

## Principles of Public Schools

Why do Public Schools have highest priority? Why do we want our children in Public Schools?

Virginia's Constitution REQUIRES a system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the Commonwealth, and shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained. (*VA Constitution Article VIII, Section 1.*)

The 2017 LWV-VA "School Choice Task Force" recommends this statement of Principles of Public Schools.

"Public schools should prevail as the highest priority for school choice in Virginia based on their role and responsibility in sustaining democracy."

To be defined as "public" there are expected responsibilities.\*\*\*

"A school is truly public if

... it is *open* to the public... all children

... it *serves* the public

(and prepares citizens to maintain government)

...it is *responsive* to the public

(who can participate in voting on school governance and can change policies)

...it is a *creator* of the public

(by cultivating citizens to exchange ideas, prepare for discourse, respond to ideas, and work across differences)

...it *sustains democracy* by developing skills for participating and enacting freedom-oriented decision-making."

\*\*\*Extracted from Sarah M. Stitzlein's publication:

[American Public Education and the Responsibility of Its Citizens](https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/09/06/how-to-define-public-schooling-in-the.html), Oxford Press, 2017 and at <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/09/06/how-to-define-public-schooling-in-the.html>

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**Appendix A**, labeled "Public Schools and Democracy" contains resources from other writers comparing public and private schools vis-à-vis Democracy.