10 Advantages to Public Education

Public schools are far from perfect, but they still offer significant benefits to the students that attend their classrooms every day. We’ll list a few of those advantages here. Public education has gotten a bit of a bad rap in recent decades, as many families are exploring other education options, like homeschooling, private schools and charter schools. However, public schools still serve a significant role in preparing the next generation of world leaders. Check out these 10 potential advantages a public school education can provide.

Cost

The cost of a public education can’t be beat. Although some parents might complain about the recently added expenses of supplies and participation in sports teams, these schools are still much more budget-friendly than their private counterparts. According to GreatSchools.org, the average tuition for private schools in the United States during the 2008-2009 school years was $10,841. The average cost for a boarding school during that same year was $23,448. Schools affiliated with the National Association of Independent Schools charged even more. In addition, private schools get additional funding through private donations. In many cases, this could mean parents of students at the schools may have to invest time and money in fundraising events for the school throughout the year. While public schools also participate in fund raisers, the bulk of their funding still comes from federal, state and local government sources.

Availability

Public schools provide access to an education for every child in a community. The Huffington Post notes that by law, public schools cannot turn students away based on academic performance, income level or disability. This ensures that every student in a neighborhood has the same educational opportunities as the neighbors down the street, regardless of their current personal or financial situation. Since education is frequently seen as the great equalizer for a society, the availability of education for all is a key benefit these institutions offer.

Diversity

Because public schools admit all children in the community, those that attend the schools are more likely to be in classrooms with other children that don’t think, act or look exactly like them. Students are more apt to be exposed to students from different cultures or income levels. They may learn to work with other students with mental and physical disabilities. The diversity of the student body can be an important learning experience in itself for all of the children that attend a particular school.

Class Sizes

According to the website for New York Schools, funding for schools is often dependent on the number of students in a school, with consideration for smaller, more manageable classroom sizes. Typically, class sizes in public schools tend to remain smaller in the early years, from kindergarten through about third grade. At that point, classes may gradually grow in accordance to the students’ age and ability to work independently.

Academic Opportunities

Public schools often have the resources to offer more academic opportunities like advanced classes and courses in specialized subjects like technology and the arts, according to Education Bug. Options might include gifted and talented programs, International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement classes. Students that want to excel will find various chances to do so, while those not inclined to academic acceleration find choices at their ability level as well.

Extracurricular Opportunities

In addition to the choices in the classroom, students in public school often have more options in activities after the last bell rings for the day. From athletics to music and theatre, most schools offer a variety of extracurricular activities to keep students learning and excelling in the areas they are most interested in.

Services

By law, public schools are also required to provide certain services to students. Some, such as transportation to and from school, are offered to all the students. Others, such as reduced-price lunches and academic assistance, are provided to students who qualify. Because the services are required, public schools have a staff of special education teachers and learning specialists at the parents’ and students’ disposal. Private schools may not offer such services because they are not required to admit students that meet these needs.

Teacher Qualifications

According to PublicSchools.org, teachers in public schools are required to be certified by the state. Certification also requires ongoing education and periodic renewal of credentials. Charter schools and private schools do not have this requirement, which means parents don’t always know the level of training attained by the teacher in their child’s classroom. In some cases, these schools might not even require teachers to have a four-year degree to work in the classroom.

Accountability

By the same token, public schools are held accountable by the state for their academic performance. While some have complained this has led to an overabundance of standardized testing, the schools do at least have a higher authority they must answer to. This prevents abuse and leads to management of failing schools much more quickly than if the school did not have such accountability.

Results

According to the Huffington Post report, students in public schools score comparably on standardized tests to students in private schools. In some cases, they outscore students in charter schools. While some public schools turn up relatively poor results, those results are often found in areas with high poverty rates. When comparing apples to apples in terms of student demographics, public schools are right up there with other types of schools.

While many are complaining about the state of public schools today – and some with good reason – these schools are still working effectively for the majority of students in the system. With many benefits from public schools, it is no wonder the majority of students and their parents are still choosing the public school in their neighborhood as their first choice for an education.