

# 1 Education (Schools and Schooling)

Education is always a hot conversation topic around the water cooler. People care about it. They have opinions about it. They praise it, criticize it, and argue about it.

And while others are talking about education, teachers are living it. They're where the action is.

People don't always agree on educational priorities or what constitutes a good education, but they all agree on its compelling importance. They just express it in different ways.

Following are some of the most interesting and insightful comments on schools and schooling from far-reaching times, places, and vantage points.



A good education is the next best thing to a pushy mother.

—Charles Schulz,  
cartoonist (*Peanuts*)



The schools of the country are its future in miniature.

—Tehyi Hsieh, author  
(*Chinese Epigrams Inside Out*, 1948)



I think education is power.

—Oprah Winfrey, actress, TV talk show host



The good school is that one in which in studying I also get the pleasure of playing.

—Paulo Freire, twentieth century Brazilian educationist



Education is the mother of leadership.

—Wendell L. Willkie, presidential candidate (1940s)



The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone, ultimately, has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone's business.

—Michael Fullan, dean, Ontario Institute  
for Studies in Education, University of Toronto



The essence of our effort to see that every child has a chance must be to assure each an equal opportunity not to become equal, but to become different.

—John Fischer



There's something special about school, and it's something that needs to be encouraged more than it is.

—Terrence E. Deal,  
University of Southern California



## 6 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, &amp; ANECDOTES

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

—G. K. Chesterton, British writer and critic



Good schools, like good families, celebrate and cherish diversity.

—Deborah Meier, educator



Public education is at the heart of what America does for the common good. Well-educated children and teens are an asset to all of society; everyone should contribute through taxes to the common goal of ensuring that education.

—Editorial, Minneapolis  
*Star Tribune*, June 20, 2004



If we're serious about education in this country, we need to start giving teachers a living wage for their inspiring and tough work. If we're not serious about education in this country, we need to get serious.

—Daniel Handler, aka Lemony Snicket, author



Education is more than a luxury; it is a responsibility that society owes itself.

—Robin Cook, doctor and author (*Coma*, 1977)



Education is the vaccine for violence.

—Edward James Olmos, actor



If a nation expects to be ignorant and free . . . it expects what never was and will never be.

—Thomas Jefferson, U. S. president,  
Declaration of Independence author



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I don't think people who haven't worked in schools can comprehend the intensity of the work, the emotional involvement, the nonstop demands.

—Susan Moore-Johnson,  
professor, Harvard University



In short, my little school, like the great World, is made up of Kings, Politicians, Divines, L.D. (LL.Ds), Fops, Buffoons, Fiddlers, Sycophants, Fools, Coxcombs, Chimney sweepers, and every other Character drawn in History or seen in the World.

—John Adams, second president  
of the United States reflecting on  
his early years as a schoolmaster



The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.

—Sydney Jo Harris, syndicated columnist



The school is not there to raise your children.

—Elinor Burkett, author-teacher



As things are now, education is so cluttered and tangled up with a thousand senseless notions and stupidities that the task of reformation is almost a superhuman one.

—Walt Whitman, poet



When you ain't got no education, you just gotta use your brain.

—Kemmons Wilson, high school  
dropout and founder of Holiday Inn



8 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, & ANECDOTES

Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.

—Robert Frost, poet



The secret of education is respecting the pupil.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, author,  
minister (father of transcendentalism)



We all talk about how education is a priority. We all know it is, in fact, the basis of our future, yet we pay teachers like sh—t.

—Stephen Blake, California legislative consultant



He who opens a school door closes a prison.

—Victor Hugo, French writer



No teachers or administrator ever has to apologize for asking for money for education. If the community offered, the request would never have to be made.

—Noah ben Shea, poet, lecturer,  
philosopher, and best-selling author



Education is the transmission of civilization.

—H. G. Wells, British science fiction author



What a sculpture is to a block of marble; education is to a human soul.

—Joseph Addison, English essayist



Educated men are as much superior to uneducated men as the living are to the dead.

—Aristotle, Greek philosopher,  
scientist, writer, and teacher



Education makes a people easy to lead but difficult to drive; easy to govern but impossible to enslave.

—Edward Young



Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

—Earl Warren, Chief Justice, unanimous  
opinion of the Supreme Court in *Brown  
vs. Board of Education*, May 17, 1954



Education is leading human souls to what is best and making what is best of them.

—John Ruskin, British writer and critic



Sometimes, the hardest part of learning new things is unlearning old ways.

—Phillip C. McGraw (Dr. Phil),  
TV talk show host and family counselor



The public, by and large, supports public education, but a number of the policymakers do not. I'm not a conspiracy theorist; I've never been to Roswell, New Mexico (where those aliens crash-landed, in UFO mythology). But the politicians who are beating up on us say we're failing. And, by their actions, they can set the system up to fail.

—David Jennings, interim  
superintendent, Minneapolis, MN



10 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, & ANECDOTES

Education is learning what you didn't know you didn't know.

—Daniel J. Boorstin,  
Pulitzer prize winner, author



A good school is the price of peace in the community.

—Ursula Franklin, founder,  
Ursula Franklin Academy



Education has really one basic factor, a sine qua non—you must want it.

—George Edwards Woodberry



Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.

—John F. Kennedy, U. S. president



A good deal of education consists of unlearning.

—Mary McCarthy, author



Upon the subject of education, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people may be engaged in.

—Abraham Lincoln, U. S. president



Today's schools look much like Ford in 1926. The products they produce—student achievement levels—are not worse than they were 20 years ago . . . slightly better. But in the 20 years, the job market has changed radically. Just as the Model T that was not good enough in 1926, the education that

was adequate for high-wage employment in 1970 is no longer adequate today.

—Murrane E. Levy, author, 1996



The gains of education are never really lost.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, U. S. president



Any place that anyone can learn something useful from someone with experience is an educational institution.

—Al Capp, cartoonist



*Ancora Imparo.* (I am still learning.)

—Michelangelo at age 87, Italian sculptor and artist



Above all we take pride in the education of our children.

—Josephus, Jewish general and historian



Nine-tenths of education is encouragement.

—Anatole France, Nobel Prize-winning author



Public education is the link between our nation and our dream of liberty and justice for all.

—Elaine Griffin, National Teacher of the Year, 1995



Education is forcing abstract ideas into concrete heads.

—Unknown





## 12 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, &amp; ANECDOTES

Schools are like a jigsaw puzzle . . . each piece has a unique design and cut that ensures just the right place to fit within the puzzle. Each morning, staff members . . . provide just the right place for every student to fit safely and securely.

—Karen Hegeman, author



The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future in life.

—Plato, Greek philosopher



There is no royal road to learning.

—Euclid, third-century Greek mathematician



We might stop thinking of school as a place, and begin to believe it is basically relationships . . .

—George Dennison



We have to abandon the idea that schooling is something restricted to youth. How can it be, in a world where half the things a man knows at 20 are no longer true at 40—and half the things he knows at 40 hadn't been discovered when he was 20.

—Arthur C. Clarke, science fiction author



The main purpose of education is to pass on the inherited wisdom of the race.

—John Adams, second president  
of the United States



Establishing lasting peace is the work of education, all politics can do is keep us at war.

—Maria Montessori, early childhood education innovator, founder of worldwide Montessori schools



[An] interest in education is one we could easily afford right now.

—Rev. Jesse Jackson, political and civil rights activist



The schools aren't what they used to be and never were.

—Will Rogers, humorist



Education is not filling a pail but the lighting of a fire.

—William Butler Yeats, Irish writer



You can get all A's and still flunk life.

—Marian Wright Edelman, author and founder of the Children's Defense Fund



To remove ignorance is an important branch of benevolence.

—Ann Plato, African American poet, essayist, and teacher



To me education is a leading out of what is already there in the pupil's soul.

—Muriel Spark, author



A good education is another name for happiness.

—Ann Plato, African American poet, essayist, and teacher



14 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, & ANECDOTES

Education is hanging around until you've caught on.

—Robert Frost, poet



If every day in the life of a school could be the last day but one, there would be little fault to find with it.

—Stephen Leacock, Canadian  
economist and humorist



Education happens when hope exceeds expectation.

—Andy Hargreaves and  
Michael Fullan, educator-authors



Education is the best provision for old age.

—Aristotle, Greek philosopher,  
scientist, writer, and teacher



Changing a school is like moving a cemetery.

—Unknown



America's schools miraculously have maintained and improved achievement during the last 25 years.

—David C. Berliner,  
Professor of Education,  
University of Arizona



It is not who you attend school with but who controls the school you attend.

—Nikki Giovanni, African American poet,  
essayist, and children's writer



Ignorance is no excuse—it's the real thing.

—Irene Peter, author



Without education, you're not going anywhere in this world.

—Malcolm X, civil rights activist



That's what education means—to be able to do what you've never done before.

—George Herbert Palmer,  
American scholar and educator



Education is the chief defense of nations.

—Edmund Burke, British  
politician, writer, and orator



Education: The path from cocky ignorance to miserable uncertainty.

—Mark Twain, author,  
lecturer, and humorist



The public schools are America's children and require the continuing encouragement, nurture, and support of America's people.

—Ira Singer, professor, Hofstra University



Education—whether the object is children or adults, individuals or an entire people—lies in creating motivation.

—Simone Weil,  
French mystic philosopher



## 16    INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, &amp; ANECDOTES

No one can “get” an education, for of necessity education is a continuous process.

—Louis L’Amour, American novelist



[My family] believed in the public schools because they believed in a community. . . . My grandmother said, “Don’t be a 10-dollar haircut on a 25-cent head.” You avoided that by going to school and paying attention.

—Garrison Keillor, public radio humorist and writer



*Non schola sed vita decimos.* (Only the educated are free.)

—Epictetus, stoic Greek philosopher



A good education is not so much one which prepares a man to succeed in the world, as one which enables him to sustain a failure.

—Bernard Iddings Bell,  
chaplain, University of Chicago



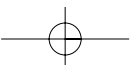
If there were no schools to take the children away from home part of the time, the insane asylum would be full of mothers.

—Edgar Watson Howe,  
editor, essayist, and novelist



This classroom welcomes all, embraces chaos, supports everyone, and hopes that you find yourself better for having been here.

—Sally Huss, first-grade  
teacher, Minneapolis, MN



Excellence in education is the key to our nation's future. We must empower all our students with the best schools and guidance possible . . . we have a sacred obligation to put our children's needs first.

—Bill Clinton, U. S. president



In large states public education will always be mediocre, for the same reason that in large kitchens the cooking is usually bad.

—Friedrich Nietzsche,  
German philosopher



If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you're planning for a decade, plant trees; if you're planning for a lifetime, educate people.

—Chinese proverb



The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.

—B. B. King, musician



I want to thank God I live in a country where, despite so much rampant selfishness, the public schools still manage to produce young men and women ready to voluntarily risk their lives in places like Iraq and Afghanistan to spread the opportunity of freedom and to protect my own . . . even though so many days in so many ways we really don't deserve them.

—Thomas L. Friedman,  
*New York Times* columnist and  
Pulitzer Prize-winning author



## 18    INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, &amp; ANECDOTES

More money is put into prisons than in schools. That, in itself, is the description of a nation bent on suicide.

—Jonathan Kozol, Rhodes Scholar, best-selling author, educator, and child advocate



Education: A succession of eye-openers each involving the repudiation of some previously held belief.

—George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright



Schoolmasters and parents exist to be grown out of.

—John Wolfenden, author



My daddy used to ask us whether the teacher had given us any homework. If we said no, he'd say, "Well, assign yourself."

—Marian Wright Edelman, author, founder of the Children's Defense Fund



I call it "Kentucky Fried Schooling." Every school is like a franchise with its own separate sense of responsibility. But are you being empowered on the unessentials . . . rather than the things that really matter.

—Andy Hargreaves, Boston College educator-author



We can't select our students. We have to take anyone who comes through the door. These are not children who go to charter schools. But our country was founded on public education. We shouldn't do anything to erode that.

—Gertrude Flowers Barwick, principal, Holland School (Minneapolis, MN)



Schools need not be merely a place where big people who are learned teach little people who are learners.

—Roland S. Barth, educational consultant, author,  
founder of Harvard Principal Center, and avid sailor



What we want for our children . . . we should want for their teachers; that schools be places of learning for both of them, and that such learning be suffused with excitement, engagement, passion, challenge, creativity, and joy.

—Andy Hargreaves,  
Boston College, educator-author



Verily, you have more need of a good education than to win silver and gold.

—Ali ibn Abi Talib, *Islamic Maxims for All*



My education was the liberty I had to read indiscriminately and all the time, with my eyes hanging out.

—Dylan Thomas, Welsh poet



Education is the passport to the future, for the future belongs to those who prepare for it.

—Malcolm X, civil rights activist



They know enough who know how to learn.

—Henry Adams, historian (autobiographer)



Education is the process through which we discover that learning adds quality to our lives.

—William Glasser, educator-author





## 20 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, &amp; ANECDOTES

Wisdom is not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sand pile at Sunday school.

—Robert Fulghum, author



Sign on a high school bulletin board: “Free every Mon. thru Fri.—knowledge. Bring your own containers.”

—E. C. McKenzie, American humorist



Public schools are under unceasing attack, tax money is being channeled to competing schools—some of which operate with laughingly little oversight—and the best and brightest are abandoning ship. And “No Child Left Behind?” It’s a joke.

—Nick Coleman, *Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist



The problem with American education is a low ceiling of expectations. We have built schools that demand too little.

—Carroll Campbell, governor, South Carolina



Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity.

—Aristotle, Greek philosopher, scientist, writer, and teacher



If we force schools to do everything to everybody, can we protest when they don’t do anything very well?

—Elinor Burkett, author-teacher



The classroom and the teacher occupy the most important part, the most important position of the human fabric.

—Unknown



True education makes for inequality: the inequality of individuality, the inequality of success, and the glorious inequality of talent, of genius.

—Felix E. Schelling, American educator



I look for a day when education will be like the landscape, free for all . . . the private school, the private art gallery have got to go. We want no excellence that is not for all.

—Elbert Hubbard, author-publisher



Education is too important to be left solely to educators.

—Francis Keppel, businessman and author



Education is not a product: mark, diploma, job, money—in that order. It is a process—a never-ending one.

—Bel Kaufman, German-born American novelist and New York City school teacher for 20 years.



Education is teaching children to take pleasure in the right things.

—Aristotle, Greek philosopher, scientist, writer, and teacher



It is in fact a part of the function of education to help us escape . . . from the intellectual and emotional limitations of our time.

—T. S. Eliot, poet



We class schools, you see, into four grades: Leading School, First-Rate School, Good School, and School.

—Evelyn Waugh, author



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To furnish the means of acquiring knowledge is . . . the greatest benefit that can be conferred on mankind.

—John Quincy Adams, U. S. president



Our best chance for happiness is education.

—Mark Van Doren,  
professor, poet, and critic



Without teaching, there can be no learning. And without learning, there can be no advancement; not for individuals and not for society as a whole. Education is so important that this (almost) goes without saying.

—Randy Howe, special  
education teacher and writer



Among the many purposes of schooling, four stand out to us as having special moral value: to love and care, to serve, to empower, and, of course, to learn.

—Andy Hargreaves and  
Michael Fullan, educator-authors



The results of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.

—Aristotle, Greek philosopher,  
scientist, writer, and teacher



Schools are change prone, but they are also change inept.

—Phillip C. Schlechty, founder,  
Center for Leadership in School Reform



Abraham Lincoln once said, “He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help.” So today, I say to critics of public education:

When you see something wrong, have the heart to help. But if you don't have the heart, please just get out of the way and let the rest of us get on with the job of improving our schools.

—Richard C. Riley, former U. S. Secretary of Education



The principle goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done—men who are creative, inventive, and discoverers.

—Jean Piaget, Swiss developmental psychologist



The elementary school must assume as its sublime and most solemn responsibility the task of teaching every child to read. Any school that does not do that has failed.

—William J. Bennett, former U. S. Secretary of Education, National "Drug Czar," and author



Arguably, the alternative to a student-centered classroom today isn't one that is teacher-centered but one that is legislature-centered.

—Alfie Kohn, educational theorist



A liberal education is at the heart of a civil society and at the heart of a liberal education is the act of teaching.

—A. Bartlett Giamatti, Yale University professor and former major league baseball commissioner



Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery.

—Horace Mann, American educator



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Education is the companion which no future can depress, no crime can destroy, no enemy can alienate, and no despotism can enslave.

—Ropo Oguntimehin



Learning is good in and of itself . . . the mother of the Jewish ghettos of the east would pour honey on a book so that the children would know that learning is sweet. And the parents who settled hungry Kansas would take their children in from the fields when a teacher came.

—George H. W. Bush, U. S. president  
and father of a U. S. president



If education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it.

—Maria Montessori, early childhood education  
innovator, founder of worldwide Montessori schools



These days, however, public education is under an all-out attack by forces that cynically want to use public funds to undermine public education.

—Nick Coleman, *Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist



At the desk where I sit I have learned one great truth. The answer for all national problems—the answer for all the problems of the world—comes in a single word. That word is “education.”

—Lyndon B. Johnson, U. S. president



There was, they argue, a time when our schools were better. Nonsense! There are more good schools today than at any

time in the past. If there are also more bad schools it is because there are more schools trying to educate children who, in the good old days, would have been working in factories and sweat shops.

—Phillip Schlechty, author and founder,  
Center for Leadership in School Reform



Education stands firmly as the cornerstone of our great nation . . . their dedication and tireless efforts put forth by our educators to enhance the learning process is essential to the growth and prosperity of our communities and our nation.

—Tom Ridge, first director of U. S. Homeland Security



It is not the IQ but the I Will that is most important in education.

—Anonymous



I read Shakespeare and the Bible and I can shoot dice. That's what I call a liberal education.

—Tallulah Bankhead, actress



The best thing for being sad, replied Merlin . . . is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lay awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins . . . you may see the world devastated by evil lunatics . . . there is only one thing for it then—to learn.

—T. H. White, author of *The  
Once and Future King*



Our schools no longer function primarily to teach . . . [Their] new role is best described as an amalgam of past surrogate

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parent, part chemical dependency clinic, part violence prevention center, and part drug enforcement agency.

—Gary J. Gustafson, small  
business owner and former teacher



Education is not to reform students or amuse them or to make them expert technicians. It is to unsettle their minds, widen their horizons, inflame their intellects, teach them to think straight if possible.

—Robert M. Hutchins, professor,  
dean, and president, University of Chicago



We're busy trying to figure out how to export democracy around the world. I'll tell you how. Give them a good public school system . . . when we're talking about why there's still democracy in this country after 200-plus years, it's no small part because we've had a public school system.

—David Jennings, interim  
superintendent, Minneapolis, MN



### An Old Man's Thought of School

And I see, these sparkling eyes,  
Those stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,  
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,  
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,  
On the soul's voyage.  
Only a lot of boys and girls?  
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?  
Only a public school?  
Ah more, infinitely more,  
And you America,  
Cast you the real reckoning for the present?

The lights and shadows of your future, good or evil?  
To girlhood, boyhood look, the teacher and the school.

—Walt Whitman, American poet (written for the  
inauguration of a public school in Camden, NJ, in 1874)



Public instruction should be the first object of government.

—Napoleon Bonaparte,  
military strategist, emperor of France



Everything America is or ever hopes to be depends on what  
happens in our school's classroom.

—Frosty Troy, editor, *Oklahoma Observer*



When I was a boy on the Mississippi River, there was a  
proposition for a township there to discontinue public schools  
because they were too expensive. An old farmer spoke up and  
said if they stopped building schools they would not save any-  
thing, because every time a school was closed a jail had to be  
built.

—Mark Twain, author, lecturer, and humorist



As someone who has had the benefit of a Park High educa-  
tion and also sent his own daughters to public school, I know  
all too well how valuable a quality public school system can  
be. Our public schools are the backbone of our country. They  
bring together the fireman's daughter with the business-  
man's son, children of all races, creeds, and color. And the  
best of those schools forge these different strands into  
communities.

—Thomas L. Friedman, *New York Times* columnist  
and Pulitzer Prize-winning author





28    INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES, NOTES, & ANECDOTES

There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny . . . it is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape.

—Tom Brokaw, TV news anchor and author

