are better positioned and motivated to help their children become successful, autonomous adults than are others, even others with greater skills and expertise.

We could be mistaken in our confidence in the superiority of parents in raising children. But to dismiss the superiority of parents is to dismiss the wisdom of thousands of years of human experience. Some may be eager to dispense with these antiquated prejudices, as they would see them, for a brave new world, but I am convinced that these long-standing and widespread traditions deserve considerable deference.

If we think that children are best raised by their parents, both out of respect for the liberty and autonomy of the parents and out of a conviction that it is in the best long-term liberty and autonomy interests of children, then the education of children should be controlled by parents. Remember that education is just one aspect of child rearing. Reading with children in school is not fundamentally different from reading with children at home before bedtime. Learning values, priorities, and self-discipline in school is not fundamentally different from learning those qualities outside of school. We should no sooner interfere with parental wishes regarding these activities in school than we would at home. Parents have primary responsibility for raising their children, so parents have primary responsibility for educating their children.

Amy Gutmann, among others, has used the observation that children are not “owned” by their parents to assert the need for a sizeable role for the state, at least in the education of children. Since the future liberty and autonomy interests of children may be distinct from the plans and preferences their parents have for them,

she argues, in *Democratic Education*, that the state needs to play a significant role in ensuring parents do not infringe upon the interests of their children.¹

But it is revealing that advocates of this view restrict this significant role of the state to education. If they really believed that the state needs to play an active role in ensuring that children's interests were being protected, then the government's involvement wouldn't end at 3:00 in the afternoon. They should want the government to make unannounced visits to children's homes to ensure cleanliness, adequately stocked pantries, and an enriching environment. The fact that most of us would consider such actions by the government to be unnecessary for children and unreasonable to parents if they occurred after 3:00 in the afternoon indicates how unnecessary and unreasonable they are in education as well. And the fact that Amy Gutmann and others are unwilling to be consistent in advocating an active government role 24 hours a day suggests that they are not so much concerned with safeguarding children's interests as with rationalizing the status quo in education.

Unlike Gutmann, I am willing to be consistent in deferring to parents in the raising and education of their children. In my ideal vision, we would treat the dominant parental role in education the same way we treat the dominant parental role in raising children generally. In the absence of demonstrated gross parental negligence or malevolence, parents should assume responsibility for educating and raising their children. The state should only intervene if there is evidence of serious neglect or abuse, with respect to education in particular and with respect to child rearing in general.

I would only make two exceptions to this identical treatment of education and child rearing. First, the state should mandate by law that parents provide for the education of their children. Since failing to educate one's children, by definition, constitutes abuse or neglect, compulsory education produces almost no infringement on the responsibilities that parents already have. Of course, one could wonder, why not also have compulsory feeding laws or compulsory clothing laws? In essence, we do, since any parent who failed to feed or clothe their children would be guilty of neglect or abuse. The only reason to have a separate, explicit requirement for children's education is that failure to educate may be less easily detected than

failure to feed or clothe. An empty mind is less obvious to casual observers than an empty stomach or an empty wardrobe.

Second, we should provide families with the resources necessary to ensure that each child receives an adequate education. I understand that we may not similarly provide families with the resources to feed, clothe, or house their children, so why do this for education? The cost of an adequate education is significantly greater than the cost to feed, clothe, or house children (keep in mind that the marginal cost of housing each child is modest and parents are already motivated to house themselves). Many families would be unable to fulfill their parental responsibilities with respect to education were they not provided with additional resources to do so. And since an adequate education plays such an important role in ensuring that children succeed and exercise their liberty and autonomy as adults, denying education to large numbers of children for lack of parental resources is simply unacceptable.

The state's role in education should be limited to mandating that children be educated and to providing the minimum resources necessary so that parents can educate their children. Beyond that the state should play the same role in education that it has traditionally played in child rearing: intervening only when parents have manifestly failed in their responsibilities.

At the risk of describing the ideal system in too much detail, I would envision that the state would provide a voucher to each child sufficient to provide for his or her education. If some children were significantly more expensive to educate, perhaps because of a severe disability, the voucher would be worth more. Parents would then be responsible for finding a way to educate their children with those resources as well as any additional resources they themselves may want to supply. If parents wished to use those funds to educate their children themselves, they should be free to do so as long as they can document that they are, in fact, fulfilling their responsibility of providing for an education. If parents prefer to contract with others to educate their children, they should also be free to do that.

The location, manner, and content of the education should be of no interest to the state. Where children are educated, how they are educated, and what they learn are parental responsibilities, just as where children are fed, how they are fed, and what they are fed are parental responsibilities. Unless the location, manner, and content

demonstrated abuse or neglect, these are parental responsibilities. We defer to parents on these matters out of respect for their liberty and because we believe that parents are best positioned and motivated to make these choices.

Not Letting the Best Be the Enemy of the Good

My educational paradise may seem more like the Big Rock Candy Mountain than other visions that more closely approximate current arrangements for education. I fully understand and accept that my educational paradise is very unlikely to ever become a reality. Despite its impracticality, articulating this educational vision has important benefits.

In describing my educational paradise I reveal a few things about my preferences. First, I place a high premium on promoting liberty and autonomy. Second, I believe that parents are better suited to make decisions that benefit their children than strangers—even well-intentioned and well-trained strangers. The exercise of having to describe an ideal school choice system makes these basic preferences more explicit and transparent.

In addition, describing the ideal system clearly indicates the direction in which I think we should be headed and marks progress toward the ideal. According to the vision I've described, every initiative that expands parental control over the education of their children is a positive step and every initiative that restricts that control is a negative step. We'll never have the ideal parental control, but we can attempt to get more of it. We should be pleased with every increase in parental control we can achieve.

So, allowing parents to transfer their children among public schools within a district results in more parental control than simply assigning children to schools based on neighborhood. Expanding the choices to include public schools in other districts is even better. Adding charter schools to the mix is better still. Including secular private schools expands parental control even more. It would further enhance parental control if there were religious private options. Allowing parents to supplement vouchers with their own funds would expand parental control even more.

I am not describing the empirical effectiveness of each initiative, which can only be known from carefully designed research;

instead, I am simply describing their theoretical advantages. The fewer restrictions parents face as to the location, manner, and content of the education of their children, the closer we are to my ideal vision.

What if there were vouchers for private schools, but those schools were required to administer state tests? Advocates of testing requirements argue that testing provides necessary information to assist consumers in making intelligent decisions and ensures accountability in the use of public funds. But requiring testing as consumer protection is likely to be superfluous since consumers regularly demand that type of information even in the absence of a government mandate. And education providers in a competitive market are likely to be eager to provide testing and other information demanded by parents because that is part of how they can market their services. In addition, a government testing requirement distorts consumer information by insisting on a single measure when parents may prefer different or multiple indicators of school quality. Lastly, the only accountability that the public should demand is that students are, in fact, receiving an education. The location, manner, and content of that education should be left to the best judgment of parents, not the collective judgment of a test mandate. (Accountability testing within public schools is different because it is a management tool for the public system controlling itself, just as the Catholic schools may require testing of all of their students as a form of internal control.)

While it would be better if there were no requirement to test, even a voucher program with a testing mandate would expand parental control and should be viewed positively. Students would have more location options, and the restrictions that a state test imposes on manner and content would be no greater than the restrictions students already face in public schools. And if private schools found the testing unreasonably burdensome, they would be free not to participate. Vouchers with a testing requirement would represent progress even if it didn't represent perfection.

The point is that we'll never achieve perfection, so we should embrace every bit of progress that can be achieved. We have to be careful not to let the best be the enemy of the good. This is especially true since the best will probably never be achieved.

The opposition of some market-oriented reformers to proposals that would expand parental control, even with restrictions,

is puzzling to me. As long as the expansion in parental choice is greater than the restrictions imposed, shouldn't we applaud the progress it represents? Their opposition is often presented as philosophical or based on principles. There are certain restrictions that these reformers simply cannot accept. But are the restrictions in the proposal worse than in the status quo ante? If not, opposing the proposal is just opposing progress.

Sometimes I suspect that the opposition to reforms with restrictions is actually based on prudential considerations rather than the ostensible philosophical reasons provided. The prudential calculation could be that if we resist adoption of a restricted proposal now, we might be able to get a less restricted one adopted in the future. And perhaps accepting limits now would set precedents that make it more difficult to produce more significant progress in the future.

Whether these prudential considerations are compelling cannot be judged in the abstract. The likelihood that holding out for more promising reforms will be successful depends on the particular context and political considerations. That being said, it has generally been the case that passage of choice reforms, even with severe limitations, has generally been followed by passage of more expansive choice reforms. Rarely has progress stagnated or been reversed (other than through the courts).

In Arizona, passage of one private choice program was followed by three more. The initial program in Florida was followed by two more. Iowa added a second program. Ohio added two more to its initial program. And Utah added a second program. In Milwaukee the private choice program started very small (capped at 1,500 students) and was restricted to secular schools. The program is now approaching 20,000 students and includes religious schools. Taking what you can get now has generally led to even more later.

Market-oriented reformers also sometimes have disputes over whether choice programs should be in the form of vouchers, tax-credit-supported scholarships, or tax credits for choice participants. Again, these are not really philosophical debates as much as debates about political strategy. Tax credits may be more likely to survive court challenges, but function almost the same as vouchers. Since the effect on parental control can be made to be identical whether in the form of a voucher or a tax credit, there should be no philosophical difference between the approaches.

The argument that tax credits are superior because vouchers are more likely to invite government regulation of private schools isn't very persuasive. The government does not need vouchers to regulate private schools. It can and does regulate private schools without vouchers. And there is no reason why government regulation has to accompany vouchers any more or any less than tax credits. If the reader remains convinced that tax credits have a political advantage over vouchers, I am perfectly willing to cede the point and alter my ideal fantasy. Arguing over these details is like arguing over whether the hobo's lake should be filled with whiskey or white wine.

Not Letting the Exception Make the Rule

Other market-oriented reformers might object that my vision of educational paradise has too few restrictions on parental control. What if parents were to seek Nazi or Jihad schools for their children? Shouldn't the state be able to exclude certain intolerant and oppressive options on the grounds that it contributes to greater tolerance and liberty in the future?

While I'm sympathetic with this concern, as a practical matter the attempt to devise government regulation of acceptable educational content is likely to be more oppressive than the oppressive education it might prevent. Very few parents voluntarily seek Nazi or Jihad schools. The dominance of Madrassas in certain countries, like Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, is largely related to the heavy subsidization of those schools by governments and the restrictions placed on other options.

The cultural preference for such an education also accounts for the presence of Madrassas, but this is something that government regulation is ill equipped to prevent. If the dominant cultural preference is for Madrassas, then we can hardly expect the government to develop regulations that forbid Madrassas. Even if it did, messages of hate and intolerance could be conveyed to children at home, so restricting it in school would have only a partial effect. Of course, if instruction at school or at home were sufficiently hateful or destructive, like encouraging children to become suicide bombers, then it would constitute abuse and be grounds for the state to intervene.

It is also interesting to note that as an empirical matter, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between a Madrassa

education and terrorist activity. In a study conducted by Peter Bergen of the educational backgrounds of 75 terrorists, he found that 40 had attended college and only 9 had attended Madrassas. He also observes that all of the pilots and secondary planners of the 9/11 attacks had attended Western universities.² We give schools too much credit when we attribute to them all of the thoughts and actions of their graduates. Children are more strongly influenced by the values of their families and communities, making regulations of school content at best marginally effective.

The reality is that in a free society very few parents want to teach their children to destroy that free society. What's more, the broader societal influence from which children cannot be entirely shielded is likely to undermine the effectiveness of whatever destructive instruction children receive. The numbers of parents preferring Jihad or Nazi schools are small enough and their instruction is likely to be ineffectual enough that their preferences can be tolerated without danger to future liberty. Efforts to restrict these few intolerant educational options are likely to harm liberty even more as advocates would want to restrict Catholic schools for intolerance of homosexuals or restrict Orthodox Jewish schools for separating girls and boys. It is better not to get on to this slippery slope by not allowing the exceptional circumstances to justify unnecessary rules.

A Word on Politics

At several points in my argument I have made a distinction between prudential or political considerations and philosophical goals. For example, I've said that whether people should support choice programs with testing requirements is really a political calculation, not a philosophical one. If they can succeed in passing a program without the testing requirement, then opposing that provision is prudential. If they think that the testing requirement will rig the choice program for failure, hindering future expansion of choice, then they should oppose it. But if people think that a voucher program with a testing requirement is the best they can get and that it creates a condition for additional programs in the future, then they should accept testing requirements.

The only philosophical issue is trying to get more choice. The rest is a matter of political calculations and tactics. Of course, those

political calculations and tactics are important, but they simply cannot be decided in the abstract. The principle that more choice is desirable can be decided without referencing the specific context, so I feel comfortable saying that more choice is better than less. But I cannot offer universal advice on whether testing requirements are always good or bad.

Nor can I advise whether tax credits or vouchers are best. Andrew Coulson plausibly argues in this volume that tax-credit choice programs have tended to be subject to less regulation, but there is no necessary logic behind that observed fact. It could easily change in the future. Again, nothing prevents the government from regulating private schools. The government can impose regulations with or without choice programs and whether choice programs are organized around vouchers or tax credits. The best tactics for avoiding regulations that hinder choice depend upon the particular circumstances.

So when people have disputes about whether to accept testing or some other requirements in a choice program, or about whether to structure programs as tax credits or vouchers, they are not really disagreeing about the goal of expanding choice. They agree on the principle, which really is the important thing. They just disagree over the best means for achieving that end.

While I offer no specific advice on tactics, which may disappoint some readers, I am very specific about the goal and how we should be open to compromise and gradual progress toward that goal. On some level this is a general statement about tactics—it is generally better to accept what you can get than to hold out for all that you want. I feel comfortable offering this piece of tactical advice because I think it is close enough to being true in almost all circumstances.

Not everyone agrees with this gradualist approach. Some folks insist that it is unwise or even unprincipled to accept compromises short of unhindered parental choice in education. I oppose that view for a few reasons. First, since the ideal will never be realized, holding out for it is (intentionally or unintentionally) a recipe for inaction and perpetuation of the status quo. Second, most progress toward the ideal of parental choice in education (or toward any other worthwhile goal, for that matter) has tended to occur by gradual progress. Revolutionary change almost never occurs. So waiting for revolutionary change is like waiting for Godot—it may never come. Third, revolutionary change is destructive and often has negative

side effects. The keeping of tradition helps tether people to the common sense and wisdom of accumulated human experience. When people break completely free of those bonds they are as liable to do horrific things as wonderful ones. Sure, we have the American Revolution, but don't forget the French and Russian revolutions. Gradualism tends to be good.

A Word on Education

I've argued that the state should require that all children be educated but should be indifferent as to the location, manner, and content of that education. But people might reasonably wonder, what is the definition of "education" so that we can be sure that parents are fulfilling their responsibilities? A related question would be, What is the purpose of education, and how can we be sure that is being served by these arrangements?

I have to confess that I am intentionally agnostic about the definition or purpose of education, and I think the government should be similarly lax on these questions. Basically, anything that can credibly be claimed to be education should be accepted as such by the government. Any more restrictive definition would infringe upon parental autonomy over the location, manner, and content of education. Similarly, the state should and does have relatively lax definitions over what constitutes acceptable child-rearing practices. If the state developed an overly restrictive definition of "parenting," that would also infringe on parental autonomy.

I think we should be even more agnostic as to the purpose of education. If education is part of child rearing and if child rearing is preparation for one's adult life, then inquiring about the purpose of education is like asking what the purpose of life is. It's an interesting question, but one that should be pursued by people individually and not by the government. People will differ about the purpose of education, just as they will differ as to the purpose of life. It's not the proper place of the government to settle these disputes and impose any particular purpose on everybody.

Some might suggest that the state has its own purpose in education—to ensure that children will regularly obey its laws when they grow up. Of course, the government does have an interest in

having its laws obeyed, but it is not clear that the educational system is a necessary or desirable part of ensuring that obedience. The primary vehicle by which the state ensures compliance with its laws is by deriving those laws from the people with their consent and by not infringing upon the people's liberty. Compelling students to learn obedience to the state in a particular manner is not necessary because consent largely ensures compliance. And it may be counterproductive because it may infringe upon people's liberty by regulating what is taught and how. The government's interests in education are best served by saying as little as is possible about what defines education and what its purposes are, and staying out of questions regarding location, manner, and content.

Conclusion

My vision of the ideal educational system is almost certainly as grand and unrealistic as the Big Rock Candy Mountain. I am only two steps away from saying that there should be no public role in the education of children. But while my goals are expansive, my requirements for a desirable educational reform are minimal. I only demand that a reform moves us closer to the goal of parental control, even if it is only a tiny bit closer.

It makes no sense to have an unrealistic ideal (as I do) and then reject everything that falls short of the ideal. That's not a reform agenda; that's a recipe for no reform at all. People who reject compromises that bring them toward their goals may take comfort in preserving their ideological purity but can never achieve progress, let alone achieve their ideal vision. I'll take what I can get.

While I favor compromise in practice, I don't understand why people would compromise in their ideal vision. If you are asked to envision what you most want, why bargain with yourself about your own dreams? Compromising the ideal vision gains no practical advantage other than sounding less silly than the singer of the Big Rock Candy Mountain. And compromising your dream runs the risk that you will distort your true goals and make unnecessary or unwise compromises in practice.

Be grand in your dreams and modest in your practice. This is the lesson of the hobo in the Big Rock Candy Mountain. He wants trees

full of fruit, lakes of stew, and hens that lay soft-boiled eggs, but he'll accept a crust of bread if that is what is offered. We should do the same in education.

Notes

1. Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.
2. Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Myth," *New York Times*, June 14, 2005.

Chapter 2

On the Way to School: Why and How to Make a Market in Education

Andrew J. Coulson

What Do You Expect?

The purpose of this volume is to identify the optimal way of returning parental choice and market forces to the field of education. But before we can properly design any system we have to know what it intends to accomplish. So, what do people want out of their schools?

On the basis of a review of survey and focus group research,¹ the public's aspirations can be distilled as follows:

- All children should have access to good schools.
- Schools should prepare children for success in private life, through a solid grounding in knowledge, skills, and values (specific expectations in these areas vary from family to family, though there is considerable overlap).
- Schools should explain the rights and duties of citizenship, to prepare children for participation in public life.
- Schools should foster harmonious relations among the different ethnic, religious, and ideological groups within our society, or at the very least not breed tensions between them.