

Governing for Life

How Governments Can Support People and Protect the Living World

What happens if humanity continues along its present path — and what could change if governance were redesigned to make the economy serve life?

“The economy should exist to serve life. Life should not exist to serve the economy.”

Discussion paper for policy review

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Overview for Policy Review

The proposal

Governments should assess economic success by the durable conditions it creates for people and the living world. GDP, employment, trade and public finances remain essential measures. They should be considered alongside health, household security, equal access to quality education and training, ecological condition and the opportunities inherited by future generations.

This discussion paper invites political parties and United Nations readers to examine practical changes to incentives, public investment and accountability. It brings together resource stewardship, durable production, education, family support, automation and informed democratic choice. The aim is to support cooperation across political perspectives while making costs, uncertainty and responsibility visible.

Priorities for examination

- Measure durable well-being. Publish an accessible dashboard that reports economic performance together with social and ecological outcomes, including differences between communities.
- Reward lasting value. Examine product durability, repair access, reuse and lifecycle costs, while protecting safety and household affordability.
- Expand learning opportunities. Develop adequately funded public education and training pathways, reduce financial barriers, and support early childhood development, creative exploration, foundational skills and adult retraining.
- Support families and teachers. Address barriers such as housing insecurity, childcare, transport and unmet support needs alongside classroom improvements.
- Plan for technological change. Evaluate ways to distribute productivity gains through learning, income security, ownership and time, with evidence rather than assumptions about job losses.
- Strengthen public accountability. Apply consistent standards to political claims, publish assumptions and trade-offs, and cooperate on problems that cross borders.

A practical next step

Select one or two priorities for a costed pilot or policy review. Establish a baseline, identify who benefits and who bears costs, protect rights and essential services, and publish measurable results. Expand approaches that work and revise those that do not. National and international institutions can contribute within their respective mandates.

Request to recipients

Please refer this paper to the relevant policy or technical team for review. Feedback on its evidence, feasibility and omissions would be welcome, together with consideration of suitable pilot projects or policy discussions. The paper distinguishes documented findings from proposed designs and possible benefits; it offers a framework for examination rather than a single blueprint for every country.

Executive Summary

Humanity has developed economic systems capable of extraordinary production, innovation and material improvement. Those same systems can also reward short product lives, excessive extraction, pollution, waste and the transfer of costs to communities, ecosystems and future generations. The central problem is therefore not production itself, nor markets themselves. It is the set of goals, incentives and measurements that determine what societies call success.

If present patterns continue, the likely direction is greater pressure on materials, climate, biodiversity and waste systems; higher exposure to supply shocks; continuing tension between productivity and employment as automation expands; and political systems forced to respond to consequences after they occur. UNEP reports that global natural-resource extraction has tripled over the past five decades and, without major change, could rise another 60% from 2020 levels by 2060.

A different model would not require abandoning enterprise, innovation, trade or profit. It would redefine prosperity so that economic output is one measure among several. Governments would also measure health, housing security, time, ecological condition, resource depletion, resilience, distribution of opportunity and the prospects of future generations.

The practical transition would move from a predominantly linear economy — extract, manufacture, sell, discard, replace — toward a durable and circular economy: design for long life, repair, upgrade, reuse, remanufacture and high-quality recycling. It would also change the treatment of pollution and depletion from invisible external costs into costs recognized in economic decisions.

Governance would become more long-term, evidence-based and cooperative: transparent trade-offs, independent measurement, representation of future generations and natural systems, citizen participation, and international collaboration on problems that cross borders. AI and automation make this transition more urgent because rising productive capacity may increasingly weaken the historical link between the amount of human labor required and society's ability to produce abundance.

Education and informed democratic choice are also central to this transition. A society's capacity to govern for life depends on whether people can learn without prohibitive financial barriers, develop their abilities in supportive environments, and evaluate public claims using evidence. The expanded discussion examines international education models, family stress, individual strengths, and practical questions voters can apply to every candidate.

The Core Question

What if the purpose of an economy were not to maximize transactions, but to maximize the conditions in which life can flourish?

This question does not imply that GDP, profits, employment, markets or trade are unimportant. They are essential information. The problem arises when they become proxies for the whole of human progress. GDP records market production; it was never designed to tell us whether families are secure, ecosystems are recovering, products are durable, communities are cohesive, or future generations are inheriting more options than the present generation received.

Part I — If We Continue as We Are

1. More extraction, more throughput, more waste

The dominant industrial model is still largely linear. Materials are extracted, converted into products, transported, consumed and eventually discarded. Efficiency has improved in many sectors, but total material demand continues to rise. UNEP's Global Resources Outlook 2024 states that resource extraction has tripled over five decades and warns that extraction could rise a further 60% by 2060 without urgent action.

- Greater mining, logging, water use and land conversion can intensify pressure on ecosystems and biodiversity.
- More material throughput generally means more energy use, transport, processing and waste management.
- Countries dependent on imported materials become more vulnerable to geopolitical disruption and price shocks.
- Environmental costs may occur far from the consumers who receive the final product, making those costs easy to ignore.

2. Planned and premature obsolescence

A system that earns revenue from repeated replacement can create incentives that conflict with durability. Premature obsolescence can arise from weak components, difficult disassembly, unavailable parts, locked software, discontinued updates or repair costs that approach the cost of replacement. The European Union's 2024 Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation explicitly identifies premature obsolescence as a problem and creates a framework for durability, reliability, repairability, upgradability, reuse and recyclability requirements.

The economic paradox is simple: a durable appliance repaired twice over thirty years may create fewer sales transactions than five short-lived appliances, even though the durable product can provide more service with fewer materials and less household expense. Economic activity and human value are therefore not always the same thing.

3. Costs that disappear from the price tag

Many economic decisions treat pollution, resource depletion, ecosystem damage and some health consequences as externalities — costs not fully borne by the producer or purchaser. When those costs are transferred to taxpayers, neighboring communities, other species or future generations, the market price can understate the true cost of the activity.

A product can therefore appear profitable while part of its real cost is being paid elsewhere. Better accounting would not eliminate disagreement about values, but it would make trade-offs harder to hide.

4. Growth that can conceal declining well-being

GDP is valuable for measuring economic output, but the OECD emphasizes that it does not reveal whether life as a whole is improving, who receives the gains, or whether present prosperity is sustainable. A country can record higher output while simultaneously experiencing environmental depletion, housing stress, worsening health, loss of leisure time or declining social trust.

This does not make GDP misleading when used for its intended purpose. It means GDP should sit inside a broader dashboard rather than serve as the single scoreboard for national success.

5. The automation challenge

Industrial society linked access to income strongly to paid employment: work produces wages; wages enable consumption; consumption supports production and employment. AI and automation can loosen that relationship. The ILO's 2025 global analysis found that one in four workers is in an occupation with some exposure to generative AI, while emphasizing that most exposed jobs are more likely to be transformed than eliminated in the near term.

The long-term governance question remains. If technology allows society to produce more goods and services with fewer hours of human labor, a system that distributes purchasing power almost entirely through traditional employment may eventually face tension between technological abundance and household access to that abundance.

6. Short political horizons versus long physical consequences

Election cycles, quarterly earnings and annual budgets encourage attention to immediate results. Climate systems, forests, soils, infrastructure, public health and resource depletion operate over decades. Future generations cannot vote in today's elections, and ecosystems do not participate directly in markets. Governance therefore needs mechanisms that deliberately represent long-term consequences.

A plausible continuation pathway

Pressure	If left structurally unchanged	Likely consequence
Resource demand	Rising extraction and material throughput	Higher ecological pressure and supply vulnerability
Product design	Replacement rewarded more than longevity	More waste and repeated household cost
Pollution	Costs remain partly externalized	Public, ecological and future costs accumulate
Success metrics	GDP/output dominate	Important losses remain politically less visible

Pressure	If left structurally unchanged	Likely consequence
Automation	Income remains tightly tied to labor hours	Potential mismatch between productivity and purchasing power
Governance	Short horizons and adversarial politics	Reactive policy and delayed investment

Part II — A Different Purpose for Governance

7. Change the objective function

The most fundamental change would be conceptual: the economy becomes a means rather than the final end. Public policy would seek durable prosperity within ecological limits while preserving freedom, innovation and pluralism.

Prosperity = the durable capacity of people, communities and the living world to flourish — now and in the future.

Economic growth would still be welcomed when it improves that capacity. Growth that depends primarily on depletion, avoidable waste or shifting costs onto others would be evaluated differently.

8. Measure what society actually wants to improve

A national dashboard could place conventional economic indicators beside measures of present and future well-being. The OECD already maintains a well-being framework, and UNDP's Planetary Pressures-adjusted Human Development Index adjusts human-development performance for carbon emissions and material footprint. These demonstrate that broader measurement is practical, not merely philosophical.

- Economic security: median disposable income, affordability, household debt, productive investment and resilience.
- Health: healthy life expectancy, preventable disease, mental health and access to care.
- Housing: affordability, quality, homelessness and security of tenure.
- Time: working hours, caregiving burden, leisure and work-life balance.
- Community: trust, safety, social connection and civic participation.
- Living systems: air, water, soil, biodiversity, habitat and ecosystem restoration.
- Resource stewardship: material footprint, waste, repair, reuse and recycling.
- Education and training: equal access to quality learning throughout life, including early childhood provision, academic and vocational pathways, arts, disability support and adult retraining. Measure affordability, participation, learning, completion and gaps between communities, rather than counting available places alone.
- Future capacity: infrastructure condition, education, research, natural capital and fiscal sustainability.

Quality education is part of durable well-being in its own right. A place in a classroom is a limited measure if teaching is inadequate, essential equipment is missing or a learner cannot afford to remain. The proposed dashboard would report opportunity and quality together, with results by income, disability, location and age where data permit. Equal access means a fair opportunity with appropriate support; it does not require identical interests, pathways or outcomes.

9. Make durability economically rational

Product policy can change the incentives facing manufacturers and consumers. The goal is not to dictate one design, but to reward products that retain value for longer.

- Minimum durability and reliability standards where justified.
- Repairability and durability information at the point of purchase.
- Reasonably available spare parts, manuals and diagnostic information.
- Design for disassembly, component replacement and software longevity.
- Longer warranties where appropriate and incentives for repair rather than disposal.
- Support for refurbishment, remanufacturing, second-hand markets and material recovery.

The EU's current repair and ecodesign rules provide a real-world example. They seek longer product lifetimes, easier repair, spare-parts access and consumer information. Such policies also create economic activity — but shift it from repeated disposal toward maintenance, repair, upgrading and remanufacturing.

10. Internalize costs without hiding the trade-offs

Where feasible, prices and public decisions should reflect lifecycle costs. This can involve pollution pricing, producer responsibility, deposit-return systems, resource royalties, restoration requirements, procurement standards or liability rules. The exact mechanism should depend on the problem.

The important principle is transparency: if an activity creates benefits and harms, decision-makers should see both. A policy that protects an ecosystem but makes essential goods unaffordable has a social cost. A policy that keeps prices low by transferring damage to future generations has an ecological cost. Good governance presents both sides and searches for designs that reduce the trade-off.

11. Represent people who are not in the room

Future generations and non-human life cannot bargain directly in today's institutions. Governments can compensate by requiring long-term impact statements, independent future-generations offices, natural-capital accounts, intergenerational fiscal analysis and ecological thresholds for decisions with irreversible effects.

This would not give an abstract concept veto power over elected governments. It would force present decision-makers to make long-term consequences visible before acting.

12. Govern through cooperation rather than humiliation

Complex transitions create legitimate disagreements. Energy security, employment, affordability, environmental protection and industrial competitiveness can pull in different directions. A

governance culture capable of stating the strongest case on each side, acknowledging uncertainty and seeking shared gains is better suited to these problems than a culture that treats disagreement as disloyalty.

- Separate the person from the proposal.
- State benefits, costs, uncertainties and who bears each one.
- Publish assumptions so others can challenge them.
- Use pilot programs where evidence is uncertain.
- Measure outcomes and revise policies when they fail.
- Build coalitions around specific shared interests rather than requiring agreement on everything.

13. Redesign the social contract for an automated economy

AI does not yet eliminate the need for human work, and current evidence points more toward task transformation than mass redundancy. But governance should prepare for a future in which productivity rises faster than the amount of labor required.

Possible tools include lifelong education, portable benefits, shorter working weeks where productivity permits, wage and income supplements, employee ownership, broader capital ownership, social dividends, universal basic services or other mechanisms. These are alternatives to evaluate, not a single prescribed answer. The guiding question is how productivity gains can improve lives broadly rather than becoming socially destabilizing.

Part III — What the Transition Could Look Like

14. From linear production to circular value

Predominantly linear model	Life-centered circular model
Extract more	Use fewer virgin materials where practical
Sell units	Sell durable service and performance
Replace after failure	Maintain, repair and upgrade
Proprietary barriers to repair	Interoperability and repair access where appropriate
Waste as an endpoint	Waste as a recoverable material stream
Environmental damage as externality	Lifecycle costs visible in decisions
Success = more transactions	Success = more value and well-being per unit of resource

15. A staged transition rather than a sudden replacement

1. Measure first. Establish credible national accounts for well-being, natural capital, material flows and long-term resilience alongside GDP.
2. Remove perverse incentives. Identify rules and subsidies that reward waste, pollution, short product lives or unnecessary resource consumption.

3. Set product rules gradually. Begin with high-impact categories where durability, repair and recycling standards are technically mature.
4. Use public purchasing power. Governments can buy durable, repairable and low-lifecycle-cost products, creating markets without prescribing every private choice.
5. Invest in enabling infrastructure. Clean electricity, grids, transit, digital infrastructure, recycling systems, water systems and research make sustainable choices cheaper.
6. Protect households during transition. Avoid policies whose immediate costs fall disproportionately on people with the least financial flexibility.
7. Prepare for automation. Build education, income and ownership systems that can distribute productivity gains.
8. Cooperate internationally. Align standards and supply chains so environmental responsibility does not simply push production to jurisdictions with weaker protections.
9. Review and adapt. Sunset ineffective policies, expand successful ones and publish results.

16. What might improve if the transition succeeds?

- Products last longer and household replacement costs fall.
- Repair, maintenance, refurbishment and remanufacturing become larger employment sectors.
- Material and energy demand per unit of useful service declines.
- Pollution and waste fall because prevention becomes economically valuable.
- Supply chains become more resilient through reuse, recycling and diversified sourcing.
- Productivity gains from AI and automation can translate into more time and security, not only higher output.
- Public decisions become more transparent because trade-offs are explicitly measured.
- Future generations inherit functioning infrastructure, productive capacity and healthier natural systems.
- International cooperation becomes easier when countries organize around shared practical interests rather than total ideological agreement.

17. Risks of the alternative model

A life-centered system can also fail if badly designed. Environmental rules can become bureaucratic, expensive or captured by incumbents. Broad well-being measures can be manipulated. Long-term planning can become an excuse to override democratic choice. Industrial policy can waste public money. Repair mandates can impose costs where repair is unsafe or uneconomic. Resource pricing can hurt low-income households if revenues are not recycled fairly.

For that reason, the alternative should not replace one unquestionable ideology with another. It needs democratic accountability, independent evidence, competition, experimentation, transparent cost-benefit analysis and the ability to reverse policies that do not work.

18. A practical governance framework

Principle	Question	Possible instrument	Guardrail
Life first	Does this improve durable well-being?	Beyond-GDP dashboard	Keep economic output visible

Principle	Question	Possible instrument	Guardrail
Long-term stewardship	What is transferred to the future?	Future-impact assessment	No unelected veto
Circularity	Can value remain in use longer?	Repair/durability rules	Technology-neutral where possible
True costs	Who pays for harm?	Lifecycle accounting	Protect affordability
Shared prosperity	Who receives productivity gains?	Tax/benefit/ownership reform	Preserve incentives to innovate
Evidence	Did the policy work?	Independent evaluation	Publish data and assumptions
Pluralism	Can disagreement improve the design?	Deliberation and pilots	Protect rights and dissent
Global cooperation	Can the problem cross borders?	Standards and coalitions	Respect national autonomy

19. A new definition of progress

The deepest change would be cultural. A successful society would no longer ask only, “How much did we produce this year?” It would also ask:

- Did people become healthier and more secure?
- Did the average household gain useful time as well as income?
- Did we increase or diminish the productive inheritance of the next generation?
- Did our products provide more service with fewer materials?
- Did rivers, soils, forests and biodiversity improve or decline?
- Did technology expand human freedom and creativity?
- Did prosperity become more resilient to war, climate shocks and supply disruptions?
- Did our decisions leave people with more meaningful choices?

The central transition is from measuring how fast the economic machine turns to measuring what the machine is accomplishing for life.

Part IV Education as a Foundation for Governing for Life

Learning that gives children something to move toward

Picture a child who has become accustomed to hearing what they do wrong. Then an adult notices how carefully they listen to music, how patiently they draw animals, or how persistently they take apart a broken toy. The adult offers materials, guidance and time. For once, the child has something they want to return to tomorrow. This is an illustrative possibility, not the story of a particular child.

An education system designed to support life should make room for that discovery. It should give children a broad foundation and repeated opportunities to find activities that make their hearts sing. A meaningful interest can become a reason to practice, ask for help and work with other people. It can also give adults a way to connect with a child whose abilities have been obscured by frustration or distress.

A child learning to perform a song has a reason to listen, rehearse and accept feedback. A child making a model bridge has a reason to measure accurately and discuss a design. Cooperation can acquire a purpose the child understands: it helps them do something they care about. The proposed approach invites participation in the school community while preserving room to question its rules and improve them.

Interest cannot be promised to remove anger or resolve every difficulty. Some children need sustained specialist help and protection from harmful circumstances. Enjoyable learning can be one part of support, alongside trusting relationships, clear boundaries and appropriate care. Schools should examine changes in engagement, safety and learning rather than assume that a visible moment of enthusiasm establishes lasting recovery.

What an impressive performance may conceal

When a young person sings beautifully, plays a difficult piece, paints with confidence or builds an ingenious device, observers often describe them as special. The visible achievement can conceal years of access to materials, patient guidance, practice and encouragement. Those opportunities deserve attention when we ask why other children have not yet revealed comparable interests or skills.

A fair education system should let children try before deciding what they are capable of. A quiet student may become an expressive storyteller; a restless student may concentrate while building; a child who finds one kind of mathematics difficult may begin to understand it through music or measurement. These are possibilities to explore, not fixed categories of learner. An interest should open doors rather than assign a child to a permanent identity.

Children differ in abilities, circumstances and the pace at which they learn. Opportunity and effort cannot guarantee that everyone will reach the same level in every activity. Yet an exceptional performance can invite a useful question: could I learn something like that if I had access, guidance and time? Education should make that invitation available widely, including to children who never become public performers or win competitions.

Everyday examples of opportunities to explore

The following examples describe proposed learning experiences. They illustrate how interests could connect with wider skills; they are not reported experiments or guarantees of a particular result. Materials and teaching would be adapted for age, safety, disability and local resources.

Singing and storytelling. Children could choose songs, explore the meaning of lyrics and create a short story for an audience. Teachers could connect the activity with language, memory, listening and expression. Participation could include using sign language, composing, recording or arranging rather than requiring every child to sing publicly.

Playing and making music. A shared instrument library could allow children to try percussion, keyboards or string instruments without a family purchase. Rhythm offers a practical setting for exploring patterns and fractions. Rehearsing together creates opportunities to practice listening and taking turns. Enjoyment and gradual progress would matter alongside performance.

Painting and visual design. A child could sketch a familiar place, mix colors and design a poster about protecting a nearby river. Reading, observation and communication would have a purpose within the artwork. Teachers would offer technique and feedback without requiring every student to copy the same image.

Building and repairing. Students could construct cardboard bridges, design shelters for a model community or repair an age-appropriate object under supervision. They could compare materials, measure dimensions, record what failed and revise the design. A failed first attempt would provide information for the next one.

Science and curiosity. Children could compare plant growth under different conditions, test model boats or investigate how a simple circuit works. They would learn to ask a testable question, change one factor when appropriate and distinguish observations from guesses. A project could begin with something the child notices outdoors.

Gardening and food. A class could grow herbs, examine soil organisms and plan a small meal using what it harvests. The activity could link biology, measurement, budgeting and care for living systems. Raised beds, containers or accessible indoor growing spaces would permit participation in different settings.

Movement and practical teamwork. Dance, adapted sport or a nature walk could give children ways to explore movement, cooperation and their surroundings. Students could help plan a route or choreograph a short sequence. Activities would accommodate different bodies and abilities rather than rank everyone by a single physical standard.

Community projects. Older students could interview residents, map an accessibility problem or develop a proposal to reduce waste. They would need to check information, hear differing views and explain their reasoning. The project could show how learning helps a community while teaching that good intentions still require evidence.

The first years deserve attention and support

The first four or five years deserve sustained public attention. Early relationships and experiences help establish foundations for later learning, behavior and health. Brain development begins before birth; early childhood is a particularly active period for forming connections, and

development continues afterward. There is no single birthday at which the opportunity to learn closes. [E29]

For a young child, learning can begin when an adult responds to a sound, shares attention or follows a question. Responsive exchanges help support development. This makes everyday care and relationships central to the education discussion, alongside formal preschool provision. [E30]

The proposed early-years model would provide safe play, conversation, stories, music, movement and opportunities to explore, with attentive adults who notice and respond. It would support caregivers with accessible childcare, practical guidance and routes to additional help. Its purpose would be to cultivate security and curiosity, without pressuring toddlers to demonstrate exceptional achievement.

Early experiences can influence a child's view of learning and of themselves. They do not dictate an unchangeable future. Children who have faced adversity deserve later opportunities and sustained support, and adults deserve chances to learn too. Investment in the early years should be followed by continuing investment throughout childhood and beyond.

A holistic model that people can use

The model proposed here would develop knowledge and practical competence alongside creativity, physical well-being, emotional skills, relationships and civic understanding. These aims fit the broader direction of the OECD Learning Compass, which includes agency, well-being and knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. That framework describes educational aspirations; it does not establish the effectiveness of this particular model. [E31]

A school day could include explicit instruction in reading, mathematics and other essential subjects, followed by guided projects and regular opportunities to explore unfamiliar activities. Teachers could connect a student's interests to shared learning goals and identify where direct instruction or additional practice is needed. Children would have meaningful choices, with guidance and expectations.

Each student could have a regularly reviewed learning plan recording strengths, interests, progress and support needs. It would remain open to change: a child who loves painting today may discover engineering next year. Families and students would help shape the plan, while teachers retained responsibility for ensuring that essential learning was not missed.

Assessment could combine sound checks of foundational knowledge with portfolios, practical demonstrations and conversations about learning. A student might explain a scientific result, demonstrate a repair or discuss revisions to a story. Schools would still check whether students can read, reason and use mathematics. They would also show capabilities that one examination may miss.

Access would require concrete provision: shared instruments and tools, accessible spaces, affordable transport, meals where needed and staff able to support different learners. Community libraries, workshops and arts organizations could help extend opportunities. Partnerships would need suitable supervision and reliable funding rather than dependence on families' connections.

A teenager drawn to electrical work could follow a respected vocational route with further study available later. A student interested in healthcare could receive help with prerequisites and

affordable training. A parent returning to education could attend part-time with childcare support. These examples show why a lifelong system needs several routes and ways to change direction.

For learners, tuition-free access would be most useful when it came with adequate teaching and realistic support to participate. For governments, the task would be to fund staff, facilities and capacity sustainably. The sections below examine debt, public finance and family pressures; a country comparison at the end of this part provides evidence and cautions for designing the model.

How to put the model into practice

Begin by asking students, families and teachers which opportunities and barriers exist locally. Establish a baseline for foundational learning, attendance, safety, access and staff capacity. Fund a manageable pilot that adds guided exploration and support without reducing essential teaching. Schools serving disadvantaged communities should have a genuine opportunity to participate.

Give teachers planning time, useful training and access to specialist colleagues. Budget for materials, maintenance and accessibility, with attention to costs families might otherwise absorb. Publish what the program costs and how participants are selected, so its benefits and exclusions can be examined.

Evaluate whether more children participate, gain skills and feel they belong, and whether access gaps narrow. Check for unintended effects, such as weaker foundational learning or excessive staff workload. Expand successful elements, revise unsuccessful ones and continue listening to children whose needs remain unmet.

The measure of success would include the child who becomes a confident musician and the child who simply discovers that learning can hold their interest. It would include the adult who retrain without sacrificing basic household security. A society governing for life would make these opportunities an ordinary part of public provision.

20. The purpose of education

A country's future capacity depends partly on what its people can understand, create, maintain and improve. Education develops the ability to earn a living, but it also shapes how people raise children, judge information, resolve conflict, care for the natural world and participate in public decisions. Within a framework that makes economics serve life, education therefore belongs among society's essential investments.

The question "Are we educating children mainly to fill office towers and manufacturing plants?" identifies a real choice about priorities. Preparation for work is valuable: societies need capable technicians, carers, engineers, farmers, teachers and many other workers. However, employability is an incomplete measure of educational success. A person also needs the knowledge and freedom to question harmful practices, understand consequences and help improve the systems in which they work.

It would be inaccurate to describe every school as designed solely to supply labor. Finland's curriculum explicitly includes thinking and learning, cultural competence, everyday life skills, multiliteracy, digital competence, working life, participation and a sustainable future. These published objectives show that broader purposes already exist in national policy. Whether they are achieved must be assessed separately. [E1]

This paper proposes a public purpose for education: equip each person to participate competently in society, discover and develop their capabilities, and understand how their choices affect other people and the living world. This is an ethical proposal informed by evidence, rather than a fact that research can prove to be everyone's preferred purpose.

21. Education without a lifetime debt burden

The case for publicly financed education starts with a practical observation: society needs educated people, including people whose families cannot pay substantial fees. Requiring borrowing can finance access, but it also transfers risk to the learner. Someone who leaves without a qualification may face repayment without the expected earnings benefit. A capable person may also decide against enrolling because the financial risk seems too great.

Evidence supports concern about consequences beyond the classroom. Federal Reserve research on the 2023 restart of student-loan payments found spending reductions in areas more exposed to student debt. This study uses geographic spending data and identification assumptions; it is not a direct observation of every borrower's household decisions. Earlier research also investigates effects on homeownership. These findings justify examining debt burdens as part of household security, while avoiding the claim that student debt alone explains all delayed adult milestones. [E17, E18]

A randomized study of a targeted tuition-free offer to high-achieving, low-income Michigan students reported university application rates of 68% among those offered the intervention versus 26% in the comparison group, and enrollment rates of 27% versus 12%. The offer also communicated financial certainty. The experiment supports a conclusion about this package and population, not a claim that universal free tuition would produce the same increase everywhere. [E19]

The evidence therefore supports removing financial barriers as a credible way to widen opportunity. It does not prove that tuition-free education alone guarantees graduation, prosperity, equal opportunity or a financially self-funding system. Those outcomes depend on teaching quality, preparation, capacity, support, labor-market opportunities and the funding design.

22. What publicly funded education could improve

Potential benefits should be stated as pathways to test rather than promises that every policy will deliver:

- Access to talent. Lower upfront costs can allow capable people from more income groups to pursue study or training; the Michigan experiment demonstrates one specific example. [E19]
- Household flexibility. Preventing new tuition debt can leave future income available for housing, caregiving, savings or other needs. The size of that benefit depends on the debt avoided and how public funding is raised.
- Adaptation. Accessible adult education could make it easier to change occupations as technology, health needs and environmental conditions change.
- Public capacity. Training more capable teachers, technicians, healthcare workers and other specialists could improve essential services when employment, equipment and institutional funding are also available.

- Civic participation. Education that teaches evidence evaluation and public reasoning could strengthen people's ability to assess policy; years of schooling alone do not guarantee sound judgment.
- Creative and practical contribution. Arts, trades, care, environmental restoration and scientific work could become more accessible choices when cost and debt are less restrictive.

These are reasons to investigate and design public provision, rather than a calculation of its net fiscal return. A country-specific assessment would need enrollment demand, teaching costs, available capacity, distribution of benefits and a credible funding plan.

23. What free education must mean in practice

Education can be free at the point of use while still requiring public resources. Teachers, buildings, laboratories, equipment and support staff must be funded. The policy choice concerns how those costs and risks are shared across society. The OECD identifies low-fee systems with extensive aid as well as high-fee systems with substantial aid; each has trade-offs. [E16]

A proposal to provide education freely to anyone seeking it should distinguish an entitlement to accessible learning from an unlimited guarantee of admission to every specialist course. Training surgeons, pilots or engineers requires competence and safe capacity. Financial exclusion can be reduced while preserving transparent readiness requirements, professional standards and alternative routes when a course is full.

A workable design could combine tuition-free public pathways with grants for essential living costs, childcare, disability access, transport, bridging courses and academic support. It could provide trades and apprenticeships alongside degrees, recognize prior learning, and permit adults to return without arbitrary age barriers. Open learning opportunities could coexist with capacity-limited professional programs.

Three funding questions need honest answers. First, does public support reach those who would otherwise be excluded, or chiefly subsidize students already able to attend? Second, will funding per student remain adequate if enrollment grows? Third, what is displaced from the public budget? A progressive funding design and strong earlier schooling can help prevent free tuition from becoming a benefit concentrated among already advantaged households.

Evaluation should measure entry, learning, completion, debt incurred for living expenses, and access by income and disability. It should also examine public cost and program quality. A policy can reduce fees yet fail students if classrooms become overcrowded or essential support disappears.

24. Family pressures are part of the learning environment

A child arrives at school with experiences from home and the wider community. Food insecurity, unsafe housing, violence, financial uncertainty and overwhelmed caregivers can affect the conditions in which learning occurs. Harvard's Center on the Developing Child describes how persistent adversity and excessive stress can interfere with development, while supportive relationships can buffer harm. Ordinary, manageable challenge differs from prolonged harmful stress. [E20]

This supports the connection between family circumstances and schooling, but the relationship is not deterministic. Poverty does not establish that parents are angry or neglectful. Separation does not establish that a home is harmful, and a two-parent home does not guarantee safety. Children in every family arrangement can thrive. Financial stress is one influence among many, alongside disability, bullying, illness, temperament, relationships and the quality of support.

Some children express distress through anger, withdrawal or disrupted attention. Treating every difficulty only as disobedience may miss an underlying need. Conversely, compassion does not mean ignoring harmful behavior. Schools can combine clear boundaries with assessment, early help and supportive relationships, while avoiding diagnoses based on assumptions.

The governance implication is broader than asking teachers to solve everything. Affordable housing, reliable food, access to healthcare, childcare and support for caregivers belong in the same discussion as education. The proposed approach addresses pressures affecting families while improving school support; it does not make parents the explanation for every learning difficulty.

25. Schools need the capacity to support children

UNESCO's 2024 Global Report on Teachers projected a need for 44 million additional primary and secondary teachers by 2030 to achieve universal education. This is a global projection, not a count of current vacancies in every country. It demonstrates the scale of the staffing challenge and the need to examine recruitment and retention alongside curriculum reform. [E21]

A school expected to teach, recognize distress, support disabilities, prevent bullying and work with families needs the staff, time and expertise to do those things. Proposed investments include qualified teachers, manageable workloads, accessible counselors and specialist services, practical referral pathways, and time for collaboration. The right staffing model depends on local needs; no single class-size rule establishes success.

Teachers should be able to identify that help is needed without being required to become every child's therapist or social worker. Families should have a clear route to support, and children should not have to become disruptive before assistance becomes available. Schools should report whether support reaches students and whether it improves attendance, safety, participation and learning.

26. Individual strengths and a shared foundation

Children differ in interests, experiences, pace, abilities and support needs. A student who struggles in one setting may contribute strongly in another: repairing equipment, composing music, growing food, caring for others, solving mathematical problems or communicating ideas. Schools should provide enough variety to discover these strengths instead of treating one narrow achievement measure as a complete portrait of the child.

Research on motivation supports taking students' perspectives seriously. A 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis examines autonomy support together with instructional structure and links these approaches with learning and motivational outcomes. Its findings support meaningful choices alongside clear goals and guidance. They do not justify replacing instruction with unrestricted choice or claiming that interest alone ensures mastery. [E22]

An interest in a subject can create a route into demanding learning. For example, a child interested in boats can study buoyancy, measurement, materials, water quality, budgeting and navigation. A child interested in music can explore fractions, sound, history, collaboration and digital tools. These are illustrations of curriculum design, not findings from a trial of those particular lessons.

Students still need access to reading, writing, mathematics, scientific reasoning, history and civic understanding even when an activity is initially difficult or unappealing. These foundations can expand future choices. The question is how to teach them with relevance, patient support and appropriate challenge, while allowing interests to develop and change.

A useful approach combines shared foundations, varied practical and creative experiences, electives, feedback, disability accommodations and opportunities to change direction. Interest should open possibilities rather than become an early label that restricts a child. Strengths in care, craft, art or nature deserve recognition alongside conventional academic achievement.

Enjoyment and a sense of competence can support engagement, but happy children do not invariably become happy adults, and enthusiasm does not automatically produce higher intelligence or sound long-term judgment. When people describe a child's positive "energy," this paper interprets that as observable vitality, engagement and confidence, rather than claiming that research establishes a measurable human energy field as the mechanism.

27. Learning to see the larger picture

Understanding a small problem in its wider setting can be taught through explicit questions: What caused it? Which other systems are involved? Who benefits and who carries the costs? What happens immediately, and what might happen years later? What evidence would change our conclusion?

UNESCO's guidance on education for sustainable development identifies systems thinking, anticipation, collaboration and critical reflection as learning objectives. This is a published educational framework, not proof that every school using its language achieves those competencies. [E23]

A lesson about a disposable appliance can connect design, repair, mineral extraction, labor, household costs and waste. A lesson about a river can connect science, agriculture, public health and water policy. Students can compare options and explain uncertainties rather than repeat a predetermined political answer. These examples connect education directly to the earlier sections on true costs and long-term stewardship.

AI may assist with explanations, translation, practice and access, but its answers must be checked. A proposed school policy should preserve human relationships, protect children's data, address unequal access and measure whether students can reason independently. Ease of generating an answer is not the same as understanding it.

28. An education transition that can be evaluated

- Define the purpose publicly. Combine foundational competence, personal development, practical capability and informed participation; invite students, families and teachers into the discussion.

- Reduce financial exclusion. Build adequately funded public pathways and support the costs that prevent students from remaining enrolled.
- Support families and schools together. Connect education with housing, food, care and early assistance instead of shifting every pressure onto teachers.
- Broaden the opportunities children experience. Include arts, trades, science, movement, care and environmental learning while protecting foundational instruction.
- Keep pathways open. Make transfers, bridging courses and adult return routes practical; avoid treating early performance as a permanent verdict.
- Evaluate outcomes. Examine learning, attendance, well-being, completion, equitable access, costs and teacher retention. Compare implementation with stated goals and revise what fails.

The evidence supports a direction rather than one perfect national blueprint: lower avoidable barriers, maintain teaching quality, provide supportive environments, and combine meaningful student agency with structure. Governing for life requires asking whether educational policy expands people's real capacity to learn and contribute, not merely whether it increases credentials or fills vacancies.

International evidence supporting the education proposals

29. What the international evidence can tell us

The comparisons below examine eight contrasting systems across North America, Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. They are representative examples, not an exhaustive survey or a ranking of whole societies. School education and university finance are different parts of a system; success in one does not establish success in the other.

PISA 2022 supplies a dated, common baseline for achievement among 15-year-olds. It assesses application of reading, mathematics and science. Singapore led all three domains; Estonia and Japan also performed strongly. The United States was above the OECD average in reading and science and close to it in mathematics. These results measure selected capabilities, not the full worth of a child or country. [E2, E32]

The finance comparison draws on Education at a Glance 2025 and national policy guidance accessed in September 2026. Report publication dates and underlying observation years differ. Tuition averages are not students' net bills after grants; living costs and eligibility rules also matter. Cross-country associations cannot establish that one policy caused an outcome. Culture, inequality, early childhood provision, teacher preparation, school resources and pandemic disruption may all contribute.

A fair comparison asks several questions together: Do children learn foundational skills? Are opportunities equitable? Are students safe and engaged? Can people afford to enter and complete further education? Can they develop practical, artistic and academic strengths? Are teachers able to provide the support the curriculum promises?

30. Eight education systems and their trade-offs

System	Selected feature	Potential strength	Limitation or question
United States	Varied institutions and financial aid; relatively high university fees. [E3]	Choice of pathways and substantial average graduate earnings gains.	Debt exposure, uneven affordability and teacher pay pressures.
Finland	National curriculum with local adaptation; school meals and low public tuition for eligible students. [E1, E4, E5]	Broad learning goals and support for participation.	Achievement declined in PISA 2022; living costs and fee exceptions remain. [E6]
Germany	Generally low public university tuition; company and vocational school training. [E7, E8]	Practical pathways alongside academic education.	Training-place availability and routes for changing direction need attention.
Estonia	Strong PISA 2022 results and substantial school autonomy. [E9]	High achievement with space for local teaching decisions.	Qualified teacher shortages and language and social gaps.

System	Selected feature	Potential strength	Limitation or question
Singapore	Strong achievement; more flexible subject levels and lifelong learning support. [E2, E10]	Rigorous foundations with increasing pathway flexibility.	Social achievement gaps remain; flexibility needs evaluation. [E11]
England	Tuition and maintenance loans with income-linked repayments. [E12]	Upfront borrowing can enable entry; repayments adjust to income.	Plan 5 can involve repayment obligations over 40 years.
Brazil	Public university places, reserved places and private-sector scholarships. [E13, E14]	Several instruments for widening access.	Admission capacity and earlier school preparation still affect access.
South Africa	Means-tested public university and vocational bursaries. [E15]	Support can extend beyond tuition to study and living costs.	Eligibility boundaries and funded capacity limit universal coverage.

Potential strengths and policy questions in this matrix are interpretations of the cited design features. They are not estimates of causal effects. England is discussed separately because education funding differs across the United Kingdom.

What these systems show in practice

United States. OECD's 2025 country note reports average annual bachelor's tuition of USD 9,596 at public institutions and USD 34,041 at private institutions for national students. Nearly 82% receive some form of aid, including loans. These reported averages describe different institutions and are not an individual cost quotation. Graduates also have substantial average earnings advantages; high prices therefore coexist with substantial returns. Neither average returns nor the availability of loans establishes that every student can afford education or that every course pays off. The same country note identifies low teacher salaries relative to similarly educated workers. [E3]

Finland. School meals and broader curriculum goals illustrate a system treating learning and well-being together. The low-tuition model described by the OECD applies to eligible students, while non-EU/EEA students generally pay fees for English-taught bachelor's and master's programs. Housing and other living costs remain. Finland is also a useful corrective to idealization: PISA 2022 performance declined in all three subjects, continuing an earlier trend. A supportive model still needs evidence, investment and improvement. [E1, E4–E6, E16]

Germany. DAAD guidance states that most public bachelor's and many master's programs generally do not charge tuition, but semester contributions, living costs and some program or regional exceptions remain. Its dual vocational system combines company training with vocational school. The practical lesson is to provide respected alternatives to university, while retaining routes into further education. Matching training to current jobs should not make a young person's first choice a permanent limit. [E7, E8]

Estonia. Its education ministry reports strong PISA 2022 outcomes, considerable teacher autonomy and support for self-directed learning. It also identifies a shortage of qualified teachers, differences

between language groups and growing influence of socioeconomic background. Strong national results and unequal opportunities can coexist. The lesson is to learn from its achievements without treating the country as a complete solution. [E9]

Singapore. Strong tested achievement accompanies reforms allowing students to take subjects at different levels according to their strengths and learning needs. Ministry guidance also describes mid-career learning support. These features show that rigorous common expectations can coexist with more flexible pathways. Nevertheless, PISA's socioeconomic gradient persists. Announcing a reform is evidence of a policy decision, not proof that all intended outcomes have already followed. [E2, E10, E11]

England. Income-linked loans spread payment over working life, reducing the need to pay fees upfront. For Plan 5, the published 2025–26 guidance specifies repayment of 9% of income above the applicable threshold and cancellation of remaining balances after 40 years, subject to the rules. Some borrowers repay sooner and some make no payments during low-income periods. A long contractual window is therefore not the same as every graduate paying continuously for forty years. [E12]

Brazil. Reserved places in federal higher education and Prouni scholarships at private institutions illustrate the use of admissions and financial support together. Federal law reserves at least half of places, by course and shift, for students from public schools or qualifying publicly partnered rural community schools, under its criteria. Prouni offers full and partial scholarships. The design highlights an important limitation of fee removal: a student must also have the preparation, admission opportunity and resources to remain enrolled. [E13, E14]

South Africa. NSFAS provides bursaries for eligible students at public universities and vocational colleges, with support categories that include tuition and, where applicable, accommodation, transport, materials and living allowances. This treats the cost of participation as broader than the classroom fee. Means-tested support directs funds toward need, while creating eligibility boundaries; its existence does not imply universal access or identical coverage for every student. [E15]

School design also deserves comparison independently of university fees. In the United States, education is primarily a state and local responsibility. Local decision-making can permit adaptation, while making it essential to assess differences in resources and opportunity between communities. In England, the published national curriculum establishes common subject expectations for maintained schools. Common expectations can clarify entitlements, but do not alone establish that every child receives the support needed to meet them. These are different governance arrangements, not proof that centralization or decentralization is universally superior. [E24, E25]

Germany also illustrates the debate about early separation into educational pathways. OECD's 2023 equity review discusses its relatively early tracking and opportunities to change tracks later. Tailoring instruction must be balanced against the risk that family background or an early judgment constrains opportunity. Flexibility should be practical for students, not merely permitted on paper. [E26]

South Africa's Department of Basic Education reports severe foundational reading difficulties in the PIRLS 2021 assessment. This evidence comes from a different age group and test than PISA and

should not be combined into a single league table. It demonstrates why support for higher education must accompany strong primary schooling. Brazil's PISA 2022 profile similarly reports substantial learning challenges, with only about 1% of students reaching the top mathematics levels. Public higher-education access policies cannot substitute for foundational learning. [E27, E28]

Education through the ages knowledge authority and care

What do we teach people to do with what they know—and how do we teach them to regard one another? This question connects the history of education with the purpose of Governing for Life. Knowledge can help communities grow food, care for illness, build safely, preserve culture, and resolve disagreements. The same knowledge can become a tool for exclusion or control. Our concern is both what learners gain and how that learning serves life.

This revision adds historical examples and a discussion of nurturing young minds to the education proposals. Historical findings, spiritual perspectives, and recommendations are identified separately.

Learning began before schools

Education is broader than schooling. Children learned through observing, practicing, listening to stories, and participating in family and community life long before written records. We cannot name the first moment when humans recognized its value. Written evidence helps us understand particular forms of organized education, but it does not mark the beginning of human intelligence or meaningful learning.

Research documents scribal education in Mesopotamia during approximately 2335–2150 BCE, including instruction closely tied to imperial administration. This is evidence of early formal training, not proof that one society invented all education. [H1]

What counts as educational success

A system may successfully prepare officials while leaving most children outside its doors. Another may preserve important knowledge while limiting which questions students can ask. We therefore examine purpose, participation, teaching, authority, contributions, and restrictions together. The examples below come from different periods and scales: some concern institutions, others wider traditions. They should not be read as a league table of civilizations.

We also distinguish the end of an institution from the decline of a civilization. Schools can change, recover, or leave knowledge that survives their buildings. Conflict, changing political authority, and loss of support can disrupt learning; none should be used as a universal explanation for a society's downfall.

Mesopotamia learning to administer a complex society

Purpose and contribution. Scribal training prepared people to work with writing and administrative institutions. A society able to train administrators could record and coordinate activities beyond what any one person could remember. Research on the Sargonic period connects instruction directly with that administrative purpose. [H1]

Authority and limits. This was specialized training, rather than universal schooling. Its institutional setting reminds us to ask whose needs a curriculum serves. Preparing an effective administrator does not by itself establish that the administration treated everyone fairly.

Change and lesson. The evidence discussed here describes a particular period, not a single continuous system whose downfall can be dated from it. The lesson we draw is that useful technical competence needs an accompanying question: what responsibilities come with the power to organize other people's lives?

Ancient Egypt practical knowledge and the status of the scribe

Purpose and contribution. The Rhind Mathematical Papyrus contains worked mathematical problems and is described by the British Museum as probably a textbook for scribes. It offers a surviving example of practical knowledge being organized for teaching. [H2]

Authority and limits. The Teaching of Khety, often called the Satire of Trades, contrasts the hardships of manual occupations with the advantages of a writing career. This is a particularly clear example of educational literature promoting the status of literate work. One text does not tell us what every Egyptian believed. [H3]

Change and lesson. These sources do not establish a single cause for the end of Egyptian educational traditions. They do help us see a persistent danger: praising literacy can slide into devaluing the people whose physical work supports the community. A classroom can celebrate writing without diminishing farming, building, or caregiving.

Greek and Roman examples intellectual opportunity shaped by circumstance

Purpose and contribution. In the Athenian households described by historical sources, boys' formal education included reading, writing, arithmetic, and music; further study was possible for those who did not need to work. Girls' learning was commonly directed toward household responsibilities. This describes Athens, not an identical arrangement across all Greek communities. [H4]

Roman education could progress from basic literacy and arithmetic to literary study and training in public speaking. Advanced study helped prepare people for public roles, while affordability and family circumstances restricted how far many children could continue. [H5]

Authority and limits. These examples show that rich intellectual traditions and unequal opportunity can coexist. Learning to speak persuasively is valuable; it also creates a responsibility to distinguish sound reasoning from manipulation.

Change and lesson. These sources describe learning arrangements rather than proving why Greek or Roman political systems declined. Their enduring lesson for this proposal is to preserve opportunities for broad learning while widening access beyond those whose families can afford time and instruction.

Imperial China examinations opportunity and hierarchy

Purpose and contribution. Civil service examinations linked mastery of approved Confucian texts with eligibility for official roles. The system supported literacy and offered some routes to social advancement. It made education central to the organization of government. [H6]

Authority and limits. Extended preparation generally required family resources or wealthy sponsorship. Girls and women had fewer educational opportunities. Successful candidates could gain considerable social authority. A shared curriculum therefore supported both advancement and the reproduction of hierarchy. [H6]

Change and lesson. The examination system was abolished in 1905 amid wider reforms responding to internal pressures and foreign imperialism. Its replacement should not be confused with the end of Chinese learning or treated as the sole explanation for the Qing dynasty's collapse. [H7]

Our proposed lesson is to assess both the fairness of selection and the fairness of preparation. An examination cannot provide equal opportunity if some children lack the teaching, time, or resources needed to reach it.

Nalanda sustained scholarship and learning through debate

Purpose and contribution. UNESCO describes approximately 800 years of organized knowledge transmission at Nalanda. Its monastic and scholarly traditions included logic, philosophy, and debate as a method of learning. Its influence extended through scholars and educational traditions in Asia. [H8] [H9]

Authority and limits. Entrance examinations and a formal institutional structure were part of this tradition. Recognizing its achievements does not establish universal access or unrestricted questioning in every aspect of its life. [H9]

Disruption and lesson. The modern Nalanda University's archaeology course identifies evidence of destruction, including fire layers and architectural collapse. A brief account should not turn complex evidence into a confident single-cause story. UNESCO also traces continuities in educational practices beyond the original institution. [H19] [H9]

The lesson we draw is to protect learning communities and the transmission of their knowledge, and to make reasoned discussion part of education rather than treating disagreement itself as failure.

Timbuktu scholarship exchange and the preservation of knowledge

Purpose and contribution. Timbuktu was a religious, cultural, and commercial center where people traveled to learn and manuscripts were written, copied, and preserved. Its collections demonstrate a substantial West African written scholarly tradition. [H10]

Authority and limits. Surviving manuscripts show achievement, but do not alone tell us how equally every group could participate. We should respect this heritage without assuming either universal access or a uniform model of schooling.

Disruption and lesson. UNESCO documented manuscript losses and extensive damage following the occupation of the region in 2012–2013, alongside the rescue of large collections. This was an attack on a continuing heritage, not proof that its knowledge or community had disappeared. [H11]

For Governing for Life, preservation is a community responsibility: conflict can damage generations of learning, while librarians, families, and other custodians help carry it forward.

Bologna learner participation independence and renewal

Purpose and contribution. The University of Bologna traces its early development to associations of students who helped shape teaching and paid teachers directly. Study of Roman law contributed to responses to the changing legal needs of medieval society. [H12]

Authority and limits. Its institutional history describes later restrictions under papal control, including the removal of student leadership and a religious profession requirement that discouraged students of other faiths. It also records periods of crisis and renewal. [H13]

Change and lesson. Bologna continues today; decline was not its final destination. This example invites us to protect participation and intellectual independence while recognizing that institutions need to adapt. It does not mean every historical university shared Bologna's arrangements.

When schooling is used to erase identity

History also requires examples of harm. The U.S. Department of the Interior's investigation documents federal Indigenous boarding schools using education for forced assimilation, including renaming children and suppressing their languages and cultural practices. [H14]

A system's success at imposing its rulers' objectives can be a profound failure toward children. The lesson for this proposal is to judge education by dignity, safety, and the lives of the people affected—not simply institutional discipline or compliance. Learning should not require a child to regard their family or cultural identity as inferior.

A wider principle education as a human right

Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes education as a right, connects it with the development of the person and respect for rights, and calls for understanding among peoples. This is a stated international principle; its declaration does not mean its aims have been fully achieved. [H15]

The international comparisons elsewhere on this page examine present arrangements for access and funding. Read together with these historical examples, they invite us to ask how a society can make meaningful learning available throughout life without turning educational differences into differences in human worth.

Knowledge does not determine human worth

Specialized knowledge can qualify someone for a particular responsibility. It does not make that person more valuable as a human being. A doctor's clinical knowledge matters when treating illness. A farmer's knowledge matters when producing food. A caregiver may understand needs that a professional has not yet noticed. Different responsibilities require different competence; everyone deserves dignity.

The Egyptian teaching about scribal careers and the social authority associated with Chinese examination qualifications show how education could become entwined with status. They do not prove every educated person was contemptuous of others. The concern is the judgment a system may encourage: "My qualification makes me superior," instead of "My knowledge gives me something useful to contribute." [H3] [H6]

Illustrative classroom example: a student who writes an excellent essay and a student who repairs a damaged chair have different achievements. A teacher can explain what each learned and where

each needs further practice. Neither achievement requires humiliating the other student. Recognizing practical knowledge should broaden opportunity, not become a reason to deny anyone access to academic study.

Professional knowledge in service of others

Michael points to Doctors Without Borders as an example of skills used for the wider good. Its charter commits the organization to assistance without discrimination and independence from political, economic, and religious forces. It demonstrates that a service ethic can be expressed through present-day institutions. [H17]

We should not assume doctors or lawyers in earlier centuries were generally less motivated by wealth or position, or that today's professionals share one motivation. That comparison requires evidence for particular times and places. Our proposal instead asks what education and professional institutions reward: careful work, public service, and integrity, alongside the income needed to sustain that work.

For all who nurture young minds

Michael's writing for *Energetically Sensitive Child* emphasizes the responsibility of parents, teachers, and caregivers to offer children compassion, understanding, and room to express individuality. He describes the atmosphere of a classroom in terms of energy and collective consciousness. This is his spiritual perspective, informed by his work with people. [H18]

Readers can also understand the practical concerns through everyday relationships: how adults listen, the tone they use, whether they respond fairly, and whether a child can make a mistake without humiliation. Research summarized by the CDC associates perceived teacher care and support with greater school connectedness and improved engagement in mathematics and reading. That evidence supports the importance of caring relationships; it does not establish the spiritual mechanisms described in Michael's account. [H16]

Teaching with care and room to question

A compassionate teacher offers encouragement, clear explanations, and honest feedback. Care does not require agreeing with every answer or removing expectations. It means guiding a learner without turning a difficulty into a judgment about who the learner is.

Illustrative example: a child gives an incorrect answer. "What led you to that conclusion?" gives the teacher information and the child an opportunity to explain. Ridicule may instead teach the child to remain silent. Our proposed approach combines warmth with the responsibility to examine evidence and correct mistakes.

A child should be able to question an educational, political, or spiritual claim respectfully. This applies to the ideas on this website too. Open-mindedness includes examining our own assumptions and allowing people to disagree without making them feel less worthy.

Supporting the adults who care for children

Adults' personal struggles can affect how they respond to children. Struggling does not automatically make a parent or teacher uncaring or unsafe. The relevant questions concern conduct, its effect on children, and what support or intervention is needed.

We propose manageable workloads, time to speak with children, access to support, and fair accountability when behavior causes harm. Asking educators to be endlessly patient while giving them insufficient time and help is an incomplete policy. Supporting their well-being belongs within the same responsibility to care for children.

Illustrative example: an exhausted teacher repeatedly snaps at a class. A school should address the behavior, listen to affected children, and examine workload or support needs. Understanding the teacher's circumstances should inform the response while protecting children from continuing mistreatment.

A place where a child can feel safe

For a child facing instability at home, a reliable adult at school may be particularly important. The CDC emphasizes supportive relationships for students experiencing uncertainty or trauma. [H16] A learning environment can offer predictable routines, patient help, and opportunities to participate without requiring children to disclose personal experiences publicly.

Teachers should avoid assuming they know what a quiet or distressed child is experiencing. Feeling safe does not guarantee disclosure. If a child raises a concern, the adult should listen and follow appropriate safeguarding procedures, including considering whether involving a particular caregiver could place the child at risk. Compassion and trained support need to work together.

The classroom as a community

In Michael's perspective, the classroom reflects the larger community's consciousness. In practical terms, it is also a place where children repeatedly experience how authority, disagreement, difference, and cooperation are handled. Our proposal is that these daily experiences should be treated as part of education's purpose.

Illustrative example: students disagree about how to protect a local stream. They investigate, hear different concerns, check their claims, and revise a shared plan. Learning includes science and communication, but also the experience of disagreement without contempt. This is an opportunity to practice cooperation, not a guarantee that every conflict will disappear.

Responsibility beyond the classroom

A caring education system requires cooperation beyond teachers. We propose the following responsibilities because each addresses a condition that one classroom cannot solve alone:

- **Governments:** fund accessible learning, protect children, support educators, and evaluate participation and well-being alongside attainment. Access on paper needs resources in practice.
- **Employers and professional bodies:** provide fair routes into skilled work and value integrity, service, and continuing learning. Credentials should demonstrate relevant competence rather than function as a blanket measure of worth.
- **Families:** take an interest in children's learning, listen without immediate judgment, and receive support when circumstances make participation difficult.
- **Communities:** provide libraries, practical mentors, cultural knowledge, and opportunities to contribute. Learning draws on more than one kind of expertise.
- **AI developers and schools:** use technology to assist explanation and exploration, protect privacy, and retain human responsibility for care. A helpful response from a system does not establish that it understands everything about a child's circumstances.

Success should be evaluated through meaningful learning, access, safety, belonging, the ability to question, and opportunities to contribute. These are proposed priorities, not a claim that a single measure captures every child's experience.

Education can develop knowledge without creating superiority, encourage responsibility without suppressing questions, and prepare people to serve life while respecting one another.

Sources for this addition

Historical facts are linked to their supporting sources. The lessons drawn from them and the recommendations for today are proposals for discussion. The World History Encyclopedia entries are secondary historical summaries; the remaining references include institutional research descriptions, museum collections, public records, and organizational statements.

H1. [Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East — Scribal Education in the Sargonic Period](#)

H2. [British Museum — Rhind Mathematical Papyrus](#)

H3. [University College London — Teaching of Khety: the Satire of Trades](#)

H4. [World History Encyclopedia — Family life and education in ancient Greece](#)

H5. [World History Encyclopedia — Roman Education](#)

H6. [Columbia University, Asia for Educators — Classics and Civil Service Examinations](#)

H7. [Columbia University, Asia for Educators — Nineteenth-century reform](#)

H8. [UNESCO — Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara](#)

H9. [UNESCO World Heritage Committee — Nalanda scholarship and debate](#)

H10. [Library of Congress — Ancient Manuscripts from Timbuktu](#)

H11. [UNESCO — Damage to Timbuktu's cultural heritage](#)

H12. [University of Bologna — The birth of the Studium](#)

H13. [University of Bologna — Nine centuries of history](#)

H14. [U.S. Department of the Interior — Boarding school investigative report](#)

H15. [United Nations — Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26](#)

H16. [CDC — Teacher Caring and Support](#)

H17. [Doctors Without Borders — Charter and principles](#)

H18. [Michael Simonson — The Power of a Loving Teacher](#)

H19. [Nalanda University — Archaeology of Nalanda Mahavihara Region](#)

Part V Voting with Evidence and Long Term Responsibility

31. What voters are choosing

Voting delegates public power. A candidate's decisions can affect education, family security, health, infrastructure, rights, environmental conditions and the resources inherited by future generations. The relevant question is therefore broader than whether we like the candidate: What are they likely to do with that power, and what supports that judgment?

Facts can establish a recorded vote, a budget figure or what a person said. They cannot alone settle every disagreement about priorities. People may accept the same evidence and weigh liberty, fairness, cost, risk or environmental protection differently. Responsible judgment separates the factual claim, its interpretation and the values behind the proposed decision.

32. Questions to ask about every candidate

- What authority would this office actually give them? Can they deliver the promise themselves, or does it require legislation, funding or cooperation from others?
- What is their relevant record? Look at actions and results over time, including failures, rather than relying only on campaign language.
- Are their proposals specific? Ask what will change, when it will happen, how it will be funded and who will carry the costs.
- What evidence supports the proposal? Can the sources be checked, and have credible counterarguments been addressed?
- Who benefits and who may be harmed? Consider households with limited resources, children, people with disabilities, future generations and ecological systems.
- Can they work with disagreement? Examine whether they answer substantive questions, treat people respectfully and negotiate without concealing meaningful differences.
- Do they correct factual errors? Distinguish an acknowledged mistake from a pattern of continuing claims contradicted by strong evidence.
- Are interests and finances transparent? Disclosures can identify relationships worth examining; a donation by itself does not prove corruption.
- Do they respect lawful accountability? Consider how they respond to oversight, independent scrutiny and limits on their power.
- How will success be measured? Ask what results would show the plan worked and what would lead them to revise it.

These are proposed evaluation criteria, not a scientific formula that calculates the correct vote. Voters can decide their priorities, but should apply their chosen standards consistently.

33. Questions about someone we support

- What is the strongest verified criticism of this person, and have I investigated it?
- Would I excuse the same action or statement if an opposing candidate did it?
- Am I treating confidence, familiarity or agreement as evidence of competence?
- Have their promises survived scrutiny of cost, authority and unintended consequences?

- What evidence would make me reconsider my support? If no conceivable evidence could change it, am I still evaluating the person?

Support can remain firm after scrutiny. Its credibility improves when a voter can explain the evidence, acknowledge limitations and demand accountability from the person they favor.

34. Questions about someone we oppose

- Can I describe their actual position fairly, using their full explanation rather than an opponent's summary?
- Is my objection to an established fact, a predicted consequence, a value difference or a personal impression?
- What problem are their supporters trying to solve, and is any part of that concern legitimate?
- Have they proposed something useful or achieved a positive result that I should acknowledge?
- Would I accept this accusation against a candidate I support on the same evidence?
- What evidence would make my criticism more precise, or cause me to withdraw it?

Fair examination does not require treating every claim as equally credible or every action as equally serious. If evidence differs, conclusions should differ. Understanding a person's position also does not oblige us to agree with it. The purpose is to criticize accurately and evaluate consistently.

35. How to investigate a claim

Instead of relying on the label “fake news,” investigate the specific statement. An outlet may publish an accurate report, a misleading headline or unsupported commentary. A generally reliable publication can make mistakes, and an unfamiliar source may point to a genuine document. The useful questions concern evidence, context and verification.

- Write down the precise claim. Separate statements such as “voted against a bill,” “opposes education” and “caused poor educational outcomes.” They require different evidence.
- Find the original material. Seek the full bill and vote, complete speech, dataset, research paper, financial filing or court decision. A short clip or screenshot may omit crucial context.
- Check identity and date. Confirm who produced it, the jurisdiction, the event date, the publication date and whether an old item is being presented as current.
- Examine the surrounding context. Check qualifications, the exact question answered, bill amendments and whether a vote concerned procedure or final passage.
- Investigate the source outside its own website. Look for ownership, relevant expertise, corrections and independent descriptions of its record. Professional-looking design establishes little.
- Seek genuinely independent corroboration. Several articles repeating one allegation or press release do not provide several independent confirmations.
- Match confidence to the evidence. Distinguish documented facts, disputed interpretations, allegations, forecasts and matters that remain unknown.
- Record the link and explanation. Before sharing, be able to tell another person what the evidence establishes and what it does not.

Library of Congress guidance emphasizes examining a primary source's creator, purpose and perspective, and considering additional evidence. An original document can faithfully record an

allegation without proving the allegation. A full interview can establish that words were spoken without establishing that their content was true. [V1]

Research also needs scrutiny. Ask whether the sample represents the people discussed, whether the finding is a correlation or a causal estimate, whether uncertainty is reported and whether later research contradicts it. A claim that a policy “works” needs a specified outcome and comparison, not simply an approving quotation.

36. Public records readers can use

For U.S. federal offices, the FEC provides candidate and committee financial disclosures and guidance for researching candidates. These records reveal reported contributions and expenditure; they do not expose every motive or all political influence. [V2]

The U.S. Senate’s vote guidance links readers to recorded congressional votes. Read the associated legislative text and the question voted on before accepting an advertisement’s characterization of a vote. For state and local offices, consult the relevant legislature, election authority and public meeting records. [V3]

In New Hampshire, the Secretary of State provides an online campaign-finance system and candidate financial-interest filings. Other jurisdictions maintain their own disclosure arrangements. These are useful starting points for investigation, with the completeness and relevance of each record evaluated on its merits. [V4]

For claimed outcomes, look for original statistics and independent audit or evaluation reports. Government publication is useful provenance but does not make an interpretation infallible. Check definitions and revisions; budgets, appropriations and actual spending are different figures. Court filings, charges, findings and final judgments also have different meanings.

Full interviews, debates and candidate policy documents help establish positions and commitments. Independent journalism can investigate facts those materials omit. Fact-checking articles are useful when they make evidence and reasoning visible; inspect their underlying sources instead of relying solely on a rating.

37. A practical example of consistent scrutiny

Suppose a campaign advertisement says a candidate “voted against children’s education.” First locate the recorded vote and bill text. Determine whether the vote concerned the whole bill, an amendment or a procedural motion. Examine what education provision it contained, what other measures were included, and the candidate’s explanation. Then assess that explanation against the record.

The verified conclusion may be narrower than the advertisement: the candidate voted against a particular bill containing education funding. Whether that means they opposed all education, objected to another provision or offered an alternative requires further evidence. A candidate’s explanation is relevant, but it should not automatically override their actions. Apply this same process to a person you favor and one you oppose.

For a promise of tuition-free education, ask who is eligible, which institutions and costs are covered, how places and teaching quality will be funded, and how results will be measured. For a

proposal to retain fees, ask how capable people without money will gain access and how borrowers will be protected. Either proposal should face scrutiny of practical consequences.

38. Choosing with clarity rather than certainty

A voter can keep a short evidence record for each candidate: the issue, relevant action or proposal, original source, date, what is established, what remains uncertain and why it matters. This prevents an impression from silently becoming a fact and makes later reconsideration easier.

The goal is an informed, accountable choice, not complete certainty about future behavior. Evidence may be incomplete, and a new candidate may lack an officeholding record. Evaluate relevant experience and detailed proposals while acknowledging that prediction remains uncertain. A commitment to governing for life includes retaining the ability to question the leaders we elect.

Education and democratic judgment connect the whole framework. People need both the opportunity to develop their capabilities and the ability to evaluate those entrusted with public power. Publicly supported learning, support for families and teachers, and transparent political accountability can be pursued together. Their success should be assessed by what they actually improve for people and the living world.

Conclusion

Humanity's current systems were not designed all at once. They accumulated over centuries in response to scarcity, industrialization, war, technological change and political struggle. They have produced enormous achievements as well as serious unintended consequences. Re-examining them does not require rejecting everything that came before.

The opportunity is to retain what works — enterprise, scientific discovery, markets, trade, democratic accountability, personal freedom and innovation — while changing the incentives that reward waste, conceal long-term costs and treat increasing consumption as the primary definition of success.

The technological question of the twenty-first century may be whether humanity can produce enough clean energy, food, housing, information and useful goods. The governance question is larger: whether humanity can decide wisely what to produce, how to distribute opportunity, how long products should serve us, what costs may be imposed on others, and what kind of living world should remain after today's decisions have passed into history.

If governance evolves in that direction, economics does not disappear. It becomes what it was always capable of being: a powerful set of tools for organizing resources in service of human and ecological flourishing.

Evidence Base and Further Reading

United Nations Environment Programme — Global Resources Outlook 2024

<https://www.unep.org/resources/Global-Resource-Outlook-2024>

Resource extraction, material use, environmental pressures and pathways toward sustainable resource use.

OECD — Well-being and beyond GDP

<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/well-being-and-beyond-gdp.html>

Why GDP should be complemented by economic, social and environmental measures of current and future well-being.

OECD — Beyond GDP: Measuring What Counts for Economic and Social Performance

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/beyond-gdp_9789264307292-en.html

The case for broader national scorecards and the principle that measurement choices shape policy choices.

UNDP — Planetary Pressures-adjusted Human Development Index

<https://hdr.undp.org/planetary-pressures-adjusted-human-development-index>

An example of adjusting human-development measurement for carbon emissions and material footprint.

European Commission — Directive on repair of goods

https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/consumer-protection-law/directive-repair-goods_en

Current policy approach to repair, product lifetime, spare parts and consumer incentives.

EUR-Lex — Regulation (EU) 2024/1781, Ecodesign for Sustainable Products

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1781/oj/eng>

Legal framework addressing durability, repairability, upgradability, reuse, recyclability and premature obsolescence.

International Labour Organization — Generative AI and jobs: A 2025 update

<https://www.ilo.org/publications/generative-ai-and-jobs-2025-update>

Evidence on occupational exposure to generative AI and the likelihood of job transformation.

International Labour Organization — The impact of GenAI on jobs, productivity and work organization (2026)

<https://www.ilo.org/publications/impact-genai-jobs-productivity-and-work-organization-review-empirical>

Recent evidence on productivity gains, employment effects, inequality and job quality.

Note: This paper combines established evidence with scenario analysis and normative governance proposals. Statements about what could happen under future systems are possibilities to evaluate, not forecasts or guarantees.

Additional Evidence and Public Records

References E1 to E32 support the education expansion. References V1 to V4 support the public-record and source-evaluation guidance. Dates distinguish research periods and published guidance; national policy pages were accessed on 30 September 2026. Proposed benefits and policy designs are identified in the discussion and should not be read as guaranteed outcomes.

[E1] Finnish National Agency for Education

National core curriculum for primary and lower secondary education

<https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/national-core-curriculum-primary-and-lower-secondary-basic-education>

[E2] OECD 2023

PISA 2022 Results Volume I How did countries perform in PISA

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i_53f23881-en/full-report/how-did-countries-perform-in-pisa_dc514907.html

[E3] OECD 2025

Education at a Glance 2025 United States country note

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/education-at-a-glance-2025_1a3543e2-en/united-states_784df67f-en.html

[E4] Finnish National Agency for Education

Primary and lower secondary education and school well-being

<https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/basic-education>

[E5] Study in Finland

Fees and cost of living

<https://www.studyinfinland.fi/funding-your-studies/fees-and-cost-living>

[E6] OECD 2023

PISA 2022 Finland country note

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/finland_6991e849-en.html

[E7] DAAD

Costs of education and living in Germany

<https://www.daad.de/en/studying-in-germany/living-in-germany/finances/>

[E8] Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training

The German dual training system

<https://www.bibb.de/en/77203.php>

[E9] Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2023

Estonian PISA 2022 results strengths and challenges

<https://www.hm.ee/en/news/estonian-15-year-oldss-knowledge-first-europe-and-among-strongest-world>

[E10] Singapore Ministry of Education 2024

Subject-based banding and mid-career learning announcements

<https://cos.moe.gov.sg/2024-announcements/>

[E11] OECD 2023

PISA 2022 Singapore country note

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/singapore_2f72624e-en.html

[E12] UK Government

Student loans terms and conditions for 2025 to 2026 including Plan 5

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-loans-a-guide-to-terms-and-conditions/student-loans-a-guide-to-terms-and-conditions-2025-to-2026>

[E13] Brazil federal legislation

Law 12711 as amended reserved places in federal institutions

<https://legislacao.planalto.gov.br/legisla/legislacao.nsf/websearch?codigo=12.711&data=20120829&ementa=2&openagent=&tipo=LEI>

[E14] Brazil Ministry of Education

Prouni full and partial scholarships at private institutions

https://www.gov.br/mec/pt-br/assuntos/es/prouni/prouni?b_start%3Aint=60

[E15] National Student Financial Aid Scheme South Africa

Bursary scheme and application guidance

<https://www.nsfas.org.za/content/how-to-apply.html>

[E16] OECD 2025

How is tertiary education financed Education at a Glance 2025

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/09/education-at-a-glance-2025_c58fc9ae/full-report/how-is-tertiary-education-financed_2845d742.html

[E17] Aladangady and colleagues Federal Reserve 2025

Debt Payments and Spending Evidence from the 2023 Student Loan Payment Restart

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/debt-payments-and-spending-evidence-from-the-2023-student-loan-payment-20250905.html>

[E18] Mezza Ringo Sherlund and Sommer 2020

Student Loans and Homeownership Journal of Labor Economics 38 pages 215 to 260

<https://doi.org/10.1086/704609>

[E19] Dynarski and colleagues NBER Working Paper 25349

Closing the Gap targeted tuition-free offer randomized study

<https://www.nber.org/papers/w25349>

[E20] Harvard Center on the Developing Child

Three principles to improve outcomes for children and families

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/report/three-principles-to-improve-outcomes-for-children-and-families/>

[E21] UNESCO and International Task Force on Teachers 2024

Global Report on Teachers projected staffing needs to 2030

<https://connect.unevoc.unesco.org/home/UNEVOC%2BPublications/lang%3Den/akt%3Ddetail/qs%3D6716>

[E22] Educational Psychology Review 2025

Blending Teacher Autonomy Support and Provision of Structure in the Classroom for Optimal Motivation systematic review and meta-analysis

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-025-09994-2>

[E23] UNESCO 2017

Education for Sustainable Development Goals learning objectives

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/education-sustainable-development-goals-learning-objectives>

[E24] U.S. Department of Education

The federal role and state and local responsibility for education

<https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/federal-role-in-education>

[E25] UK Government

National curriculum in England framework for key stages 1 to 4

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>

[E26] OECD 2023

Equity and Inclusion in Education governing and designing education systems

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/equity-and-inclusion-in-education_e9072e21-en/full-report/component-5.html

[E27] South African Department of Basic Education 2023

Response to PIRLS 2021 and revised reading plan

<https://www.education.gov.za/ArchivedDocuments/ArchivedArticles/Minister-Motshekga-responds-to-PIRLS-findings-with-revised-National-Integrated-Reading-Plan.aspx>

[E28] OECD Education GPS

Brazil student performance PISA 2022

<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=BRA&topic=PI&treshold=5>

[V1] Library of Congress 2021

Evaluating primary sources and considering additional perspectives

<https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2021/09/evaluating-primary-sources-is-seeing-believing/>

[V2] Federal Election Commission

How to research candidates and public campaign records

<https://www.fec.gov/introduction-campaign-finance/how-to-research-public-records/candidates/>

[V3] U.S. Senate

How to find congressional votes

https://www.senate.gov/legislative/HowTo/how_to_votes.htm

[V4] New Hampshire Secretary of State

Campaign finance system and disclosures

<https://www.sos.nh.gov/elections/campaign-finance>

Additional New Hampshire financial interest records <https://www.sos.nh.gov/financial-interest-rsa-15-and-12-g>

[E29] Harvard Center on the Developing Child. Brain Architecture. Explains early development, the interaction of genes and experience, and continuing capacity for new connections throughout life. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/key-concept/brain-architecture/>

[E30] Harvard Center on the Developing Child. A Guide to Serve and Return and Early Childhood Development. Responsive exchanges and supportive environments. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resource-guides/guide-serve-and-return/>

[E31] OECD. The OECD Learning Compass 2030. An aspirational framework including student agency, well-being and competencies. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/tools/oecd-learning-compass-2030.html>

[E32] OECD 2023. PISA 2022 United States country note. Describes mathematics performance as close to the OECD average and reading and science performance as above it. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/united-states_a78ba65a-en.html