

Sign In Register Print Subscription Conversations Today's Paper

Go

POLITICS OPINIONS LOCAL SPORTS National World Business Investigations L

Make us your start page



Washington, D.C. 53° Light Rain Personalize

D.C. Maryland Virginia Crime Education On Faith/Local Obituaries Traffic & Commuting W

In the News MoCo big-box bill Skyland Wal-Mart Electrocutation Food truck explosion Dupor



**Online MBA**  
Earn Your Top Ranked MBA in 19 Months



# The Answer Sheet

A School Survival Guide for Parents (And Everyone Else)

In-depth coverage: [Education Page](#) | [Why Read The Answer Sheet?](#) | [RSS](#) | [Jay Mathews's Class Struggle](#) »

## FROM ABC TO PHD

*"It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education."*  
-- Einstein Learn what's really happening in the world of education with veteran education writer Valerie Strauss and her guests.

## FAVORITE POSTS

[Turn middle school into "boot camp for life"](#)

[Myths of standardized testing](#)

[Take this 1931 8th grade test](#)

[Dogs: An unusual guide to school reform](#)

[Darling-Hammond: U.S. vs other nations](#)

[Matt Damon's smart speech to teachers](#)

## THINGS YOU NEED TO

Posted at 04:00 AM ET, 10/04/2011

## Why public education must be preserved

By [Valerie Strauss](#)

*This was written by Peggy Zugibe, a member of the Haverstraw-Stony Point (N.Y.) Board of Education. She is also a member of the Rockland Board of Cooperative Educational Services and a member of the board of directors of the New York State School Boards Association.*

By Peggy Zugibe

People often ask me why I'm a school board member. To be sure, it is an unpaid and largely thankless job. You make decisions that affect people's wallets and their children, and emotions can run high. No matter what forms of academic progress our students achieve, some will say [our schools are failing](#) and call for radical changes.

But I love being a school board member because I believe in public education. I believe that all of us associated with public schools — school board members, administrators, teachers, students and involved parents and community members — are working to preserve one of our nation's greatest assets.



Th

1

2

3

4

5

**KNOW**

- 1 [Major National Research Council report: Test-based incentives don't produce real student achievement](#)
- 2 [The Perry-Obama education fight](#)
- 3 [What 'Superman' got wrong — point by point](#)

**MORE TO READ**

[D.C. Schools Insider Class Struggle](#)  
[College, Inc.](#)  
[Campus Overload](#)

**SUBSCRIBE**

 [Select ...](#)

**SEARCH THIS BLOG****RECENT POSTS**

[Gingrich on school and work: More than a bad idea](#)  
[The value of a veteran teacher](#)  
[Common Core standards pose dilemmas for early childhood](#)  
[Kansas Gov. Brownback's apology to tweeting student](#)  
[Should tweeting teen apologize to Kansas governor?](#)

**Entries By Category**

[Achievement gap](#)  
[Anthony Cody](#)  
[Bullying](#)  
[Charter schools](#)  
[College Admissions](#)  
[D.C. Schools](#)  
[Diane Ravitch](#)  
[Guest Bloggers](#)

Our Founding Fathers believed in public education. In 1785, John Adams wrote, "*The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it. There should not be a district of one mile square, without a school in it, not founded by a charitable individual, but maintained at the public expense of the people themselves.*"

In the 1800s, when our country took in more immigrants and it became more diverse, education reformers saw public education as a means of creating productive citizens, ending poverty and crime and unifying an increasingly diverse population. Those societal goals are as relevant today as they were then.

Polls show that the American people value public education.

But the current political climate is downright hostile to public education. [Teachers](#) are viewed as [underperforming](#), administrators as overpaid and school boards as overly contentious if not dysfunctional. In certain cases, the criticism might have merit.

But overall, schools and school boards do vital work. This is what democracy looks like.

Political scientist Benjamin Barber has argued that our public schools don't merely serve the public but actually create the public: "Public schools are not merely schools for the public, but schools of publicness: institutions where we learn what it means to be a public and start down the road toward common national and civic identity."

As a nation, we need to remind ourselves of the value of public education. This has been recognized by national education organizations such as the [American Association of School Administrators](#), which has a terrific campaign called "[Stand Up for Public Education.](#)"

Also, the Center on Educational Policy has a great publication called [Why We Still Need Public Schools](#) that covers the history of public education and explains how public schools are linked to the common good. It cites six missions that our country has expected public education to fulfill. Our schools:

\*Provide universal access to free education.

\*Guarantee [equal opportunities](#) for all children.

\*Unify a diverse population.

\*Prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society.

