

**Brain Neaves, Third Place Winner from the New England Region  
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There are some things that all Americans have in common. All Americans believe in the right to be able to say what is on one's mind. They all believe in the right to have a lawyer before a court. Another important belief is the right for all Americans to have an education. The educational opportunities for American citizens, notably females and minorities, have expanded over the years, but the principle remains the same as it was in the early days of America. Everyone deserves an opportunity for the pursuit of happiness, and at the heart of that principle lies education, because without knowledge, it is very difficult to find opportunities to succeed. The value of education in America is displayed by Benjamin Rush's "The Education of Republican Women," and the words and actions of President Thomas Jefferson.

Benjamin Rush's "The Education of Republican Women" displays the value of education. "It is high time to awake from this [British] servility," Rush said, "And to adopt manners in everything that shall be accommodated to our state of society, and to the forms of our government. In particular it is incumbent upon us to make ornamental accomplishments yield to principles and knowledge, in the education of our women." Here, Rush stresses the need of education for women in order to help America's new government develop. Rush makes his argument in support of education for young ladies in several ways. Wise and educated mothers can improve the American government and country by instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government, he said. Rush also writes that American mothers should be educated because "there have been few good or great men who have not been blessed with wise and prudent mothers." Rush also says that if women in America are educated, their husbands may find the sweetest prize of their toils in the approval and applause of their wives. Clearly, Rush's article reflects the value on education in early America.

Thomas Jefferson embodies the value of education very well. Jefferson understood the importance of education in American life. "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be," Jefferson wrote. This quotation reveals that Jefferson not only thought education was important, but that it was necessary to protect freedom. As well as expressing his support for education in words, Jefferson shows his value of education in his actions. The Land Ordinance of 1785, written by Jefferson, was an important document in many ways. However, one important thing about it stands out. Out of each township, one parcel of land is always donated to education. This ordinance became a key document in the development of education in the Old Northwest. Jefferson also attempted to pass several bills that would secure education for citizens in the law, including the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, which would make primary schools for all children available, and make a secondary school available for the brightest boys. Even into his retirement, Jefferson attempted to further education in America by founding and helping to maintain the University of Virginia. Clearly, Jefferson had a passion to improve education in America.

Education has been a prominent focus in my life as well. Until I was in sixth grade, my parents homeschooled me, hoping to instill a lifelong interest in learning new things. Once I entered public school in seventh grade, I made it a priority to do well in my classes. School has been a rewarding and important part of my life ever since. I plan to keep developing a good education by going to college. Having a good education will give me freedom by giving me the skills to do high-paying work, as well as help me understand how to solve the problems that I find in daily life. Having a good education is mentally rewarding as well as necessary to secure a good job.

The value of education has been an important one in the history of America, displayed by documents such as "The Education of Republican Women". Our nation's great political leaders have kept the value of education close to heart, one of which is Thomas Jefferson. I, too, have displayed the value of education in my life. Through all of these examples, it is clear that the value of education is important in American life.