

## Horace Mann and the Common School Movement

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Senior Division  
Group Website  
500 Words

## Process Paper

Everyone in our group is interested in education, so we knew education would be a great topic for us. Two of our members even serve on a district-wide advisory board. While checking out books from a library we realized the topic was right in front of us. We checked out those books through our public school library accounts. This made us wonder where our robust public school system came from. A few Google searches later, we decided to focus on Horace Mann and the birth of public schools.

Our main methods of finding sources were the Internet and contacts at colleges. We used a variety of websites to find both analyses of the events we discussed and also primary sources such as the text of the relevant laws. We also used books that Horace Mann, the central figure in our topic, wrote as a primary source on both his thoughts at the time and as a link to the issues of the day. Finally, we used University of Minnesota databases to find an additional multitude of primary sources.

As all of our group members have an interest in technology or computer science, we decided to create a website to tap into these talents. The website format also gave us the most leeway in dividing up labor to make sure that everyone was involved every step along the way but nobody had to work on something they did not enjoy. Our first step in creating the project was researching together so everyone understood the topic and knew what sources were available. Once everyone understood the topic well and we had a variety of sources we divided the website into sections and let everyone work on a different area using the sources they needed. Finally, we revised and edited the website until it was polished as a group. As we felt that the History Day website builder was inadequate, we also spent some time polishing our CSS skills in order to refine the design of our website.

After our first competitions, we felt that we needed to update our website. We redid the entire graphic design of the website, as well as making substantial updates to the text. It was too reliant on quotes to tell the story of Horace Mann so we made our own words more descriptive and eliminated extraneous information.

We often take our education for granted. The countless hours that teachers put in to make us better people usually goes unnoticed. This is most unfortunate, because education is one of the largest steps up on the ladder to prosperity. Lack of access to education is a massive barrier to success that is still prevalent around the world. That barrier used to be universal in the USA as well, until Horace Mann and the Common School Movement broke it. We chose to bring this topic in front of you today because of the importance of the Common School movement, and how it ties into the story of American education.