

Ye Old Deluder Satan Law

The Massachusetts School Law of 1647, as it is officially called, required that towns with 50 or more families establish schools. Several secondary and some elementary schools were opened as a result of the edict, but many towns preferred to pay the fine imposed for ignoring the law. Although the law was not the beginning of publicly supported education, it was an important milestone. It provided a precedent that could be cited in later campaigns to make schools a matter for both public concern and governmental interest.



It being one chiefe proiect of y^eould deluder, Satan, to keepe men from the knowledge of y^e, Scriptures, as inform^r nears by keeping y^m in an unknown tongue, so in these latt^r times by perswading from y^e use of tongues y^t so at least y^e true sence, & meaning of y^e orginall might be clouded by false glosses of saint seeming deceivers, y^t learning may not be burded in y^e grave of fathers in y^e Chuch and commonwealth, the Lord assisting o^r endeavo^rs,

It is therefore ordered, in every township of this jurisdiction after ye Lord hath increased your numbers to, to 50 households, shall then forthwith appoint one with in their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as ye major part of those that ordered by prudentials ye town shall appoint; provided, those who send their children be not oppressed by paying much more money than the have for teachers in other towns; and it is furthered ordered, where any town shall increase to 100 families or households, they shall set up a grammar school therefore being able to in such youth as far as they shall be fitted for the university, provided that if any town neglect this performance [more than] one year, then every such town shall pay 5 pounds to the next school [town] until they shall perform this order.