

vouchers tend not to pay for high-quality schools, so that poor families that receive them tend not to get high-quality education for their children. But for wealthy parents, the vouchers represent public support for the wealthy and a cut in support for those who lack wealth.

The conservative attack on public education is being felt drastically in higher education. Conservatives in state legislatures are cutting funding for higher education, with two horrendous consequences. State-run colleges and universities used to be the gateways to education for poor and lower-middle-class students. As conservatives cut state university budgets, the schools, to stay in business, have had to raise their tuition, pricing higher education out of reach for a great many of these students. Students' only alternative has been to borrow money, which raises the second problem: student debt. At a time when banks can borrow money at 1 percent interest, students have to pay 8 percent interest on their loans, which burdens them with many years of loan payments after they graduate. That makes it harder for them to afford getting a post-graduate education or starting a family. Present calculations are that if the government forgave all student loans, it would boost the nation's economy far more than the cost of the loans. Nonetheless, conservatives are against both loan forgiveness and dropping the interest on student loans to the same rate that banks pay.

Whether at the level of pre-school, K–12, or higher education, the conservative move is to reduce or end public education—as part of the move to end public resources in general.

Education is a freedom issue. But that is not now being said in public discourse. Without education you are not free in many, many ways. Education tells you about the world and the possibilities in life. If you don't know what is possible, you cannot even set goals. Education isn't just about filling your head with facts; it's about teaching you to think, to notice, to be critical, to act rationally, to be practical, and to get access to facts for yourself. Education gives you skills, the ability to do things you couldn't do otherwise. Yes, educated people have more economic potential—and money can make you free in many ways—but the freedom education offers goes well beyond money. It opens the possibilities for connections to the natural