

# Education in Connecticut

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Education in Connecticut has a long and distinguished history. It is a distinguished history in good measure because of the Puritan foundations of Connecticut education. To understand the educational goals of Connecticut's seventeenth-century Puritan settlers, one must know something of their attitude toward childrearing. The Puritans sought to mold functioning, obedient members of society in order to perpetuate Puritan religious beliefs as well as to reinforce the Puritan social system. It was essential, therefore, that all members of their society be literate in order to know the principles of the Puritan faith. These were to be found in the books most highly regarded by the Puritans—the Bible and the catechism. Both books symbolized the Puritan child's religious heritage as well as his introduction to the education of his faith.

Prior to 1650 the first schools were voluntary, supported by a town's ecclesiastical society. Both girls and boys attended. The teacher may have been an educated person, a widow, older woman (dame), or a person waiting for something better to come along. Teaching was not regarded as a high calling, a state of affairs which did not change until the mid-nineteenth century.

The curriculum of the early New England schools was fairly standard and generally followed that of England. Children probably learned to read by first studying the alphabet and syllables from a hornbook or alphabet book, then proceeded to a catechism, primer, or Psalter. The latter three set forth the fundamentals of Puritan religious belief. Children were expected to memorize answers to religious questions. Writing and ciphering were probably taught from texts such as Edward Cocker's *The Tutor to Writing and Arithmetic* (1664). Much of the educational material as well as religious literature available, such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684), Lewis Bayly's *Practise of Pietie* (1658), and Michael Wigglesworth's *The Day of Doom* (1662), were read aloud and in groups to the degree that they passed into the oral tradition.

If a boy showed promise and/or his family had means, he could attend a Latin grammar school, such as the one founded in New Haven Colony in 1642. These schools were more academically based than the voluntary schools and offered a classical curriculum. From there a student might go on to study at

the new college in Massachusetts at Cambridge, especially if he intended to become a minister.

The practice of voluntary education in many towns in both the Connecticut and New Haven colonies paved the way for a general educational policy in the Connecticut Code of 1650. The Code of 1650 was especially important in the evolution of education. It enumerated two principles upon which Connecticut's present school system is founded: first, that the state should compel parents (and masters) to educate their children (and apprentices), and second, that public moneys, raised by taxes, may be used for education. A town of fifty families was ordered to employ a teacher to instruct the community children to read and to write. When a town reached a hundred families, it was to establish a "Grammar Schoole" for more advanced learning. While the religious motive for this law was substantial, the law was also dictated by the economic concern that each child be trained either in husbandry or in a trade.

Even though the educational provisions of the Code of 1650 were strongly stated, the provisions were difficult to implement without definite funding arrangements for education. By 1677 the educational impact of the Code of 1650 was diluted when the General Court gave the local towns broad discretion in the proportion of their taxes which had to be allocated to the support of schools. Further, after 1686, popular as well as financial support for Connecticut's four Latin grammar schools declined. The result was that only the grammar schools in New Haven and Hanford were continued. A study of the General Assembly at the turn of the century showed that many people were unable to read and write, thus revealing how poorly earlier acts of the legislature were being enforced.

The quality of education in the colony did not widely improve through the eighteenth century. Through a series of statutes passed from 1702 to 1795, most notably those of 1766 and 1774, the colony allowed for the decentralization of its school system, thus relegating the financial responsibility to local governments. By these various acts of legislation, therefore, the town became the most important unit affecting education. In 1766 towns were allowed to establish school districts, geographical subdivisions of a town with a population large enough to support a common school. A further departure from the strong Puritan control of education in the seventeenth century was legislation of 1795 which prohibited ecclesiastical involvement in local school affairs. Instead, school committees or selectmen were overseers of the district schools. They built the schools, hired the teachers, regulated the curriculum, and decided the time and length of school terms. An important aspect of this districting trend was the brake it put on the establishment of schools above the

common school level. Districts were usually too small in population to support a school for higher grades. Teachers' salaries were poor. In fact, low pay was often a criteria in hiring a new teacher. The effects of these statutes did not begin to be reversed until well into the nineteenth century.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, school systems were supported by local taxes augmented by rate-bills levied against the families of students. This method of financing education was a compromise to citizens as it incorporated elements of both public and private school funding, an arrangement regarded by many as the only practical way of paying for the rising costs of education. In 1795, the General Assembly created the Common School Fund from the sale of land in the Western Reserve. This was a permanent fund of \$1,200,000 with the common schools of the state benefiting from the interest. The Fund actually created a dilemma for school committees and towns. Instead of decisions regarding the schools being made upon need, they were based on the amount of money being received. The Fund also created a measure of indifference, as townspeople felt that they no longer had major educational or financial control over their schools.

Besides establishing a school system at the local level, Connecticut in the eighteenth century took significant steps toward the development of a system of higher education. Yale College was founded in 1701 by Congregationalists who sought to counteract the growing liberalism of Harvard. Yale's primary function was to educate men for the ministry. As the century progressed, however, Yale produced physicians and academicians who taught in grammar schools or who were instrumental in starting colleges such as Dartmouth, Hamilton, and Oberlin.

Yale's development from college to university through the nineteenth century can be credited largely to its dynamic and imaginative presidents beginning with Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), who served from 1795 to 1817. With the election of Dwight as president, Yale College began an era of expansion in physical size and student body as well as in curriculum. New areas of study, such as languages, chemistry, and natural history were established. The Yale Medical School was founded in 1810. With Jeremiah Day (1773-1867), president from 1817 to 1846, the foundations of future schools in the areas of theology and law were begun. The development of the area of science instruction was a great contribution of Yale's president from 1846 to 1871, Theodore Dwight Woolsey (1801-1889). He broadened the study of chemistry and created professorships in engineering as well as in fields such as modern languages and art. During Woolsey's tenure, there was a growing emphasis on graduate work, with the result that Yale granted the first American Ph.D in

1861. From its origins as a Puritan, classical college, Yale had grown in stature by 1872 to encompass four different schools: Divinity, Law, Medicine, and Philosophy and the Arts. Yale's designation as a university took place in 1885.

In the twentieth century, Yale continued to grow and expand its programs. The School of Forestry was created in 1900 followed by Schools such as Nursing (1923), Engineering (1983), Drama (1955), and Art and Architecture (1955). As programs continued to develop, Yale underwent marked physical growth. During A. Whitney Griswold's (1906-1963) presidency from 1950 to 1962, twenty-six buildings were erected or were under construction, and faculty increased from 1,505 to 2,300. In addition, Yale became and continues to be a mecca for scholars drawn to the excellent collections in its galleries and libraries.

Yale had begun its second century before another college or university opened its doors in Connecticut. Trinity College was established in 1823 in Hartford by the Episcopal church for men of all faiths. For most of the nineteenth century, Trinity remained small, offering a round, liberal-arts education. In 1872, the College moved to its present, ninety-acre site on the western edge of Hartford where a new campus emerged in the distinctive Gothic style created by architect William Burges (1827-1881). Over the years, Trinity's curriculum has expanded. Today the College offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in such fields as mechanical and electrical engineering.

The only other institution to be founded in the early nineteenth century was Wesleyan University, established in Middletown in 1831. It, too, had religious roots—in the Methodist church. Under Wilbur Fisk (1792-1839), who served as Wesleyan's first president, from 1831 to 1839, the standard classical curriculum broadened to include modern literature and the sciences. Significant changes—especially the offering of more electives—occurred during the last quarter of the century. Wesleyan remained a small, liberal-arts college until after the turn of the century. With its next two presidents, William A. Schanklin (1862-1924), president from 1909 to 1923, and James L. McConaughy (1887-1948), president from 1925 to 1943, Wesleyan underwent a period of rapid physical and academic growth. Today Wesleyan offers degrees through the doctorate.

Another major development in Connecticut's educational history was the emergence of the academy movement at the end of the eighteenth century. Following the economically troubled years after the Revolutionary War, Connecticut entered an era of affluence. Commerce, shipbuilding, small businesses, and mills prospered. A new middle class emerged which demanded

a higher standard of education for its children than the common schools could provide. Most of the academies were founded as private schools by notable patrons, clergymen, or women. Growing out of the pattern of the old Puritan grammar school, these private academies and seminaries provided the only form of formal education above the common school to prepare young men for college and young women for their social responsibilities.

Joining Hopkins School which was founded in New Haven in 1660, new academies began springing up all over Connecticut after 1780. The movement flowered in the first half of the nineteenth century. The curriculum for young men offered a wider range than the traditional classical education of the grammar schools. English, writing, science, and mathematics were regularly studied. Knowledge, mostly gained through rote, often gave the learner only an acquaintance with the subject rather than a working ability of it. As for the education of young women in the period, there existed between 1792 and 1865 some fifty-nine academies for females. These schools offered a wide range of subjects from rhetoric, French, and history to "ornamentals" such as embroidery, piano, and painting.

Mention should be made here of Prudence Crandall's short-lived school for young ladies in Canterbury. Begun in 1831 to teach the daughters of the local gentry, the school was converted to an all-black female academy after Miss Crandall attempted to integrate one black girl. After a year of intense persecution and controversy, she closed the school in 1834. The building in which her academy was located remains today as the only existing female academy of its era and is open to the public as a museum operated by the Connecticut Historical Commission.

It should be noted that academies made significant contributions toward mid-century to Connecticut's development of a public high school system. Academies, first of all, offered a model for secondary organization and instruction. Second, many of the first high school teachers, both men and women, were products of the academy system.

Though the academy movement declined after 1850, in part due to the establishment of public supported high schools (Middletown High School, the oldest continuous high school in the state, was founded in 1840), some survived, while new ones emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century to gain the status of the modern preparatory boarding school. The following is a list of the more noted academies and seminaries in Connecticut (an asterisk indicates that the school no longer exists):

## **Men's**

Hopkins School, 1660

Woodstock Academy, 1801

Bacon Academy, 1803

Suffield Academy, 1833

Gunnery, 1850

Norwich Free Academy, 1856

Loomis School, 1874

Westminster, 1888

Taft School, 1890

Hotchkiss, 1891

Pomfret, 1894

Choate, 1896

Salisbury, 1901

Kent, 1906

## **Women's**

Litchfield Female Seminary, 1792\*

Hartford Female Seminary, 1823\*

Wethersfield Female Seminary, 1824\*

Canterbury Female Boarding School, 1831\*

Miss Porter's School, 1847

Westover, 1909

Ethel Walker, 1911

Canterbury, 1915

South Kent, 1923

Wooster, 1926

Avon Old Farms, 1930

With the "Age of the Common Man," the Industrial Revolution, and the new humanitarian attitude throughout the nation and overseas, the nineteenth century was a period when improvement in education was emphasized. In Connecticut this trend culminated in establishing a state school system and in professionalizing the teaching field through formal training in normal schools.

Henry Barnard (1811-1900), a Connecticut legislator, became secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Common Schools and founded the Connecticut State Teachers' Association in 1848. He campaigned tirelessly for the establishment of a state-supported normal school. From 1839 to 1849 Barnard organized various teachers' institutes around the state to provide training for teachers in the common schools. Even though attendance at the institutes increased and teachers supported Barnard's scheme to establish a normal school, the General Assembly was skeptical as to both the need for better

trained teachers and the expense involved. It was not until the example of state-supported normal schools in Massachusetts under educator Horace Mann (1796-1859) and in New York that the General Assembly finally responded to public pressure and passed the Normal School Act in 1849.

Four important aspects of the legislation for Connecticut's future educational development were: that teachers would be trained only for the common schools; that a Board of Trustees would be selected to choose a site and apply for funds; that the sum of \$11,000 would be appropriated for a building; and that the 220 students were to be admitted with equal representation of the sexes. Henry Barnard was appointed the first principal and the site ultimately chosen was New Britain. The school opened in 1850.

While the State Board of Education was formed in 1865, the era of the Civil War brought a hiatus in educational advance. After 1869, however, there was a growing need for more and better-trained teachers. This need stemmed from an increase in the school population and an expanded curriculum, especially in the field of science. By 1868 all Connecticut public elementary schools were free, i.e., supported by taxes and/or state aid. By 1872, high schools were included in this support.

A particular stimulus to the rise in high school population was the offering of two alternatives to the traditional classical education for the college bound. One was the "English Course," which gave a student a well-rounded, four-year education preparing him/her for life in an industrial age. More electives were offered in this course than for the more structured classical education. The other alternative curriculum was the "Partial Course," which provided a two-year education for those who intended to join the work force upon the completion of secondary school.

To meet the needs of the growing public school system, teachers' institutes, offered by the Board of Education, continued to be held until the turn of the century to provide at least limited teacher training. It was the opening of three new state normal schools, however, which contributed significantly to establishing teaching as a highly specialized and respectable career.

In 1889 the General Assembly selected Willimantic as the site of a normal school to provide teacher training in eastern Connecticut. Next came New Haven and Danbury Normal Schools in 1893 and 1903 respectively. By establishing normal schools in these strategic geographical locations, the General Assembly made a major commitment to meeting Connecticut's teacher-training needs.

Another commitment the Assembly made to the people of the state was in 1881 with the founding of a land-grant agricultural college on 170 acres in Mansfield. Named the Storm Agricultural School, it quickly grew. In 1893 it admitted women, and in 1899 it was renamed the Connecticut Agricultural College.

By this act of establishing a land-grant college, the Assembly was responding to a national movement to expand science education, particularly where it pertained to agriculture. Strong agricultural organizations such as the Grange and scientists such as the noted American naturalist, Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), advocated the development of agricultural courses. The Morrill Act of 1862 helped these advocates by providing that lands in the public domain be awarded to states in order to establish colleges to teach, among other things, agriculture and the mechanical arts.

The trends in the training of teachers in Connecticut from the turn of the century to World War II included an increase in student bodies, except during World War I, and a move toward higher academic standards. These trends reflected not only the call for more teachers, except for the years of the Depression of the 1930s, but also the desire of the State Board of Education to raise certification requirements, especially during the 1920s and 1930s. The state normal schools increased in students and expanded their programs from two to three years by 1930 and to four years as of 1933. By 1937, all four schools were state teachers' colleges requiring the completion of a four-year program.\*

In making these changes, however, the legislature failed to increase funding to finance the expanding schools. As the Depression deepened, the legislature, in three successive sessions (1933, 1935, and 1937), reduced the appropriations to these colleges to their 1931 figures. Meanwhile, enrollment doubled, and Connecticut struggled with the problem of having an excess of teachers.

The years following World War II were ones of rapid growth in public education.



During the 1950s the postwar baby boom made itself felt with the burgeoning of the school population and an increasing demand for teachers. A decline in the birthrate over the last decade has brought a decline in both school population and in the number of schools which make up the state's 165 local and regional school districts:

#### Student Enrollment in Public Elementary & Secondary Schools

<i>1958-59</i>	<i>1968-69</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1982-83</i>
460,132	635,861	581,171	506,075

#### Number of Public Schools in Connecticut

	<i>1975</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1983</i>
Elementary	790	643	621
Middle	168	160	155
High School	140	139	138
Specialized Schools	33	36	35
Total	1131	978	949

In recent years teachers have begun to feel the effects of the shrinking job market. After a quarter century of rapid growth in the profession in terms of mobility, financial gains, and job security, teachers are threatened in the mid-1980's by personnel cutbacks related to school consolidation and a declining enrollment. The following figures reveal the dramatic decrease in the number of public school teachers between 1978 and 1983:

\* In 1902 the Connecticut Agricultural College became involved in teacher training by offering summer courses in nature study. By 1933, when the school was renamed the Connecticut State College, its program in teacher education emphasized secondary school preparation. When the College became the University of Connecticut in 1939, the evolution of the institution of the teacher education was completed with the establishment of the School of Education and the authority to grant graduate degrees, including the doctorate.

## Number of Public School Teachers in Connecticut

1954	1959	1978	1983
14,148	17,240	34,657	32,583

Along with a diminishing market, teachers' salaries have also been discouraging to many who are or might be in the profession. In the mid-1960s, teachers' salaries in the state ranked fourth in the nation; in 1982 they ranked twentieth. Though the national average in salaries is just under \$13,000 and Connecticut's is slightly over \$21,000, the latter is paid only to those with thirteen years experience and a master's degree.

As educational enrollments began to rise immediately after World War II, the state was called upon to assist local communities in financing the construction or expansion of schools. From 1945 to 1960 the total amount spent on school construction in Connecticut was over \$307 million. Nearly \$93 million came from state aid. With the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, Connecticut also began receiving Federal funds on a matching basis to upgrade instruction in mathematics, science, and foreign languages. The first funds were received in 1958-59 and amounted to \$395,000. These funds, however, were able only to maintain the status quo by matching inflation rather than providing for significant advances.

In addition, the existing state funding system in no way addressed the inequities inherent in the divergent tax bases of the various school districts. This situation came to a head in 1974 with a decision in the case of *Horton vs. Meskill*. The decision was in favor of Horton's contention that educational opportunities were unequal across the state.\* The decision was acted upon in 1977 when the Connecticut Supreme Court directed the General Assembly to work toward equalization through a funding program to aid needy towns. By 1979, the General Assembly developed the Guaranteed Tax Base (GTB) funding formula. Full funding was to be phased in over a five-year period. This phase-in period has been extended to 1984-1985 through subsequent changes in the legislation.

The GTB funding system has been plagued with difficulties from its inception. A major problem is that the GTB formula has proven to be complicated and cumbersome in application. Moreover, there is no method of monitoring how the funds are applied towards education. In fact, while GTB funds are meant to foster equal education, they are often regarded as revenue by the recipient towns and are not always dispensed directly by local school boards. Because of

some of these procedural problems, Horton took the case back to court in 1980. The case was pending as of early 1985. Finally, many feel that the real problem lies with the General Assembly, which has not been concerned with the implications of *Horton vs. Meskill*, but only with complying with the Court decision. As a result, the effect of GTB funds on education has been minimal. In point of fact, the 1982 national ranking of state expenditures for education found Connecticut listed as 44th in the nation.

\* Horton vs. Meskill stemmed from a suit brought by Wesley H. Horton of Canton against the state in 1973. Horton charged that the way the state financed public education discriminated against the residents of Canton. As a result of this landmark case, the per pupil grants to Canton have risen from \$250 to \$600 over the past eleven years.

Over the years since World War II, higher education in Connecticut has mirrored the rapid growth of the public schools. During the last three decades many colleges and universities expanded their residential and instructional facilities and enlarged their faculties to accommodate the waves of students. Many people were drawn to the new community colleges, which provided students with an associate's degree or a plan of study upon which to transfer to a four-year school.

The University of Connecticut underwent a phenomenal expansion under Albert N. Jorgensen (1899-1978), president from 1935 to 1962, and under Homer D. Babbidge (1925-1984), president from 1962 to 1972. Branches opened in Hartford, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury. The Storrs campus undergraduate population went from 7,400 in 1960 to over 23,000 in 1982. Not only are doctoral degrees offered in over twenty-five fields, but with the establishment of the Health Center in 1968, the University made another commitment to the people of the state in the training of doctors and dentists.

The four state teachers' colleges have also experienced further growth. Their growth was due not only to the great demand for teachers, but to the attractiveness of their curricula broadened in the liberal arts. The most recent change for these colleges came in March 1983 when they became part of the Connecticut State University System under a single board of trustees. This legislative move was an attempt to improve fiscal efficiency, unity, and coordination of policy making.

A 1982 analysis of enrollment by the Board of Governors for Higher Education revealed some interesting statistics. For example, after the growth of the 1960s, less rapid in the 1970s, total enrollment in colleges and universities was leveling off in the early 1980s. Undergraduate enrollment in both public and private institutions made a small increase of .1% from the fall 1981 to

1982, but graduate enrollment declined 1.9%. Most growth in enrollment was among part-time undergraduates, with an increase of 2.4% over 1981-82. This rise reflected, in large part, the return of the older student to college studies. Community colleges also experienced a dramatic increase in enrollment of 4.4% during 1981-82. Connecticut women comprised over half of the total enrollment in the fall of 1982 with 53.5% of the student body. These figures reflect the national trend. Minority enrollment increased 26.6% between 1976 and 1980, compared to a national growth rate of 15.3%. Finally, 59.3% of all 1981 Connecticut high school graduates (27,338) went on to higher education. Half (13,808) of these continued in state institutions.

A complete listing of the fall 1982 enrollment in Connecticut's colleges and universities follows with the dates in which the schools were established:

<b>Institution (Four-Year)</b>	<b>Founded</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>
University of Connecticut	1881	23,316
(inc. 5 branches and the Health Ctr.)		

State Universities		
Central	1849	12,487

Eastern	1889	3,416
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Southern	1893	10,481
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Western	1903	5,996
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Connecticut College	1915	1,933
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Trinity College	
1823	1,972

Wesleyan University	
1831	3,006

Yale University	
1701	10,332

Albertus Magnus College	
1925	499

Bridgeport Engineering Institute	
1924	901

Fairfield University	
1947	4,960

Hartford Seminary	
1834	97

Hartford Graduate Center	
1955	1,930

Holy Apostle College	
1956	152

Paier College of Art, Inc.	
1981	442

Post College	
1890	1,484

Quinnipiac College	
1929	3,631

Sacred Heart University	
1963	5,003

St. Alphonsus College	
1963	50

St. Basil's College	
1939	18

St. Joseph College	
1932	1,212

University of Bridgeport	
1929	6,323

University of Hartford	
1877	8,564

University of New Haven	
1920	7,298

<b>Total</b>	<b>115,528</b>
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### **Institution (Two Year)**

<b>Founded</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>
Asnuntuck Community College	
1972	1,934

Greater Hartford Community College	
1967	3,068

Housatonic Community College  
1967 2,657

Manchester Community College  
1963 6,331

Mattatuck Community College  
1967 3,597

Middlesex Community College  
1966 2,986

Mohegan Community College  
1970 2,388

Northwestern Connecticut  
Community College  
1965 2,371

Norwalk Community College  
1961 3,511

Quinebaug Valley Community College  
1971 968

South Central Community College  
1968 2,318

Tunxis Community College  
1969 3,235

Briarwood College  
1966 383

Hartford College for Women	
1933	200

Katherine Gibbs School	
1973	48

Mitchell College	
1938	910

Mt. Sacred Heart	
1954	13

<b>Total</b>	<b>36,918</b>
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## State Technical Colleges

<b>Founded</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>
Greater New Haven	
1977	1,325

Hartford	
1946	1,983

Norwalk	
1961	1,947

Thames Valley	
1963	1,861

Waterbury	
1964	1,968

<b>Total</b>	<b>9,084</b>
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## Grand Total

**161,350**

Recent reports have focused attention on the decaying quality of education not only in Connecticut but also across the nation. In 1983 the National Committee on Excellence in Education published the results of a two-year study entitled: "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." In order to raise the standard of education in America, this report made strong recommendations to increase the length of the school day and year, to increase the amount of homework given to students, to increase teachers' salaries, and to raise college standards. Connecticut's *Trachtenberg Report* is a result of a task force charged in 1983 with evaluating the problem of education in the state. Its primary recommendation, that teachers' salaries ought to be increased to be competitive with those in the private sector, was included in Commissioner Gerald Tirozzi's *Connecticut's Challenge*, a position paper delineating educational reforms, which has been adopted by the State Board of Education.

Such reports have helped to galvanize the state's Board of Education into proposing aggressive reforms which sweep across the whole spectrum of education. While high priority is being given to reforms in early childhood education, much planning is being given to secondary education, teacher preparation programs, and to the certification process. All will require additional and/or new sources of funding. Reassessing priorities to meet present and future educational needs in Connecticut is the challenge for the General Assembly and ultimately for the people of the state.

From the Code of 1650 over 350 years ago, progress in the development of education in Connecticut has been slow. It has usually come only when people perceived a particular need. If the public does not recognize that need today and make a commitment to support public education adequately, the damage that is done will have to be repaired in the future by those who will not be educated for the task.

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\* *Entry under revision*.