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FIVE HUNDRED YEARS

A Comprehensive Case for Home Education



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Introduction

In many ways, public school is terrible for educating children. Fortunately, there is an alternative to public schooling known as home education, or more commonly known as homeschooling, where children do not attend a school with its tedious and oppressive routines and instead take a customized, self-directed approach to learning.

There are a lot of great reasons to choose home education over public school. Some are reasons against schooling and others are a positive case for home education. Some of them are personal (how it affects the individual) and some are social (how it could affect everybody.) Some are libertarian in nature and many are just common sense that should appeal to anyone.

It's unfortunate that a dichotomy between schooling and home education exists. I believe that if public school wasn't compulsory and publicly funded that there might be dozens, if not thousands, of options and paths for educating children. But since compulsory, government-funded public education exists, so does the dichotomy.

I'm going to make the longest, most complete list I can of arguments for home education. But consider this an open-ended project. I'll amend it as I discover new reasons or if other people submit them to me. And it might be interesting to pair them with refutations sometime in the future.

Please note that these arguments are not perfect syllogisms, but more of a collection of observations, opinions and assertions that can serve as a starting off point for further exploration.

54 and counting:

The argument for knowledge

Probably the most important reason supporters of public education use to justify school is that obtaining *knowledge* is critically important. This is true, knowledge is power. People who know more are asked to do more difficult tasks and make more money for it. They are also given authority.

But, most knowledge is useless. Think of all of the things you don't know. The only knowledge that is powerful is either stuff that is useful (e.g., job functions, cooking, driving a car) or enjoyable. Or knowledge that somebody else has that provides value (e.g., it's valuable that my dishwasher repairman knows dishwasher repair, but I don't need to know it myself.)

All other knowledge is without value to an individual. Every person has a unique parcel of knowledge that is valuable to him or her.

So how can schools come up with a 15,000 hour-sized portfolio of knowledge that is specific to everybody? They can't, they purposefully don't, and almost everyone experiences this. People like to joke about how they never use the calculus they learned in high school, and, comically, they can't remember it anyways.

How many people learned their career skills through public education? How many people enjoy the knowledge they received there? Or have problems acquiring knowledge they use or enjoy outside of the framework for school? Pretty much nobody.

Knowledge might be the most important asset a human can acquire and school doesn't deliver it. In fact, it most likely distracts children from finding the knowledge relevant to their own individual lives.

The argument against conformity

Besides every student learning *the exact same thing at the exact same schedule*, school teaches conformity in many ways. Students are expected to sit and behave the same way, arrive and leave at the same times, sit in orderly rows, and be discouraged from challenging the information they receive. Disruption to the rules is punished and independent thought is rarely encouraged.

People, especially children, need to be individuals whose own unique style, personality and behavior flourishes as they grow and learn. Conformity training discourages this.

The argument for better learning, a love of learning and engagement

Children are born natural learners. Interact with any toddler and you will see that they are desperate to experience the world around them. Little children probably say "why" a 100 times per day.

When children are free to learn what interests them, they are better, more engaged learners. They foster their love of learning and ultimately learn better.

Schooling is the opposite. Through the droning assignments, the subjects of disinterest, the endless repetition, and forced scheduling it crushes the love of learning. Most kids soon associate the painful schooling process with learning itself and ultimately are trained to despise the idea of learning.

The argument for exposure

Some proponents of schooling insist that school exposes children to a broad array of subjects that they wouldn't be exposed to otherwise. But, school really just teaches five to seven subjects when there are actually thousands of subjects in the world.

Even if we were to hone in on something school focuses on like literature, the nation's schools essentially limit exposure to the same dozen books regardless of a child's interest, despite there being millions of books in the world. Sure, there is a library at the school, but when do they get to go? And books are just one kind of media, only favored through school's history because it was the only one available in the pre-modern world when school was invented.

An open, free-range education gives children the time to explore any subject they desire and inflicts no one-size-fits-all curriculum. Home educated children not only can be exposed to a wider array of subjects, they can be exposed precisely to the ones they find interesting or useful.

The argument for powerful subjects

School tends to avoid, or at least go lightly, on some of the most powerful subjects such as economics, commerce, ethics, politics, epistemology, aesthetics, logic, rhetoric, metaphysics, sociology, psychology and others. These subjects can be fascinating and particularly useful in developing interesting, informed worldviews.

Oddly, school doesn't shy away from other difficult topics that are far less useful to the average person. Math and science go strangely deep in school despite the fact that this knowledge is only useful to a handful of careers with very little personal significance.

Powerful subjects are the good stuff! We shouldn't deny our children access to them. Home education can inspire children to explore powerful subjects if they choose.

The argument for useful subjects

I'll happily concede that reading, writing and some math are essential skills and schools do indeed teach them. It's also true that school is not necessary to teach them. For example, children learn the extremely valuable skill of talking without school instruction.

And then the school curriculum is packed with useless information that is forgotten soon after it is learned. Most people don't find memorizing dates, US capitals, atomic element charts, advanced math, Latin, ancient poetry, chemistry or biology, etc., particularly useful or interesting.

There are many subjects that are absent or woefully underserved in school that are completely useful. They include:

- Conducting a job search
- Balancing a checkbook
- Banking
- Managing an investment portfolio
- Creating a budget
- First aid
- Cooking
- Doing laundry
- Home repair
- Applying for a loan
- Filing taxes
- Buying a home or a car
- Routine car maintenance
- Vocational computer skills
- Shopping
- Making a business case
- Calculating return on investment
- Running a business
- Etc.

These types of skills must be deemed *too important to be taught at school* and must be taught at home or in the workplace. After all, failure to learn them would actually have an impact on somebody's real life.

Failure to learn, say, quadratic equations or Shakespeare verse, has virtually no impact for almost everybody. School mostly teaches subjects where failing to learn them has no real world consequence at all.

The argument for modernity

The majority of schooling is taught using a method developed 3,000 years ago: the lecture. Back then, it was the best they had. Now, it may be one of the worst. It's passive and it uses countless droning humans to convey the same message across the country, even those topics that could easily be codified in a book or a video. And it's not very good for retention.

Education shouldn't be entirely based on ancient methods. In our modern times, computers are ubiquitous and powerful. In fact, most students probably have more powerful information delivery systems in their pockets via their iPhones than any lecturer could provide.

The argument against instructor-led, time-fixed training

Most schools use lecture-based training models where a teacher orates in front of a crowd while the students take notes. With perhaps the exception of gym and art, all classes are managed this way, and even those that don't still employ an instructor or an overseer at the minimum.

If we think about how we as adults voluntarily acquire knowledge, it is very rare that we use instructors or lecturers. Adults sometimes hire instructors for learning a musical instrument or golf or tennis or the like. They might do employee training or certifications for a very short while (like a few days). But that's about it, the bulk of learning is self-directed.

When learning voluntarily, adults don't fixate on rigid time schedules. In school, every subject has uniform time requirements e.g., it's 45 minutes per day, five days per week and then it starts and ends in accordance to the school calendar – for every single subject regardless of how different the subject is or how small or vast its scope.

Some knowledge might take an hour to learn. Others areas may take a lifetime. School uses old fashioned, unnatural instructor training and arbitrary, rigid timing.

The argument against testing and grades, and rewards and punishments

School might be the only institution where the customers (the students) are evaluated and the servers (the teachers) go unwatched. Students are the ones who are supposed to benefit from school. Imagine going into a restaurant and instead of being asked how well the chef did, the diners were scrutinized for how well they ate.

Testing and grades, imposed generally without regard to their victims, are poor tools to see how an individual is progressing towards their own goals in life. Many critics of testing say it spoils the teaching process and that teachers "teach to the test".

Grading is the primary method of teaching by rewards and punishments. Learning should be *intrinsically* driven, meaning it comes from the student's own desire to acquire knowledge. Rewards and punishment are *extrinsic* means, and most likely spoil the student's appetite to learn things that are useful and enjoyable.

And what a thin, vague system! Just five letters to codify every child's intellectual progress.

Besides being a poor measure, as stated above, they add unneeded stress. They can also put the student at odds with their parents, the student at odds with the teacher, and even the parents at odds with the teacher. When is having everyone at odds with each other ever a productive process?

The argument for doing vs. observing

Since most of school teaching is via lecture, students must learn by passively watching and taking notes. Doing tasks is much more effective at learning and retaining information. School discourages doing for most subjects and for the majority of the time.

The argument for free play

Free play is when children, without external restrictions or guidance, design their own activities and modes of play. It can be wonderful in developing independence, creativity, negotiating skills, interpersonal skills, and fun.

School kids live under constant direction and surveillance. Their only opportunity for free play during school are the scraps of time given at recess (unsurprisingly, most kids favorite school-time activity). It seems to be a growing trend for parents to further shorten free play by signing their kids up for organized sports and activities after school and on the weekends, further putting them in another system where they wear uniforms and follow the instructions of an adult.

Home education provides much more time and opportunity for free play.

The argument for history

Most history, as it is taught in schools, is *political* history. Almost every event described is either the work of a President or a war. Even when non-government events are covered, such as the Great Depression or the Million Man March, the story usually hinges on how the government responded.

Schools narrow the scope of history to government, and usually only portray a positive view of the student's own government (e.g., America's children learn that America is great.) For example, students probably don't learn the true body counts of American wars or how many people have been incarcerated in its prison system.

Real history, though, also includes individual achievement, business, consumption trends, technology, art and media, music, communications, religion, philosophy, scientific discovery, food, and fun.

History without a school approach could vastly and wildly open up education to be more inclusive and more expansive, providing everyone with a more complete and valuable knowledge of history.

The argument for alternative political views

Public school tends to describe social order exclusively in the concept of government, describing how it works, how it is staffed, how elections occur, etc., while rarely questioning whether it is the right way or not. It's a description of what's there, not what could be. If any hemming or hawing occurs, it is only to show differences between the main two political parties (here in the USA). Schools never mention the role of violence or theft inherent to the system. Indeed, it would be very much against the public school staff's interest. It would be against the government's interest.

To be fair, socialism and communism are both recognized, sometimes to describe their murderous failures, but sometimes with an encouragement that they might be right if implemented correctly.

Corporate/military fascism is taught to be totally evil, even though the school masks many of the corporate/military fascism qualities inherent in the US's current system.

Capitalism is largely skewered and sometimes painted as a necessary evil we must endure. The word is mentioned at school, but rarely with any fair definitions.

Libertarianism or anarchism are rarely described, and if even acknowledged, are either blown off as irrelevant, or, at best, criticized.

Other ideas such as agorism, anarcho syndicalism, resource based economies, social democracy, paleoconservatism, pascifism, panarchy and others don't exist.

Public school children are basically taught that the status quo is basically our unchangeable, and even virtuous, state of nature. If one wants their children to learn any thing else, any other possibility than the status quo, it's not happening at public school.

The argument for religion or atheism

Home education allows parents to teach their children the fundamentals of how they believe reality and ethics exist in the world. At school, knowledge is to be taught with very little context of how reality or ethics are believed to exist within the world. This is a fairly large omission. Schools presume to teach what exists in the world and how it works, while purposefully ignoring how we understand reality and morality itself.

However your sense of aesthetics lie, it should be a right for parents to present their worldview to their children.

Some worry that parents will teach misinformation, but rarely give the school the same scrutiny.

Would we fault a Hindu wanting to teach their kids about Hindu practices or a Buddhist for teaching their kids how to meditate?

The same can be said for teaching *atheism*. At public school, each day is started with a prayer to the *state* and *God*, called the *Pledge of Allegiance*. While most public schools don't promote a religious agenda, it is still absolutely taboo to actively suggest God doesn't exist or that reality is what we view with our senses.

As home educators, atheist parents who wish this belief to be a strong part of their children's education can do so freely, frequently and explicitly. They are allowed to frame knowledge with this view of reality.

The argument for leaders over followers and entrepreneurs over workers

Since school teaches obedience, dependence and conformity, it naturally encourages people to be followers. Children who are encouraged to be imaginative, individualists, innovators and self-reliant will develop the skills to blaze their own paths, take command of a situation, take calculated risks and invest in themselves. These are more the qualities of leaders and entrepreneurs over followers and workers.

The argument for opportunity

Children spend 13 years (17 or more if you count college), 40 hours a week, nine months out of the year mostly learning and then forgetting. What could kids achieve with that time if they were to reclaim it for themselves? What could they create? What *other* opportunities could they pursue?

Losing time is always a double liability because not only did you burn the time doing something valueless but you also missed the opportunity to do something valuable. And it's a triple liability if you paid to do it.

The argument for happiness and for empathy

School makes many if not most kids unhappy. They don't like most of their school work. They don't like being told what to do every second of the day. They don't like having to be part of cliques or getting bullied. They don't like taking tests. They don't like getting grades. They hate homework. Getting up early stinks. The bus sucks. So does the food.

Sometimes parents hate school too. They hate the schedule it imposes. They hate watching their kids experience the pressure, either of the school work or the social scene.

Why is something imposed that makes children unhappy? Especially for 15,000 hours during what should be a person's happiest years. Would you want to be unhappy? No! Would you purposefully inflict unhappiness on yourself? Hell no!

Have a little empathy for the children. Feel what they feel in going to school. Don't send them somewhere they are near guaranteed to be unhappy.

The argument for family

When kids go to school they are separated from their families for seven or eight hours per day, five days per week. Some kids go to a latchkey type program and might be gone for eleven hours per day! Most people know many families who need to race through every day, left with the scraps of time leftover from the school schedule, racing through a morning routine to get to school or the bus stop and having a brief night together of maybe just a few hours. These few hours might be filled with dinner, homework and getting ready for an early bedtime (so they can be sure to get up the next morning.) This leaves families with just the weekend to spend together, which can be filled with organized sports and dad going golfing

anyway. I've seen families like this. The children place a massive burden on their schedule and they barely get to see them. I wonder why they bothered having children in the first place.

School isolates children from their families and can cripple the relationship children have with their parents and siblings. Children who do not go to school can experience richer family interactions more frequently and on a daily basis.

And it is good for the parents. Can you imagine anyone on their deathbed wishing they had *missed* the majority of time they could have spent with their kids when they were growing up? I can't.

The argument of efficiency and time

Even if we were to concede that the scope of education was the right portfolio of knowledge for everybody (it isn't) most people could obtain it in a much shorter timeframe. After all, the time "on point" in school is only a fraction of the day. Teachers must move at the pace of slower children and must spend their attention divided amongst 20-30 students.

But since the knowledge portfolio is wrong, it means that school is just a massive waste of time and resources pursuing the wrong outcomes. It's an inefficient use of a child's time and energies. It is 15,000 hours of time spent on knowledge they don't need and mostly forget anyways!

In fact, school might be the largest waste of time ever devised by mankind.

The argument for convenience

School life can create a lot of inconveniences. In our neighborhood, most school families have to wake up at 5:30 AM or earlier to catch the 6:30 AM bus. Parents who drive often spend an hour making the commute because of the long drop off lines and traffic. Lunch has to be planned ahead of time. At night, there's more commuting and kids must be in bed early to ensure they can get up the next day. Parents can be completely unprepared for school closing and half days. Parents are often frightened to miss a single day. Then there's homework.

Most families probably don't even consider what they *feel* like doing on any particular day. Monday? You go to school. Tuesday? You go to school. And so on. What if the day is oddly glorious and would be better spent outside at the beach? Nope, school. What if there's an amazing event happening during they day your children should attend? Nope, school. This is a level of inconvenience probably not even actively thought about by most people.

And then everyone has to pack in both errands and recreational activity on the scraps left over, which means the stores, the roads, the parking lots and the recreational spots are jammed at the same time instead of evenly utilized throughout the week.

All of this inconvenience can be avoided by not going to school.

This argument will be easy for many people to toss, though. If you are family with two working parents, then school probably seems like a wonderfully convenient place to dump the kids for most of the week. Free babysitting! It's surely no accident that the school schedule mimics the typical work schedule.

The argument for sleep, sleeping in and staying up

For school children and their families, some stranger – the superintendent – commands that everyone wake up at the same time. And it's often too early for most people.

And because everybody has to get up at the same time, it usually means everybody has to go to bed at basically the same time if one wants a decent chance at getting enough sleep.

Why should a total stranger be able to command you, your children, your spouse, and a couple thousand of your neighbors, when to go to bed and when to get up?

Plus, it's not uncommon for kids, especially teenagers, to not get enough sleep.

With home education, individuals, not unknown, distant superintendents, get to decide when and how much sleep occurs.

The argument against exhaustion

Between waking up too early and having to spend seven to eight hours being consumed with school (including commuting), school can be exhausting. So much so, that it consumes almost any time students would have to pursue subjects that personally interest them. By default, this means that students can generally only learn what is designed in the curriculum and very little else.

The argument for vacation

Even if we concede that school is just, good and necessary, it's bizarre that the superintendent gets to dictate when everyone gets to have a vacation. This creates a ridiculous rush for everybody in a state to go on vacation at the same time. It creates scarcity for plane tickets and hotel rooms, raising prices and reducing availability. It creates traffic jams. Beaches and ski slopes are packed. And don't even try to go to a theme park during these weeks as you'll pay through the nose for the privilege of waiting in lines for 90 minutes per attraction. Who wants to wait in line? It's torture, not vacation.

The rationed vacation time also creates anxiety. Many families have some panic about making sure they enjoy themselves with the little time they have. The massive disappointment when it rains on vacation is partly ignited because the family knows they can't extend it due to scheduling, they know it's going to be months before they are allowed to go again, and it already costs too much.

If school systems were a little sensible in this area, they would at least stagger vacations by region to alleviate the artificial rush and make travel more convenient, affordable and enjoyable for the families it supposedly serves. Or at least introduce some flexibility to take time off instead of instilling panic about students missing assignments or taking tests.

But they don't, and hence we show up and take our breaks when they are commanded of us.

What terrible nonsense. Home educators decide when they want to go on vacation and can pick times that are smart. They also don't have to have a rationed amount of time available to them. If three weeks isn't enough, they can take more.

Or take less. Home school families don't have to pack their family time into a few weeks per year or wait until the school says it is okay to have leisure time. Or feel like they have to "get away" from the pressures and "grind" of the day-to-day. Many homeschool families don't need a lot of vacation. They live it instead.

The argument for having kids around (to benefit adults)

Some people think it's nice to have children in their lives and around the community. Some people feel happy to see the kids playing in the yards and streets, having fun and sometimes shooting some hoops with a dad. Adults also learn from children and can enjoy quality interactions with them.

When kids are locked in the school for the majority of the waking day, there are no kids around.

The argument against boredom

Some have said that the opposite of joy isn't anger, but boredom. Most of school for most people is incredibly boring. It's supposed to be, as it was designed to model the tediousness of factory work. Boredom sucks and nobody wants it. But worse, in school children learn that learning and the subjects they study are inherently boring, potentially forever spoiling learning and these topics.

The argument against peer pressure

Conformity training leads to students not wanting to be different and to gain the mass approval of others. This is peer pressure, and it can force kids into behaviors they don't want and bring feelings of rejection, embarrassment and shame.

Home education doesn't teach conformity and lessens the effects of peer pressure because the groups of people they associate with are voluntary.

The argument against stress and unneeded pressure

School can be an anxiety factory for many students. Students are under constant surveillance and evaluation to perform. Every student is given a grade, typically based on the first five letters, for everything they do. They are forced to take tests. They are told that if they don't get good grades they will not get into a good college, and if they don't go to a good college they won't get a good job. And then they'll be poor and miserable FOREVER.

This constant evaluation has a tendency to put parents at odds against their own children. Bad grades are deserving of punishment and cracking the whip, instead of parents and students working together.

School is famous for social stress e.g., not being teased or bullied, getting into the popular clique, being attractive, having the opposite sex like you, being the right weight, having the cool clothes, etc. Watch any movie or TV show that takes place in a school and these are typically the prevailing themes. All of them can produce stress and unneeded pressure.

Why put this stress on children? An empathetic soul, not wanting stress imposed upon themselves, would insist that children shouldn't experience it either.

The argument for caring and thinking about it

It's too wild of a coincidence that 97% or more of all parents sit down and think hard about how education should be delivered to their children for 13 years and all come to the exact same conclusion: school. This super-majority simultaneously chooses to start schooling at the exact same age and end schooling at the same age. They all choose the same days of the week and the same hours. Uncanny!

It might be because many parents simply don't care or think about it. School is automatic. In most households, I would be surprised if there was more than five or ten minutes of research or critical thinking before the parents arrived at the conclusion that they would send their kids to the closest school when the child turned school-aged.

How much of the curriculum is thought through by parents? How about what the right schedule is? What about if the right people are in charge? How long do they think about which classmates their child should have? The answer is probably zero for much of this population.

It's all done without care or thought for so many people.

As an anecdote, I put my kids in public school without thinking about it. Later, I spent the better part of a year reading books on education before making my choice to take a different route. It took serious contemplation.

Many parents do care about their child's education, but their attention is usually around getting homework done and policing grades. They care about how the student is performing, but never question the techniques, the subjects, the schedules, the people or the approach itself.

This is one of the scarier arguments presented here.

The case against useless credentialing

Most of school seems aimed at the final destination of a diploma, perhaps with some honors. And then as a path to a college, which like school, is solely aimed at providing a degree.

These credentials are signaling less and less in the job marketplace as they are so ubiquitous. People are also less impressed as seemingly anybody, regardless of effort, can seem to earn one. Why should people waste so much time and energy trying to get a near-meaningless credential?

The argument for accelerating, or even skipping, college

It's not uncommon for a home educated teen to begin college, usually through a correspondence, online or community college, well before they are 18, and even finishing a degree before school kids begin. This is likely because they are able to accelerate their "school" learning or skip over parts of it altogether.

Not many teens in public school can make much headway in college before graduating save for a few advanced placement courses. This is probably because they are required to move at the same pace as every other student and don't have the time or energy to pursue extra courses.

Home educated children, having learned the value of self-directed learning, might take a more critical view of college itself. College, after all, mirrors a lot of the same approaches as K-12 education. Empowered with a natural, engaged sense of learning, they may feel more comfortable or more capable of learning without formal college instruction.

The argument for real experience and income

Most kids, teenagers for the most part, are so burdened with the school day and homework, and then general exhaustion from not getting sleep, that having a real job and producing their own income is difficult if not impossible. Real work experience is the most valuable experience for future producers. Nearly every employer favors proven work experience over school experience. This is evidenced by how people format their resumes after they've had a job. Education is regulated to the end of the resume.

Income generation can be important too, providing benefits such as self esteem, self-reliance, responsibility, financial skills, work ethic and, well, the ability to buy stuff.

School robs children the ability to build real work experience and earn income.

The argument for job or career preparedness

With more time to work and gather real-world skills, home educated children can better prepare themselves for fulfilling a job or career upon adulthood (or earlier). Schooled children must spend so much time on abstract, non-vocational learning that even after thirteen years of school and four years of college many are still unprepared to do much in the workforce.

The argument for creating a diverse network

Home educated children, through adult relationships, mixed-aged contacts, real work and community interaction are better able to create diverse networks for learning, projects, hobbies and ultimately work. A network of people a child can build can be hugely valuable over time for jobs, opportunities, etc.

Conversely, a network of all the people from your town and your exact age is less valuable than the more diverse set a child could build on his or her own. Plus, the network built in school is based on arbitrary groupings of people by age and geography, not in mutual interests or in how value can be created and shared. This is the true value of a network. Networks are not merely having lots of random, dead-end acquaintances, but having relationships with people who can exchange knowledge and value.

The argument against extending childhood or postponing adulthood

Over the past decades, there seems to be a push to extend childhood to later and later ages. Many children are shielded from real responsibility through their teen years and even into their college years.

It's not uncommon for adult children (I hate using this term) to return to live with their parents after completing college.

Some children are ready to take on adult responsibilities at a much younger age than the school schedule allows. School's constant training in dependence and helplessness reinforces perpetual childhood. Perhaps one of the most preposterous moments (and this has been made into an Internet meme) is that 17 year olds in high school must still ask for permission to use the bathroom but then a day after graduation must be mature enough to decide what they want to do with their entire lives.

Without the drag of school, young people can mature at their natural rates, and many can become competent, useful adults long before they turn 18.

Arguments for socialization and individuation

Questions about "socialization" are some of the most popular inquiries about home education, typically asked with intentions of criticism. The argument goes that homeschooled kids, locked away in their houses, fed nothing but Jesus and quilting, will fail in basic human-to-human interactions.

The inquiry and criticism has some problems:

- The criticism is based on the fallacy that homeschooled kids don't interact with other people
- The word "socialization" has different meanings, and not all of them are desirable
- If socialization, taken in its most positive meaning, is desired than school may not be the best way to achieve it

First, we should eliminate the idea that homeschoolers will be so socially inept that they would not be able to sustain any sensible human interactions. Like they will fart in elevators, pick their noses at job interviews and wear their pants inside out when they attend a wedding. Homeschooling children learn how to act appropriately in social situations.

Another criticism is that they will not learn how to make friends and interact within large groups of people. Surely some homeschoolers will not be good at this, but sending kids to public schools is no guarantee that they will either.

Homeschool children are exposed to crowds and other people besides their family. In many ways, they get to interact with more people as they attend more diverse activities and are more likely to interact with mixed age groups. They also aren't forced into social situations against their will and are more likely to express emotions more honestly, let down their guard and have to figure out how relationship work from a voluntary perspective.

Another implication of the criticism is that homeschoolers will perform poorly in society. They won't be able pay respect to a boss, won't be able to be obedient in the workplace, won't be able to manage interpersonal conflict, or that they won't be able to withstand the tediousness of dealing with people they don't like.

When socialization means to be an *obedient part of society* it can take on sinister qualities. If to be socialized is to be made subservient, obedient, conformist, apathetic, and compliant workers/consumers,

the socialization is arguably to the detriment, not the benefit, of the child. It's only the bosses and rulers who benefit from this kind of socialization.

Another question may not be "how do we socialize children", but how do we encourage individuation? Individuals are those who can interact with others to negotiate, provide personal value and exchanges, and live firstly for their own rational self-interest.

Lastly, if we take the best, most positive definition of socialization – the ability to communicate and interact with others in positive ways - public school may not be the best method of achieving that. School purposefully smashes groups together through forced association. They arbitrarily divide kids into static same-age groups. They limit free social interaction, limiting it to only scraps of time during recess. Most of the school day kids are to be quiet and are only allowed to talk after raising their hand and asking for permission. The level of judgment is high, pushing kids to not express themselves or show emotion. Cliques are a necessary part of school and not belonging to one makes life difficult. It's also no wonder that bullying arises, given that, like a prison, force becomes the last avenue for social power for some. Their interaction with adults is almost all subordination and many students come to mistrust or despise the adults they interact with at school.

So to wrap up:

- Home education children can interact with others effectively, and maybe more effectively
- The idea that socialization is the act of making people fit obediently into a society may be a gross concept anyways
- School might not be the best place for social interaction anyways

The argument against bullying

Bullies are either abusive jerks or rechannelings of the abuse they receive at home. Or they are the product of forced association in the pressure-filled lock-down that is school, similar to how prisoners often have to dominate peers that aren't in a clique.

Either way, home educated children can easily not experience bullying since they are not forced to associate arbitrarily in a crowd locked up together. They simply do not have to be in the same place as the bullies.

The argument for mixed age groups

Schooled children are segregated into same-age classes (i.e., grades), regardless of their development speed, success with knowledge or special needs. This can be deleterious because it requires children to learn at the same pace regardless of how quickly or slowly they need to progress as an individual. The smart kids get bored, the average kid rides a long, and the slower children become frustrated. Often, the class has to move at the pace of the slower children.

But worse, it denies children the chance to interact with children of all ages. When children interact in mixed age groups, younger children often get to learn from the older children. Older children get to learn how to mentor and support younger children. And then they get to play together as well, all based on

building relationships based on mutual interests, play style, or personalities, not simply when their birth year was.

The argument for adult interaction (to benefit children)

Children can learn a great deal by interacting with a large community of adults, all who may have unique skills and experiences. Some of the adults may have academic knowledge to share (in the five to eight subjects of school), but many more will have knowledge in the hundreds of subjects that make up adults' professions, interests and hobbies.

In schools, children are limited to a fixed number of professionally trained adults, often just two to three adults in elementary school and perhaps seven or so per year in middle/high school. These adults are not presented in a voluntary situation, they are chosen arbitrarily with little student choice. They almost always represent an authority (they are an authority), have a command/control relationship with the student, are put in conflict with the student through the grading and testing system, and are typically forced into many-to-one interactions (i.e., a 30 person class eliminates the opportunity for much one-on-one interaction).

In school, children are robbed of meaningful, voluntary adult relationships. In school, they are fed limited, forced, often spoiled adult interaction.

The argument for health and safety

The chances that your school kids will be gunned down Sandy Hook- or Columbine-style are a million to one. The chances are worse than winning the Powerball lottery. The school bus won't sink through the ice as in the film *The Sweet Hereafter*.

The playground bullies might not beat up your kids, especially if your kid gets good at avoiding certain hallways or areas of the playground. It will just be emotional abuse and stress.

They will though be forced to sit idle at a desk for the majority of the day without exercise. They will eat some of the most horrible food, both in terms of taste and nutrition, ever devised by man (think "pink slime"). They will not get enough sleep. They will probably be so exhausted at the end of the day to desire nothing but to watch television.

Perhaps more tragic is that new pathological mental disorders arise as a result of children not behaving in school. ADHD type drug prescriptions (e.g., Ritalin) are on the rise, with prescription rates rising when school is in session. These drugs are draining many children of their energy, interest and make them mental selves. What's worse is that this drug usage is being encouraged by parents, teachers and doctors.

Taking children out of school can be healthier. As a parent, you can help them make healthy eating decisions and while the public school kids are trapped in their desks, yours can be climbing a tree.

We could almost make the case that kids would be *less* safe out of school with the extra skinned knees and mosquito bites they might suffer running about and not safely secured to a desk.

And maybe the school kids will be the unlucky lottery winners of an Adam Lanza execution. Children in public schools, after all, have already purchased the ticket.

The argument against drug abuse

Children often learn about and experiment with recreational drugs through people at school. Most of the information they are given is from other students who are largely learning on the fly at the same time, hidden away from parental supervision.

In home education, parents can better control children's access to drugs and provide their own education about drug usage according to their values and preferences.

School is no guarantee of turning every student into a drug user, and home education is no guarantee of children not finding drugs, but the home educator likely has the favorable situation.

And, again, school seems to prompt the use of ADHD type drugs more than anything. That's not kids abusing drugs, that's kids being abused with drugs.

The argument for the environment

There's probably not much difference between schoolers and home educators for direct environmental impact as environmental activists would track it, such as carbon footprint, garbage produced, resources consumed, land protected, endangered birds saved, cow farts suppressed, etc.

But home educated children actually have the opportunity to experience more nature and environment because they are not locked away in a cinder block, florescent light-lit room for seven hours a day. They have more opportunity to explore the woods, roll in the grass, observe animals, roam the beach, play at the park and breathe the outdoor air. Some may even garden.

Will this exposure make them appreciate the environment more? I would think so. And if they appreciate it more we could project that they will want to protect it more.

As a wholly personal opinion, I would prefer my kids to develop a *love* of nature vs. developing a *fear* of it being spoiled. The public school approach seems like a horror story of global warming, flooded streets, arid desserts and wiped out animal populations, all the product of human greed, and all viewed from a movie projector in a darkened classroom.

The argument for self-rule, self-control, self-ownership and treating children as free humans

Schools have many features of a prison. As a student, you *have* to be there and follow the teacher's instructions. Actually, the students must obey *any* school personnel's instruction, even the janitor's. You're told when and where to sit and when you are allowed to stand up. You must ask for permission to use the restroom and may be denied it. You are told when to eat, often what to eat and what you are not allowed to eat. You are not permitted to talk freely.

You may not leave the building without permission.

There are penalties for behaving in ways that aren't part of the rules. You're told how to dress (to different degrees). You're told what to do when you go home.

People with dignity are free to do what they wish with their selves. School is an antithesis to this idea. You can't own, rule or control yourself if every move is directed by an order from an external authority. Prisoners aren't free, and neither are students.

The argument for libertarian morality (or the argument against coercion and the initiation of violence)

School violates the non-aggression principle, meaning that it is based on violence and coercion. It is funded by taxes, which is property that is taken by force. Attendance is guaranteed by compulsory attendance laws. Students *have* to go.

School is not a voluntary or peaceful interaction.

Sure, the apple on the teacher's desk or the playful fingerpaintings on the wall don't look violent. But refuse to pay your taxes or disobey truancy laws and you'll get a letter. Then maybe a visit or a court date. Refuse those and people will eventually come with guns to enforce the law. Try to protect yourself and the final outcome could be getting shot.

It saddens me that I have to use the word "libertarian" as a qualifier for "morality", but such is the state of our current nature. Apparently most people believe that the threat of hurting people is a good way to teach little children.

The consequentialist libertarian argument against government effectiveness (i.e., the government is bad at doing things)

The government doesn't have a great track record of being operationally efficient, producing quality outcomes or managing costs very well. It's not a knock on the people who work there, surely they are well intentioned, but they have little incentive to do so.

With little competition, no pricing mechanism, no consumer choices and no cost of failure, schools perform poorly. Teachers with tenure don't get fired, no matter how dismally they perform. Great teachers don't get consistently rewarded for outperforming. Funds are taken from taxes so there is no penalty for providing bad service. Reports of cost-per-student seem to range from \$10,000-\$20,000 per student year, meaning the average class of 25 has a *quarter to half million dollars* to spend on a room, a teacher and some books/crayons. Administration and bureaucracy seem to be always expanding. Standardized testing is the benchmark for what is good school or not, but it poisons the pot. Schools end up chasing the test in order to game performance rankings and ultimately more funding.

It's sheer insanity to trust the same group of reckless strangers responsible for the DMV and the War on Terror to be put in charge of sculpting your children's mind for eight hours a day for thirteen years.

I could go on, but supporters of school make the case for me. It's popular to gripe about how poor schools do and why "we" should fix them. The answer, sadly, is too often to grovel for more money, make school hours longer, apply more testing, change the curriculum (like Common Core standards), or beg the Federal government to do something.

The argument for thrift

In the US, it is not unusual for school districts to budget and spend \$10,000-\$20,000 per student per year. A small town may have 1,000 active students (K-12), meaning that they are expending \$15,000,000 per year doing something that could be basically had for nearly free.

Some, probably many, families may get a bargain out of school, especially if they use it as a free daycare service while both parents go to work. But even if the cost of daycare exceeds the family's per-year property taxes during the time they need it, they still pay property taxes during the decades when the children have grown up. Plus, all of the people who don't (or sadly, can't) have children also pay the taxes for 50 or 60 some years.

School is a giant waste of money.

The argument against human capital

Some would argue that we need school to fulfill the jobs that the economy requires. At the minimum, we hear that kids need to be prepared with the basic skills to populate the workforce. Sometimes we hear that we aren't keeping up with Eastern nations on science, engineering and technology skills, so we need to encourage more STEM education. Education is the answer to design an optimal workforce. It's a human capital strategy to satisfy the aggregate economy.

Maybe it is true that schooling helps fulfill the human capital needed for an aggregate economy. I'd probably agree that it is. But we're not an aggregate economy. We're individuals first. I don't want to be a pre-designed cog in somebody else's machine. I don't want that for my kids. Neither should you. No one should care if the aggregate GDP or NYSE ticker goes up or down at the expense of our own lives. We don't need school to create human capital.

In fact, it's insulting to call people human capital in this regard, as useful as it is.

The argument against school and its true function

School isn't designed to educate children. It's designed to indoctrinate them, make them obedient and to create apathy. It's to enable constant surveillance and to foster dependency. School is purposefully tedious, making kids fill out worksheets all day while waiting for permission to use the bathroom.

Historically, the technique of public education was designed by the Prussians in the 1800s to ensure that soldiers would be obedient to the state and not abandon their place on the battlefield, which would be a natural thing to do if they were not conditioned to obey. It later was brought to America by Horace Mann and was embraced by "robber baron" era industrialists who desired a compliant factory-ready workforce who were conditioned to do simple, repeatable tasks for hours on end.

School is training to create compliant consumers/workers who never question authority.

It may sound nefarious or conspiratorial, so even if one is skeptical that this is the true purpose of school, the effects are still observable. Students largely sit in desks for seven to eight hours a day to do dull and

repeatable tasks. They are to obey authority for the entire day. They must ask for permission to do anything. They are fed the same raft of information as everyone else. School is obedience training, a 13-year program designed to instruct that life is tedious and grueling by nature.

Even if we were to value the *knowledge* that students learn during school, is it worth the painful method? Is it worth the obedience training that comes with it? I don't believe so.

The argument against poverty and prison

Could home education reduce poverty and reduce prison populations?

Maybe or maybe not. But we can see how well decades of public school is doing against these goals. Implicit to a school's stated mission is to prepare children to be productive, intelligent and responsible citizens who can obtain good jobs and contribute.

Has schooling, which is universally inflicted on our poor and often at huge expense, curbed poverty or crime in the past 100 years? Or do the poor seem to remain systemically poor and prison populations rising? Home education probably couldn't perform worse, and home educated children can have many more opportunities to learn responsibility, self-reliance and real-world skills if they wish. The skills they learn can be a set that is custom to their needs, not the canned factory stuff school students must endure.

Think of it another way. Consider a framework like Maslow's hierarchy of needs where first a human must satisfy their basic material needs (food, shelter, safety) before pursuing higher-order emotional and intellectual needs. A poor person, by definition, has fewer basic material needs that are met and should probably be spending their time filling that gap first before chasing higher-order intellectual needs.

But school doesn't allow this. It assumes that if we cram abstract knowledge (e.g., literature, math, history, science) into their heads the gap will disappear magically. It might make more sense to let poorer people learn work skills when they are younger, and once they have rectified their basic needs, they can then pick up the higher-order knowledge they would like to pursue.

Let me restate this radical, "bigoted" idea: if we insist that poor children must be forced to learn something, first teach poor people how to not be poor, then, later, maybe teach them about early American history, how to calculate the circumference of a circle, 19th century English literature, sentence diagraming, etc.

It's like there is somebody trapped in a deep well and what he desperately and immediately needs is instruction on how to build a ladder. But instead of giving him that, we send down a confusing book with a map of Europe, some 500-year-old plays, a periodic table of the elements, and a dodge ball.

Maybe this has a bad aesthetic or seems unfair. But is it more fair to delude them and ourselves with a deceitful aesthetic that abstract knowledge is more important than obtaining basic needs?

This approach would require discrimination, meaning treating different people differently. Or letting students discriminate about what they want or need to learn. This is antithetical to schooling where everybody gets the same thing regardless of might be of value to them. People are so terrified of discrimination that we'd prefer to maintain sameness at all costs instead of throwing the most needy the lifeline they need.

But, I'm not advocating that we force poor people to learn anything. After all, if the boring, dumbing-down, disengaging school experience is deleterious to the flourishing of affluent and middle-class children, it's probably doubly so for poor children. Why cripple the abilities of lower income children? Why punch them when they are down?

Lots of things contribute to poverty and crime, including family, culture, government, laws, luck, individual traits, circumstances, genetics, race, geography and others. But school is in the mix.

The argument against the military, war and soldiering

It's hard to imagine why so many young people in the US think it is a good idea to join an organization whose main value proposition is to go kill people and potentially be shot at and killed. This is the US military and it is strangely effective at recruiting people to do just these things.

This is largely because students are indoctrinated with state education, taught that wars are glorious and just, that borders matter, that authority and might are supreme, and that it is heroic to be a soldier. Through this training, the school outputs humans ready to be recruited to do some of the most evil, disgusting tasks the world has ever seen.

Plus, many students find themselves pressured to find some path to adulthood, such as college, because they are so ill equipped to find real work and manage adulthood coming out of school. Those that don't take the college path often take the military as a replacement. They may not even want to murder people or be murdered, but they see it as the only viable path to training, occupation and adulthood.

If the indoctrination system is removed, i.e., public schooling, the military would have a much harder time recruiting soldiers. The government itself would have a much harder time convincing the population that war is a just or necessary activity. With the end of the viability of an armed force and a distaste for mass murder, we could hope that the end of the military, war and soldiering would be quick and final.

The argument for ending public education

Within this article, there are plenty of arguments against compulsory public school, so many, it hardly seems worthwhile to reform or reinvent it. Why not get rid of it altogether?

Getting rid of public education will probably never happen with a principled politician or through voting. Public education is a predatory function of the government, so no political action will likely ever change it, much less cut the whole thing out.

But if people stop going, if people start realizing the benefits of not going, if knowledge and learning flourish without it, if family improves, if convenience and freedom are realized, if the institution becomes increasingly irrelevant and vilified, if people turn to that draconian cinderblock prison with repulsion and disdain, the institution will die. People will simply stop funding it. And politicians, lagging indicators always, will sign off on its final euthanizing.

The bureaucrats and administrators will then have to get jobs based on voluntary exchange and value provision. The teachers will need new work too, with the best getting pay raises in a free market of education.

The argument for limitless, flourishing education options

Despite calling them evil, the government loves monopolies. Government likes to regulate schooling, even private schooling, to be sure that it meets its objectives. This monopoly has pushed out the thousands or millions of educational alternatives that might exist without them. Even if government hasn't made other options outright *illegal*, it has monopolized the students' time and the parents' educational budget through compulsory attendance laws and taxation. Any possible free market education innovations have had their potential demand imprisoned by the public education system.

Probably most importantly, the primary *customers* of education products and services would be the student and the parent. In today's model, there is no price or selection mechanism between student and education provider. Students and parents are not the primary customer that is served. This is the nature of forced revenue and forced attendance. For the most part, bad teachers can't be fired. The motivation of the entire system is backwards and perverted.

What would free market education look like? I don't know. But we can guess that it would be diverse in formats and approaches, offer all sorts of different pricing models, ranging from free to very expensive, would constantly be adopting and pushing technology, would be vetted by customers and competition among vendors, and be custom to each student.

Teachers and lectures could still be part of the mix.

The end of school would put students back in charge of their education, and the market would flourish with limitless, innovative education options.

The argument for ending government

For people who believe the world would be a better place where violence and theft (i.e., Government) were not used to solve complex social problems, a broad adoption of home education is essential.

The end of the state and liberty cannot be achieved through political means. No voting can end it, no elected official will ever undo it. The government's primary objective is to survive and grow, and ending itself would never be in its best interest.

Removing the illusion that it is necessary and non-violent, though, can be achieved if enough people remove themselves from its indoctrination and obedience training program: compulsory public schooling.

In order to force somebody to believe something untrue and immoral, (e.g., for the government tells us that violence is virtue, theft is moral, murder is right, kidnapping is justice, etc.) they need to indoctrinate children, and for a long time. This is how religion is inflicted on children. For example, no fundamentalist Muslim is born with the desire to do a suicide bombing. It takes years of indoctrinating a child to destroy their sense of reason, desire for truth and self-preservation.

Once public school is gone, children – people – will begin thinking for themselves. They will see the government for what it is: coercion. They will begin ignoring it. The appetite to fund it will disappear. The desire to obey will vanish. The efforts to justify it will vaporize. And the institution will wither.

And so will go war. And the military industrial complex. And the banking cartel. And fiat money. And the institutionalized welfare class. And the medical cartel. And corporatism. And the prison system. And the war on drugs. And the pharmaceutical cartel. And so forth.

If we want to end the tyranny of government, we need to take our sweet children out of school. It may be the only way.

The argument for a better society

With children liberated, families reunited, people unhindered, and government minimized or dead, we can all be free. With the weight of war off our backs, we can feel good that we don't promote murder and that we can use those resources for something happy or productive. With taxes now gone, mothers and fathers can return from the office to raise their children. With technology and production unhindered, new wealth and prosperity lifts all boats in the harbor. With truth and personal interests as our guides to knowledge, our minds expand, both in capability and happiness.

Individuals become better, and everybody's better together.

The final personal argument from experimentation and low risk

The final case for home education is the easiest to justify: try it. There's almost no risk. Take a few months or maybe a year and try it out. Don't like it? You can always go back to public school. The administrators will welcome your child back with open arms and gladly tell your children to get back in line and shut their mouths. The public school won't disappear this year or next.

Experiment and see what happens. See if your children and yourself are happier. See if you enjoy more family time and the convenience home education provides. See if engagement and curiosity reemerge.

Just try it. You can do it.

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