

# The Education Wars

## A Citizen's Guide and Defense Manual

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and Jack Schneider



### Overall Rating:



### Did you complete the book?

Yes  No  Almost

What was your overall opinion of the books?

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What was your favorite part of the books?

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What did you not like?

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Your favorite quotes:

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01. The country’s founders, including Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, made the case for public education. Adams said that government has a responsibility to provide education to “every rank and class of people, down to the lowest and the poorest” and a duty to pay for that education as a “public expense.” But until the early 20 th century, many students were excluded from public schools. Today, parents are fighting to get their children out of public schools instead of into them. What has changed?

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02. The authors point out that local schools belong to local governments. Yet funding for schools comes from a combination of federal, state, and local sources. How can those who care about public education strike balance with regard to the priorities of these different stakeholders?

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03. Public schools are subject to oversight when it comes it issues like abuse and bullying. This is not true of private schools. How does moving more students into private schools potentially put them at risk?

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04. The authors ask readers to try to imagine starting a public school system from scratch today, and creating a system designed to serve every young person in the country. If you were to do this, how would you prioritize meeting the needs of all students? How would it be different from the systems that are currently in place?

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05. The authors say that when Americans start fighting over schools, you can be fairly sure that it isn’t really about the schools. What are the biggest undercurrents in today’s school battles?

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06. The authors note that today’s school culture wars carry distinct echoes of earlier battles over textbooks, sex education, and the teaching of evolution. But they say that this time, it really is different. Do you agree or disagree, and why?

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07. Battles over school prayer, placing bibles in schools, and displaying the Ten Commandments in classrooms have occurred in a number of states. How can believers of many faiths, as well as non-believers, unite to oppose these actions? What messages are most effective?

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08. The authors explain that the rationale over school funding has been that taxpayers benefit from the provision of public schools whether or not they have children attending them, because public schools lead to a stronger economy, a better society, and healthy democracy. Why do you think so many people have lost sight of this?

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09. Public schools are where young people encounter ideas they may not encounter at home and learn to think for themselves. How and why do “parental rights” advocates try to prevent this from happening?

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10. The authors note that defending public schools doesn’t have to mean defending the status quo. In your opinion, what are two or three things that public schools could do better than they are doing now?

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11. In their conclusion, the authors ask a number of questions about who schools are for and who gets to make decisions about how they operate. Why is it important to keep discussing these topics, even for those who are strong supporters of public schools?

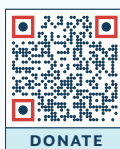
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12. Throughout the book, there are short sidebars contributed by other writers and experts. How do these additional voices add to the expertise and narratives the book is able to share?

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## QUOTES

“America’s schools are far from perfect. Anyone with direct experience can list the things they’d do differently were they in charge. And anyone in a position of leadership will attest to the fact that even being in charge isn’t usually enough to institute significant reforms, at least not with anything resembling speed.”

“For the most part, the school wars that have unfolded over the years have been opportunistic in nature. National political fights have been pulled into the schools as a way of making otherwise abstract crusades maximally visceral and immediate. After all, bringing such battles into the schools is, at its core, about stoking fear — that children are at risk.”

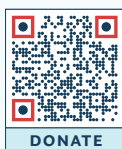
“Our widening partisan rifts are also threatening the nation’s schools. A 2022 Gallup poll found that a vast gulf now separates Democrats from Republicans when it comes to their faith in public education. While 43 percent of Democrats express confidence in public schools, fewer than 10 percent of Republicans hold that view.”

“Conservatives have long expressed fear that if we overemphasize what’s negative about American history, students will cease to believe in the country.”

“Using taxpayer dollars to support religious schools, or any other school that would advance a particular ideology that isn’t broadly shared, should raise serious questions for us. Our public schools are often segregated by race and income, given the deeper patterns of segregation in our communities. ... Why would taxpayers support schools with the potential to fracture society even further?”

“Schooling is what we do to ensure that we live in an educated, humane, and cohesive society — one that is able to reason collaboratively, even across disagreement, and decide collectively. It is how we pass on our shared valuables and principles, support and sustain culture, and forge a shared ethos.”

“The flames of culture war have roared through our schools before. Yet never have they threatened to be so destructive. As some activists have mounted the equivalent of a volunteer fire brigade, supporters of voucher programs have rained down a steady stream of fuel. Whether their political moment lasts a year or a decade, they know that the moment will pass. Inasmuch as that is the case, they are acting with all deliberate speed.”



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