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Horace Mann was a Massachusetts politician who used his influence and power to shape the first board of education in the United States and to advocate for the implementation of the first tuition-free, tax funded public school in the nation. Mann initiated educational reform and was instrumental in professionalizing teacher education. His educational theories and improvements to the educational system in the 19th century were unequaled and he helped further the cause of public schools to become instrumental in contemporary education (“ Only a teacher,” n. d.). Horace Mann believed that in a democratic society education should be universally free and would thus create a system that would promote an equal educational playing field for the masses led by well-educated teaching professionals. Mann stated in one of his 12 impassioned and detailed educational reports that “ Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men,—the balance-wheel of the social machinery (“ Horace Mann”, n. d.) .” He felt that by educating the proletariat they would be able compete on more equal footing with the educated and financially successful members of society. Once the masses were educated, he believed that poverty and crime would diminish, promoting widespread “ social harmony” in the country (“ Only a teacher,” n. d.).

Horace Mann felt strongly about the need for professional training for teachers and while he served as Secretary to the Massachusetts Board of Education he presided over the establishment of the first teacher training college, now known as Framingham State University, in the United States in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1839 (“ Our history,” n. d.). Prospective teachers were given lessons in content knowledge and instructional methods in addition to receiving the equivalent of student teaching in a model school associated with the university. The establishment of teacher training schools lead to the advancement of education for prospective teachers so they would be better prepared to meet the needs of future students (“ Only a teacher,” n. d.). Through his passion and hard work, Horace Mann laid the groundwork for what is now an established system of public schools throughout the United States that many now take for granted. Mann’s desire to allow every person to have the opportunity to succeed through well taught and professionally led public schools has helped to forge institution of public schooling and the ideal of public education and in this respect, he truly is the “ Father of American Public Education.”

References

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