



What Kind of Citizen? Educating Our Children for the Common Good

Joel Westheimer

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How can schools teach the skills required for a strong democracy to flourish? *What Kind of Citizen?* asks readers to imagine the kind of society they would like to live in—and then shows the ways in which schools can be used to make that vision a reality. Westheimer draws on groundbreaking research on school programs and policies to sharply critique the current direction of school reform. He points to the many varied and powerful ways to teach children and young adults to engage critically, to think about social issues, and to participate in authentic debate that acknowledges that intelligent adults can have different opinions. But today's teachers are being forced to abandon these practices in favor of test-preparation in only a very narrow set of academic subjects. How did this happen? What can we do to set schools back on the right track? How can we realign school goals with what research shows parents, children, and teachers actually care about? How can we save our schools from today's myopic interpretation of what constitutes an education? Westheimer answers these questions and makes a powerful call for schools to become more engaging, more democratic, and more educative.

“Among the many casualties of a preoccupation with rigor and accountability is the prospect of education for meaningful democratic citizenship. In this refreshingly accessible book, Westheimer not only makes that point but explains the importance of helping students to think critically and question tradition. He issues a welcome invitation to connect our conception of the ideal school to its impact on our broader society.”

—**Alfie Kohn**, bestselling author

“What does it mean to be a democratic citizen? And what kind of education produces one? For the past 2 decades, Joel Westheimer has been one of North America's most knowledgeable and able guides to these critical issues. Along the way, he has forced us to reconsider the larger goals and purposes of our public schools. His book will provide an invaluable roadmap for anyone who asks the big questions, no matter what they think of his answers.”

—**Jonathan Zimmerman**, New York University

“In this highly readable, persuasive book, Joel Westheimer reminds us that, in our zeal for higher test scores, we seem to have forgotten the highest aim of education—to produce better people, more thoughtful citizens.”

—**Nel Noddings**, Stanford University

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