Public Education and the Public Good

Overview

1. Values of the public good
2. Visions of public education
3. Implications for public leadership
Values? Whose Values?

Where do you stand?

Allow, limit, or ban the sale of soda, snacks, and fast food?

Adopt a statewide assessment for kindergartners?

Allow parents to home-school their children even if they lack a teaching certificate?
Link teacher pay to student test performance?

Suspend or revoke the driver’s license of teens who drop out of high school?
Teach biology?

1. Evolution
2. Creationism, creation science and intelligent design
3. Teach all

Offer students cash to take advanced placement courses?
Adopt uniforms, a dress code, or individual choice?

Rank students?
Teach sex education?

1. Comprehensive for all age-appropriate students with parental consent
2. Abstinence only
3. No, leave it to parents

Require schools to set aside time for the Pledge of Allegiance?
What are these issues about?

“It’s an odd thing about this universe that, though we all disagree with each other, we are all of us always in the right.”

Values of the Public Good

Liberty
Community
Prosperity
Equality
These values reflect our unique heritage...

And frame our visions for public schools and public education.
Liberty

Legislators propose several education bills aimed at creating more flexible, individualized public schools.
Allow public school teachers to wear faith-based clothing and jewelry

Allow home-schooled students to participate in public school sports and activities
Legislative debate focuses on who should be included
Require social science texts to include study of the role and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans to the economic, political and social development of the state.

Offer employment benefits to domestic partners of employees.
COMMUNITY

Install surveillance cameras in schools
Make chronic truancy and other rules violations a criminal offense

Require teens 18 and younger to take driver education classes before receiving a provisional license
PROSPERITY

Education bill would put teachers who score lowest on performance evaluations first in line for layoffs
Adopt standardized tests for health and sex education

Allow ads in schools to help balance budgets
1 - Name your school
2 - Come up with a slogan, logo, and mascot
3 - What is your school about, what does it do, how does it do it?

**Visions of Public Education**

**LIBERTY**
Freedom, choice, independence, autonomy, mobility, openness, transparency, discretion, individual rights, exceptions, voluntary, opportunity, individuality, privacy, due process, personal responsibility, self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-help, self-governing

**COMMUNITY**
Safety, security, sense of place, belonging, identity, connection, attractive, appealing, welcoming, healthy, preservation, conservation, restoration, tradition, customs, culture, history, legal, religion, the sacred, collective action, social order, moral order, quality of life

**PROSPERITY**
Economy, efficiency, growth, profit, productivity, return on investment, development, incentives, competition, consolidation, centralization, privatization, maximization, commercialization, standardization, performance measurement, benchmarking, market rules, quantity of life, standard of living

**EQUALITY**
Fairness, justice, tolerance, acceptance, diversity, difference, equity, inclusion, representation, compensation, redistribution, equal rights, equal opportunity, equal access, equal treatment, equal results, level playing field
What might a liberty-centered school look like?

What might an equality-centered school look like?
What might a community-centered school look like?

What might a prosperity-centered school look like?
What do competing visions and values mean for our work?

Liberty – freedom, choice, individuality, personal responsibility, self-determination

Community – safety, security, connection, belonging, social and moral order

Prosperity – efficiency, profit, productivity, standardization, return on investment

Equality – fairness, justice, inclusion, equal opportunity, equal treatment

They help us do three things

1. Answer key questions about public schools and public education
2. Understand that our first task is to decide how much of the public good we want public schools to address
3. Recognize that we need each other to forge a collective vision of public education to guide policy choices and decisions
Leadership for the Public Good

We may prefer one value, but there’s always more than one value involved
For example...

Three public leadership challenges

- Ethical – How will I treat other citizens and values?
- Moral – How will I seek the good I like?
- Political – What is the best possible balance we can achieve?
The essential task of public leaders is to make normative or value-based choices on behalf of the public good.