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## Editorial Urges Politicians to Support Higher Education – it’s a Winning Issue

March 19, 2018

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[NY Times Editorial Says Higher Education is Important and Finds Flaws in Polls Expressing Negative Opinions about Higher Education](#)

[www.NYTimes.com](http://www.NYTimes.com)

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We’re supposed to be living in a time of education skepticism. The media regularly run stories suggesting education is overrated. K-12 schools are said to be in a never-ending crisis, and college debt has become a new crisis. A much-discussed Pew Research Center poll recently found [a jump](#) in the number of people saying colleges had a negative effect on the country.

In truth, though, Americans’ attitudes toward education are much simpler than all of this noise suggests — just as that Alabama ad test found. Whatever complaints people may have about their local school or college costs, most have no doubt that their children need a good education. People see it as the most reliable path to a good life, and they are right.

The unemployment rate for college graduates is [a mere 2.3 percent](#). College graduates [earn vastly more](#) than non-graduates. Educational gaps in life expectancy and health status [are growing too](#).

When you start to dig into the education skepticism, you find that much of it collapses. Those journalists and academics publicly questioning the value of education? Many are desperately trying to get their own children into strong school systems and colleges. Their skepticism apparently applies only to other people’s kids.

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And that Pew poll? It was legitimate but misunderstood. The rise in negative feelings toward colleges came largely among Republicans, many of whom see campuses as bastions of liberalism. Yet those Republicans still want their children to attend college. They understand that the benefits of education outweigh any risks of lefty brainwashing.

Last week, I asked the research group Morning Consult to conduct [a poll on education](#). The main question gave parents a list of schooling levels — high school, community college, four-year college — and asked which they wanted their own children to attain. The results were overwhelming: 74 percent chose four-year college, and another 9 percent chose community college. The progressive think tank Demos recently commissioned its own poll that found strikingly similar support for [increased higher-education funding](#).

The popularity of education offers a giant opportunity to politicians. It's a chance to talk about something other than Trump — and be heard.

*David Leonhardt*