1.a. Education defined:

“the social institution that is responsible for transmitting knowledge, skills, and cultural values in a formally organized structure” (Kendall, 1998:274-297).

b. Schools are locally controlled.

We finance most education in the US on a local level, through property taxes. We guard local control of schools "jealously." Local school boards have control over such matters as allocation of monies, curricular content, school rules, and hiring and firing policies.

2. What are the main problems with U.S. education?

a. Economic: Schools can more easily go into a budget crisis due to local control, especially in areas of low-tax property.

- Costs of fuel for school buses and food for school lunches may increase.

- When the costs to the schools begin to outweigh the money coming in through taxes and other funding sources, programs that are deemed unessential – such as non-academic or arts concentrations – are cut and teachers may lose their jobs.
2. What are the main problems with U.S. education?

b. Performance: The U.S. is only middle of the pack internationally in math, science, and reading education.

- In 2015, the U.S. ranked 38th out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science & reading in PISA tests designed for 15 year olds (Singapore is #1).
- Also, average math scores for fourth- and eighth-graders in 2015 fell for the first time since 1990.
- Standardized testing curricula, such as the Common Core tests, have been controversial due to the challenges they pose to local control.

c. Drugs: Substance use and abuse, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are major issues affecting American students.

- A 2011 survey of American high school students by the CDC notes that 39 percent of teens reported drinking alcohol within the past 30 days and 22 percent engaged in binge drinking.
- Many teens begin substance abuse through regular regimens of legal prescription drugs, even (ironically) drugs "designed" to help them in school (Ritalin, Adderall, etc.).

d. Changing Norms: Society’s norms are putting more responsibility for children and expectations for their care on social institutions, such as daycare, schools, and law enforcement.

- Meanwhile, the Pew Research Center reports that Americans have a declining interest in education.
- Schools have taken on an industrial character (Sir Ken Robinson RSAnimate).
- Money is not the answer to boosting our country’s international educational status. In studying the world’s highest achievers — Finland, Singapore and Ontario, CA — our lack of respect for teachers is the nation’s number one enemy of education.
2. What are the main problems with U.S. education?

**e. Privatization:** The "neoliberal" (conservative) agenda in the United States is to get government out of any service that can be provided by the private market. Education is no exception.

- "Public" charter schools offer taxpayer-funded education without the benefits of oversight by local taxpayers and without collective bargaining agreements (unionization) of teachers – all of the power is in the hands of the administrators and executives.
- Private charter schools have no regulation on religious education (public schools must respect the wall between church and state).
- Real public schools, by law, must serve all students in the district (including special needs students); charter schools can pick and choose their students, leading to potential discrimination and unequal educational opportunity: (see chart, next page)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>% Economically disadvantaged students</th>
<th>% Special education students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success Academy Charter-Harlem 1</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 149 Sojourner Truth</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 242 Young Diplomats Magnet Academy</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 76 Philip Randolph</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 2 Samuel Stern</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Academy Charter-Bed-Stuy 2</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 297 Abraham Stockton</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 59 William Floyd</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 33 Carter G. Woodson</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Academy Charter-Bronx 2</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 55 Benjamin Franklin</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 10 Theodore Schoenfeld</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 152 Garret A. Morgan</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3. What problems exist in U.S. higher education?

**a. Cost:** Unlike public secondary education, higher education (college and university) in the U.S. is privately-controlled. Yet, it faces its own challenges, the primary one being cost.

- "It's not going toward my salary!" "At some private colleges, for instance, 58 percent of the dollars go to student and institutional support services, compared with just 42 percent that is spent on actual instruction." Washington Post
- Government is spending much less on your education. Student tuition dollars at public research universities covered around 56 percent of educational costs in 2008. Today, they cover nearly 63 percent. Meanwhile, when measured per student, state spending on instruction at public colleges is at its lowest point since 1980. Washington Post
3. What problems exist in U.S. higher education?

b. Loans: To pay for the higher costs, student loans have been used to supplement parental savings and scholarships/grants.

- In 2012, student loan debt peaked over $1 trillion nationally, higher than consumer credit card debt.

- The current “mess” is just one of many that have been created in the attempt to solve educational social problems since the 1950s (see Best and Best 2014, *The Student Loan Mess*).

c. The 4 “Messes” of Student Loans (Joel and Eric Best, 2014):
   
   i. 1958 - 1972: Opened access through creation of the Federal Student Loan Program; Unintended consequence = limited access to private loans (unavailable to lower social classes).

   ii. 1972 - 1998: Guaranteed stable access to loans through creation of Sallie Mae (private federal loan servicer; now “Navient”); Unintended consequence = high rates of loan defaults (no repayment).

   iii. 1998 - 2010: Increased usage of student loans and accompanying debt load due to rising college costs; Unintended consequence = economic slowdown; “millennials” not able to afford middle class lifestyle (downward structural mobility).

   iv. 2010 - today: Fear of an economic “bubble” being created by financial sector manipulation of well-intentioned student loan debt policies; Unintended consequence could be a second Great Recession.

So, is free college tuition a good idea? Or will there be negative reverberations from that policy as well?