

Education in colonial america essay examples

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The emergence of early colonial America onto the stage of Western civilization, dramatized many political, social, and religious events. Perhaps the greatest and most surprising story, surrounds the United States' first official education system. It grew from turbulent beginnings. This paper explains how the United States government stepped into the pages of history, to create the first federally mandated public school system. One source states that the U. S. public education system can trace " its development from its roots in Puritan and Congregationalist religious schools in the 1600s" (" A History of Public Education in the United States"). As the newly formed nation expanded, it would eventually have to figure out how to educate its citizens. The future Federal system would someday mandate public education standards. But, the earliest colonial Americas needed to build it from scratch. The topics of religion and politics drove the hottest debates among the colonial peoples.

This essay discusses the situation, and gives an overview of colonial times in America in terms of how the society was, and how public education came to be. Slavery existed in these early days, and the mixture of different peoples living altogether on the same land created many differences of opinions. This essay also discusses the religions of the ethnic-regional areas, and surveys several noteworthy events. According to data taken from the U. S. Embassy, the first public school in America was known as ' The Boston Latin School' (" Boston, Massachusetts: America's City of Firsts"). It was created by a Puritan, John Cotton who was very well-trained in the scholarly arts of theology. Cotton had studied at Cambridge University, and is the key individual responsible for the establishment of this tiny, first public school.

The Puritans were known for honest living, and possessing a desire to learn as much as they could about God's word. They also enjoyed converting others to the Puritan version of Christianity.

The reason why this was not always easy to do, is because there was a plethora of different religions. The Spanish conquistadores had spread their influence of Catholicism. The newly arrived Euro-Americans, as former members of the ' Church of England' were now free to worship as they saw fit. But their primary task was to survive, and build a new life on the North American continent. As a fellow of Trinity College, one source states that Cotton indulged in " six daily hours of prayer and study" and was determined to call his weekly parish services to order quite often (" America's First School"). Colonial American society was an authentic example of a multicultural experiment. The earliest European Americans co-existed in the same land with natives, and black people. Not all peoples were treated equally. However, the early colonial settlers found themselves sharing the same spaces, with very different people from what they were accustomed to.

In terms of religious differences, each group held its own beliefs. As mentioned before, the Spanish had influenced some. The colonists had physically and ideologically broken away from the Church of England. Indigenous peoples, (called Indians) had exercised great efforts to hang on to their land. But it was too late. Imported slaves from Africa had relegated blacks to the lowest position on the totem pole. Even though history has not always recorded the religious beliefs of the black and native persons, they certainly did embrace their respective forms of worship. Native cultural

religious practices held an immense respect for nature, and displayed a deep spiritual understanding toward honoring the living plants and animals. A little known fact that pertains to the earliest black slave population, in colonial America, is that they intensely fostered their own religious beliefs and practices too. Not all whites shared the same religious belief, although the Puritans and a generalized forbearance towards Christianity, were typical. The first school, Boston Latin, in 1635 would not remain the only school in early America. Shortly thereafter, a trend of like-minded schools began to dot the land. According to Thattai, this new 'free' style of public education was kind of like a forerunner to the later federal government-run education system. Thattai states "The most preliminary form of public education was in existence in the 1600s in the New England colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire" ("A History of Public Education in the United States"). The major idea and main purpose of these early versions of 'free' public education, was to overwhelmingly advance Puritan beliefs in God. The reason why the Puritans, and other Christianized religious groups like the Congregationalists, sought to provide schools for the children is that they felt it would be much easier to indoctrinate them. The fact of the matter, is that they were not truly interested in advancing an education for each child, but rather sought to impose "their religious views through public education" ("A History of Public Education in the United States"). Most – if not all – of the children included in the early Puritanical schools were white students. Though, the Puritans did show kindnesses to everyone due to their strict ideas in wanting to please the God of the Holy Bible.

Meanwhile, the black slaves did not have any access to education in the

early days. They embraced a religious practice from the early days, having been captured and ensconced from the African continent. In a strange land they were forced to give up all cultural ties from their yesteryear, and learn to swallow the bitter pill of subservience in a hostile society. Little known facts have come forward, regarding the religious lives of black slave society. Bradley (1975) discusses this issue in an article entitled ‘ The Role of the Black Church in the Colonial Slave Society,’ and states “ The formation of the black church is the key to the beginning of Afro-American community and culture in colonial America. Because religion was an integral part of West African life, slaves used religion for the creation and recreation of community” life (p. 413). By this time, the native inhabitants around the proximity of the first school – the Algonquian peoples – were being squeezed out. As European-American colonization thrived, some of the nation’s founding stakeholders began to consider the plight of the country not having a formal education system. Also, not everyone thought the establishment of ‘ The Boston Latin School’ was a progressive idea.

Some referred to the school’s existence purely, an unholy dissidence. These individuals felt very upset and displeased over the whole affair. But the most learned men, such as those persons who would later frame the Declaration of Independence, felt it was a good idea. For example, one source records that “ When Edmund Burke referred to America as being the model for ‘ dissidence of the dissent’ more than 100 years later, he might have been speaking referring to the Boston Latin School” (“ America’s First School”). Perhaps these events help explain why Boston grew to become the site of so many heated battles, and anxious tensions between the American colonists

and the British. Even to this day, Bostonians are a proud and feisty folk. Meanwhile, during this particular episode in early colonial America, the cultural circumstances initiated what would later come to be called a ‘melting pot.’ Widespread commentary has often referred to America as an experiment. And indeed, it was so. Culture clashes often sat on perilously shaky ground. The violation of human rights for many were viciously violated. However, federalization of a nationally mandated education system would soon arise. It would accomplish the provision of bringing order to the land. An educational solution would solidify order, bolster technological advancement, and improve literacy. The influx of growing numbers began to infiltrate America. At this point, you had an even greater mix of cultures! The country was changing in a myriad of exciting and unexpected ways. The world had never seen anything remotely like it before. The localization of American’s schooling enterprises, were about to make room for a national education system.

The United States Department of Education arose in 1867, on the bedazzling heels of the demise of Southern aristocracy and plantation slave-days. It happened during the time of President Andrew Jackson. One article, entitled ‘We Don’t Need No Stinkin’ Common Core,’ states “The federal Department of Education started out rather innocuously. President Andrew Jackson signed legislation that formed the first Department of Education,” and the entity was set up to create a sort of collection funnel of information. That funnel established a database for both the schools, and teaching activities (“We Don’t Need No Stinkin’ Common Core”). Fast forward to the modern world of today, to a world filled with pink-and-purple digital fireworks, and a

smartphone society like no other. The American federal system of education has achieved recognition from all over the world, especially in terms of its higher educational opportunities. Educational institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Stanford, MIT, and UC Berkeley draw hopeful applicants from all around the globe.

The U. S. Department of Education truly began as a humble endeavor to monitor and collect information. The 'Red State Townhall Media' (2014) article states "The Department of Education went from a small data gathering department to a rules and regulations making cabinet-level governmental department whose major responsibilities" are captivatingly enormous ("We Don't Need No Stinkin' Common Core"). The United States Department of Education is so huge, it reminds one of a tremendous spider web. The Department covers areas pertaining to policy on financial aid money, enforcement of discrimination prohibitions, problem solving focuses for resolutions, and an awesomely expansive database which also engages in important research. If you roll back the dusty hands of the clock to approximately the 1840s, the earlier version of the United Education system was not accessible to everyone. The wealthy white elite were the first to be able to take advantage of its fruits.

In those days, not all children could attend. Thattai reminds readers that the 'Reformers' helped to change the situation, since they "wanted all children to gain the benefits of education" ("A History of Public Education in the United States"). The movement's leaders were located in Massachusetts, and the area of Connecticut. Eventually, the laws agreed – with passages of legislation by other states, too – like New York. Each state by 1918 made

public education a legal requirement for every American kid. The Catholics remained unconvinced, however, which is why so many private schools are Roman Catholic to this day.

In conclusion, the U. S. Department of Education has a deep and fascinating history. The early colonial context of America harbors a rich past, unlike any other. Thanks to the ‘ Reformers,’ free public education “ at the elementary level was available for all American children by the end of the 19th century” (“ A History of Public Education in the United States”). Hallelujah!

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