

U.S. Department of Education: Parents Are Support Staff

On Friday, the U.S. Department of Education released a [document](#) detailing ways parents can foster a better education for their child.

Upon the release of the document, Secretary of Education [Arne Duncan declared](#):

“I have never met a parent who doesn’t want the best for their child. However, it can be hard for families to know how to support their child’s education. Engaging with their educators is a good place to start. This tool provides families with questions to ask to work with educators to ensure schools are providing all students with an education that will prepare them for college and careers.”

Encouraging parents to be involved in the education of their children is certainly a worthy goal. But in reading through the document, I noticed that parents were treated as the support staff in their child’s education, and not as the primary decision-makers.

Furthermore, the education plan advanced by the government primarily focuses on the importance of tests, career preparation, and participation in a fair, equal environment.

Contrast these education goals with those of one who first shaped American government. According to John Adams, parents are not the “support staff” in the education of children; instead, Adams assumes they have the primary responsibility for such a great task. And the main goal of that education is not to ensure that

children can pass tests, or prepare for a career, or even participate in a fair and equitable society. The goal is to train them in virtuous living:

“The Education of our Children is never out of my Mind. Train them to Virtue, habituate them to industry, activity, and Spirit. Make them consider every Vice, as shamefull [sic] and unmanly: fire them with Ambition to be usefull [sic]-make them disdain to be destitute of any usefull [sic], or ornamental Knowledge or Accomplishment. Fix their Ambition upon great and solid Objects, and their Contempt upon little, frivolous, and useless ones. ... Every Decency, Grace, and Honesty should be inculcated upon them.”

Perhaps society would be better off if the government stepped back and recognized that parents are the primary and best educators of their children?

[Image Credit](#)