Private Schools as Education Inhibitors

The value of public school education is not undermined by the presence of unapreciated and under-utilized. Public school systems have the ability not only to provide children with a good education, but also to break down class barriers and introduce students into culturally diverse environments.

Yet, in many cases, they fail at this goal due to society’s reliance on private schools. Public schools are not dangerous, provide a second-rate education and corrupt students. Assuming that these statements are true (they are, but let’s assume), it is no wonder that parents send their children to private schools. As concerned parents abandon public schools, they deprive the system of one avenue for improvement. Concerned parents that have the option (financially) of private schools often leave the parents that would be leading public school PTAs (Parent Teacher Association). These parents have clout in the education world and can bring change to failing schools and systems.

This is apparent in the Chicago Public School system. In public high schools in wealthy neighborhoods, there are clean floors, new books in the classrooms, and ping-pong tables in the lobbies. Public high schools in poor neighborhoods, however, are still suffering from class barriers, and students are more concerned with surviving gang activity within the school than getting new books. High schools like these fail because any bright children from the troubled neighborhoods find a way to afford a private school. Who can blame them? Yet, running away from the problem is not a solution.

It becomes apparent that public schools are not in a vicious cycle. Bright students in troubled neighborhoods attend public schools because their local public school is failing, yet it will keep failing if bright students keep leaving. As these students and families look for other personal interests academically (no blame assigned), they hurt societal education as a whole.

The social value of public schools becomes under-utilized. Private schools are not beneficial to societal education as a whole. They help certain individuals in the short term, but hurt many more in the long run. Public schools provide an opportunity for students to interact with cultural diversity in an environment of academic equality. There is no other way to do this than to interact with people of different backgrounds.

In the 1960s began a process of eliminating class barriers. Underlying many of our nation’s current prejudices is economic class distinction. Our society is divided into economic classes (upper, middle, lower, etc.). They practically define our being. Public schools provide an environment where these distinctions become weak and ignored. As wealthier families send their children to private schools, they prevent the destruction of class distinctions.

Shenandoah county area students and family-members, many of who had never before had the opportunity to visit your beautiful campus or to enter the doors of the College. Their reactions have been quite complimentary.

Special thanks to Vice President Shirley Yoder for outstanding efforts in communicating that helped to make College Night a success for another year.

Margee Greenfield, College Night Coordinator
Rockingham County Public Schools

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Conversing in Both Church and School
"It will be important for Christian colleges and universities to help guide the community of faith through this difficult period by providing perspective and insight, while at the same time seizing every opportunity to influence the academy and intellectual communities toward a fuller understanding of Christian worldviews." The words of Anthony J. Dickema, president emeritus of Calvin College in Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship speak to the strength of educational institutions both in the past and present.

We hold the Saskatchewan and Purdue statements calling for the church to be in dialogue with those who hold differing views to be the teaching position. The денч of Church USA (MC USA) states Membership Guidelines for the Formation of Mennonite Church USA clarifying a point regarding homosexuality and, in this capacity, the position regarding debated issues in the church.

The Weather Vane is published weekly by undergraduate students of Eastern Mennonite University. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the university or its affiliates. Letters to the editors are welcomed: the editors reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and space. Advertising is selective, with preference given to local businesses.

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The Weather Vane

Letter to the Editors
Many Thanks for College Night

To the Editors:
I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the members of the EMU community for the effort that went into the College Night Program on Thursday, Oct. 3, such a success. During the months preceding the event, Laurie Miller and members of her Admissions Office staff and Valerie Helbert in Conferences and Events provided great support and assistance. There was a good deal of planning and preparation before the event and I thank all of those who contributed time and creative effort to the event. The planning and implementation of such an outstanding and important program.

It has been our goal to provide the students in this area with information about all of the options available to them so that they can make informed decisions. Our students were well served once again this year. The EMU display of post-secondary options contributed wonderfully to that goal.

There is no question that EMU has received strong and positive visibility as the site of this event over the past two years. During both programs, representatives from more than 80 institutions of higher education, approximately 1,000 participants; Rockingham, Page and Shenandoah county area students and family-members, many of who had never before had the opportunity to visit your beautiful campus or to enter the doors of the College. Their reactions have been quite complimentary.

Special thanks to Vice President Shirley Yoder for outstanding efforts in communication that helped to make College Night a success for another year.

Margee Greenfield, College Night Coordinator
Rockingham County Public Schools

~s.j.v.