

**Re: “Public Military Academies  
Put Discipline in the Schools”**

**April 7, 2005**

**Letter to the Editor**

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EPSL-0505-112-EPRU

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Re: "Public Military Academies Put Discipline in the Schools" by Alina Tugend, April 6, 2005. "Discipline" is the ultimate weapon in the conservative arsenal on school policy because it conveniently imposes amnesia about the history of how public schools are the way they are. The history of unequal funding of public schools? Forget about it. Subject underfunded schools to "fiscal discipline" and make them compete with each other for money. The deep links between poverty and unemployment and public school performance? Questions about whose knowledge matters and what should guide curriculum selection? Which schools get which teachers? Forget about it all. Impose "discipline" on students with high stakes standardized tests; impose "discipline" on teachers with scripted lessons; impose "discipline" on administrators with threats of "reconstitution." And now turn public schools into military bases. Making public schools into military academies is not only a backdoor draft targeting the poor and minorities who have been shortchanged with fewer educational and economic opportunities. It is also a racially-coded way to displace blame for America's failure to extend universal high quality public education onto those citizens most injured by this failure. Perhaps the gravest fact that gets forgotten with all this talk of discipline is that public schools have a democratic function of preparing citizens - a task very different than that of preparing soldiers.

Kenneth J. Saltman

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Original article: "Public Military Academies Put Discipline in the Schools" by Alina Tugend, April 6, 2005, *The New York Times*, Section B, Page 9, Column 3. Available at: [www.nytimes.com/2005/04/06/education/06academies.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/06/education/06academies.html)