



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



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How Public School Curriculum Has Changed!

Obsession with Nosy Questionnaires

Many parents assume that the tests given to their children in public school are only for educational purposes. To the contrary, for many years schools have been demanding that students answer nosy questions about their personal behavior and attitudes, about what goes on inside the family, and even about the behavior of relatives.

The federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) 20 U.S.C. §1232h(b), passed in 1978 to address this problem, prohibited the asking of nosy questions about sexual or illegal behavior, or mental or psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his family, without prior written parental consent, in any programs financed through the U.S. Department of Education. Enforcement of this law has always been passionately resisted by the public school establishment.

No regulations were written until 1984. Phyllis Schlafly's 1984 book *Child Abuse in the Classroom* (which Thomas Sowell called "must reading for parents") records the shocking statements of parents who testified about survey and curriculum abuses and the need for these regulations. Despite the law and the regulations, more and more offensive questionnaires continue to be given to students in schools all over America. Usually, the school claims that PPRA doesn't apply because the questionnaire doesn't use federal money.

New Jersey has suddenly leapt to the forefront of this issue due to the determination of alert parents whose children in a Ridgewood public school were given a nosy questionnaire called "Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors." Pupils as young as age 12 were required to answer a 156-question survey about sex, drugs, suicide and other personal matters.

Question 101 was: "Have you ever tried to kill yourself?" Acceptable answers were "No"; "Yes, once"; "Yes, twice"; "Yes, more than two times". Question 108 was: "How many times, if any, in the last 12 months have you used LSD ('acid')?" The acceptable answers were "0"; "1"; "2"; "3-5"; "6-9"; "10-19"; "20-39"; "40+".

The questionnaire asked students to incriminate

themselves by saying how many times they had "stolen something from a store" (question 56); "damaged property just for fun (such as breaking windows, scratching a car, putting paint on walls, etc.)" (question 59); used heroin, opium, morphine, alawan, PCP or Angel Dust (questions 105-7).

The unmistakable impression conveyed to the students was that illegal and immoral conduct is rampant among our youth and probably normal. The questionnaire's implicit message was that the issue is not whether certain behavior is wrong, but how frequently it occurs. The school administered the survey during a compulsory classroom period as though it were a test, with every student participating.

Several parents sued the school district in federal court. The school prevailed in the district court, but the parents persisted. They won an unprecedented and spectacular triple victory.

First Victory: The Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the district court and ruled unanimously in favor of the parents on December 10, 2001 (*C.N. et al v. Ridgewood Board of Education*). The Circuit Court agreed with the parents that the school's administration of the questionnaire may have violated the First Amendment's prohibition against compelled speech and the Fourth Amendment's prohibition against unreasonable intrusion into the household. The Court also agreed with the parents that the Board may have violated "the substantive due process rights for the adults to raise their children." The court remanded the case to the lower court to proceed with discovery to prove constitutional and legal violations.

Second Victory: On December 18, 2001, the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office, after a two-year investigation, issued a 15-page letter to the Ridgewood School District stating that the District had violated all four requirements of the PPRA: 1) the survey was funded with federal education (Goals 2000) funds; (2) the students were "required" to participate in the survey; (3) the survey asked questions that would reveal information in three of the prohibited information categories; and (4) the school district did not obtain prior written

consent from the parents.

Third Victory: On January 7, 2002, the Governor of New Jersey signed into law the New Jersey Student Survey Bill (A3359). Often called the New Jersey Protection of Pupil Rights law, it applies the protections in the federal PPRA to *all* surveys given in the state's public schools. The new law requires that schools obtain informed written parental consent before giving surveys or tests asking for information about political affiliations, potentially embarrassing mental and psychological problems, sexual behavior and attitudes, family income and other personal family matters, or legally privileged matters, and imposes monetary penalties for school districts violating its provisions.

This new law should put an end to nosy questionnaires in New Jersey and become a model for other states. The need for this law was demonstrated again when another New Jersey questionnaire came to light which had been administered to 7th and 8th graders last year in a Ridgewood middle school. Here are a few of the 55 intrusive questions on the survey entitled "How Am I?":

Have you ever driven a car after drinking alcohol, or ridden with a driver who seemed impaired? Are there guns in your home or the homes of your friends? Are you engaging in risky sexual behavior (multiple partners, no protection from STDs or unwanted pregnancy)? Do you often think you are stupid, worthless, unlovable?

If you drink, do you drink intending to get drunk? Have you used any kind of drugs? Have you ever made choices while under the influence of drugs or alcohol that you later regretted? Do you hang around with a crowd that smokes, drinks, or uses drugs? Do you have a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, or uncle who is an alcoholic, is significantly overweight, or developed colon cancer? The teacher told the students to put their names on the questionnaire and to graph their responses to indicate their levels of risky behavior.

Whatever happened to our Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches and our Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination? Did anyone read these kids their *Miranda* rights?

The only other states that have PPRA laws similar to New Jersey's new law are Nevada and Utah. Parents in other states should ask their legislators to pass a PPRA.

Adopting a Federal Curriculum

Behind frequent protestations by public officials about local control of the schools, a federal curriculum has been quietly imposed by law. All the pieces are now in place for this major goal of the Clinton Administration. And it's all hiding behind that good conservative word "standards."

Elementary and secondary school education used to be organized around subjects such as reading, math, history, geography, language, and science. While smatterings of those subjects are still taught, the focus has been shifted from academic subject matter to teaching attitudes, beliefs, values, themes, behaviors, and job skills. This is indoctri-

nation, not education. Leftwing professors write the textbooks and the teachers unions control the public schools, so the ideology is what those groups deem politically correct.

Two of the three 1994 Bill Clinton laws — Goals 2000, which defines the goals, and School-to-Work, which prescribes the shift from academics to job skills — were touted as "voluntary." The third 1994 law, the appropriations reauthorization (known to many as H.R. 6), tied the knot, warning that schools would not get any federal money unless they conform to the other two laws.

In a remarkable inclusion of special-interest legislation, the third law named and funded a private organization, the Center for Civic Education (CCE), to develop the national standards for teaching civics and government. This cozy relationship was reconfirmed in the 2002 education law called "Leave No Child Behind" and means that CCE is empowered, with the force of federal law and a stream of taxpayers' money, to decide what is taught in our nation's schools about civics and government.

CCE produced a 180-page volume called *National Standards for Civics and Government*, plus textbooks, teacher's guides and other materials for elementary, middle, and high school levels. This great quantity of words is short on facts but long on inculcating attitudes.

CCE's textbook called *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution* admits a peculiar aversion to facts: "The primary purpose of this text is not to fill your head with a lot of facts about American history and geography. Knowledge of the facts is important but only insofar as it deepens your understanding of the American Constitutional system and its development."

"Deepens your understanding," that is, of a prescribed worldview without cluttering your mind with hard facts about American history and what is actually in the U.S. Constitution. For example, the fact that the U.S. Constitution contains a Second Amendment doesn't exist in the book called *Standards*. Many pages of *Standards* are devoted to the Bill of Rights but, funny thing, the Second Amendment is completely censored out.

The 180 pages of *Standards*, of course, contain much that is informative, but the information is peripheral to the selling of a political agenda designed to change the student. The book admits that *Standards* is trying to teach "certain dispositions or traits of character."

One major theme is a put-down of allegiance to national sovereignty. Professor Allen Quist of Bethany Lutheran College made a word count and discovered that the book contains only 8 references to national sovereignty, but 17 references to the environment, and 42 to multiculturalism. When *Standards* listed the seven "fundamental values" of the United States, national sovereignty didn't make the cut, but diversity did.

Six of the eight references to national sovereignty use the same curious wording: "The world is divided into nation-states that claim sovereignty over a defined territory

and jurisdiction over everyone within it.” Do we only “claim” national sovereignty, or is it a historical fact that we won our national sovereignty in a War of Independence and we jolly well need it to protect ourselves against foreign aggressors? The words “divided into” imply that maybe it would be better if we were not “divided” into countries, phrasing that is a favorite of those who advocate global government.

CCE’s *Standards* puts two government purposes on equivalent levels: “the protection of the rights of individuals and the promotion of the common good.” The words “common good” are repeated over and over again in this book, but they are not in our Constitution. “The common good” can mean whatever a totalitarian government wants it to mean. Our Founders never would have ranked “common good” as an equal value with our Creator-endowed individual rights.

The last page of *Standards* gives its final advice to the students: Citizens have “the ability to reaffirm or change fundamental constitutional values.” Is that what a federal curriculum is all about — changing our constitutional values?

Ohio Tackles Evolution Controversy

How the subject of evolution is treated in the classroom has emerged as a source of controversy in the Ohio State Board of Education. Until now, Ohio public schools have not mandated any direct teaching about the subject.

The Ohio legislature ordered the Ohio Department of Education to write standards that guide how all subjects are taught in public school classrooms. The standards for math and English were accepted rather easily, but the science standards suddenly became very controversial.

The conference report of the “No Child Left Behind” bill signed by President Bush on January 8, 2002 includes a science requirement that focuses on “the data and testable theories of science.” This new federal law specifies that “where topics are taught that may generate controversy (such as biological evolution), the curriculum should help students to understand the full range of scientific views that exist.”

When the Ohio writing team presented its first draft, it failed to help students understand “the full range of scientific views” and instead tried to mandate Darwinian evolution as the only acceptable teaching. Ohio’s curriculum standards committee questioned why the draft included no ideological diversity, and the media immediately rushed in to fan the flames of old prejudices and activate the liberals who want to raise phony issues about separation of church and state.

The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* editorialized that public school instructors should limit their teaching to “the most widely accepted scientific theory” and teachers should not “stray from it.” The notion that such a closed-minded, unscientific approach could be advocated in a major newspaper in our current era, when the generally lauded

icons are diversity, academic freedom, free speech, critical thinking, multiculturalism, and opposition to censorship, is truly remarkable. If a scientific theory is true, there is no need to censor criticism. If a theory is scientific, it should be demonstrated by evidence and replicable experiments, and testable against alternate hypotheses.

Any committee presuming to write school science standards should honestly face up to the fact that current science textbooks usually include demonstrable errors. Some of these errors were exposed years or decades ago but remain in textbooks, often even with illustrations.

Many science textbooks show diagrams or illustrations to reinforce the claim that all modern animals as well as man diverged from a common ancestor. Most textbooks ignore the evidence from the Cambrian explosion, in which major groups of animals suddenly appeared in the fossil record without any evidence of common ancestry. The picture of the peppered moths is a favorite in science textbooks to try to demonstrate natural selection in the wild. We now know that the picture is a fake (moths were glued on tree trunks for a photo-op).

In the face of such dishonesty becoming widely known because of the internet, the Darwinian-only majority of academics has been steadily retreating from their theory. Even the *New York Times* finally admitted that the 19th century drawings of vertebrate embryos, showing humans evolving from a fish-like ancestor, were faked. Some scientists have been developing alternate theories of life’s origins by presenting evidence of what is called intelligent design.

Are we going to teach our young people to develop an inquiring mind and to be open to new discoveries, or are we going to teach them that science is static, that everything about the origins of life has already been determined and there are no possible deviations from what the establishment has dictated?

Science standards and textbooks should not mandate the dogmas of the past when evidences of error come to light and new discoveries occur. Science should be about facing and evaluating new evidence, not silencing dissent.

Multiculturalism Run Amuck

California public schools seem to be trying to show us how far they have gone to downgrade Christianity. Some schools are teaching an intensive, three-week course in Islam that is not merely history or a course “about” religion; it is behavior modification and role-playing.

Study handouts include a history of Islam and its founder, Mohammed, 25 Islamic terms, 20 proverbs, Islam’s Five Pillars of Faith, and 10 key Islamic prophets and disciples. The students are required to wear a robe during class, adopt a Muslim name, and stage their own jihad or holy war in a dice game.

When parents complained and the press discovered this course, the school principal said it “reflects California

(educational) standards that meet state requirements." The Houghton-Mifflin textbook, *Across the Centuries*, is state approved and used throughout California.

The news media reported that this textbook presents Islam in a positive manner while mentioning Christianity briefly and negatively. Events such as the Inquisition and Salem witch-hunts are highlighted in bold black type, while no negatives appear in the textbook about Islam's wars, massacres, and cruelties against Christians and other non-Muslims. The miraculous events leading up to the Koran are presented as factual, while references to the miracles of Christianity are downgraded by disclaimers.

Leave No Child Behind

The liberals in the media and in Congress are gloating over the final passage of H.R.1/S.1, which President Bush labeled "Leave No Child Behind." This 1,000-page giant education law was hailed by some of the same Republicans who only few years ago had promised to fulfill Ronald Reagan's promise to abolish the Department of Education. The *New York Times* bragged that it will "dramatically extend the federal role in public education," and is "a breathtaking intrusion of the federal government on states' control of education."

The price tag on Leave No Child Behind is \$26.5 billion. That's \$8 billion more than the last Clinton education bill and \$4 billion more than Bush requested. The majority of Republicans caved in to White House pressure, but 34 conservative Republicans in the House valiantly voted No. The bill passed by 381 to 41 in the House and 87 to 10 in the Senate.

This remarkable bipartisan realignment was brought about by Bush's demand to pass any bill that would please the Democrats, plus the hardball tactics of the Daschle-Kennedy-Gephardt Democrats in insisting on whatever their allies, the teachers unions, demanded. The bill fulfills Bill Clinton's prophetic statement in a speech in Chicago on January 22, 1997: "We can no longer hide behind our love of local control of the schools."

The Administration touted accountability as the supreme goal. But accountability to whom? According to this law, it's to the U.S. Department of Education, not to parents or local school boards. As the way to achieve accountability, the new education bill requires annual testing of all students in reading and math from the 3rd to the 8th grades, and in science beginning in 2007. In addition, states must test 4th and 8th grade students in reading and math every other year using the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). But tests can't improve the schools unless reform in the teaching of reading and math takes place before the tests are given.

During the months that the education bill was in congressional committees, House conservatives offered several amendments to make the bill less objectionable. Only a few portions of these amendments survived.

One amendment included in the final bill, introduced by Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO), requires that tests be based on objective, measurable and widely accepted professional testing standards and not assess personal beliefs or attitudes of the students. This language is needed because many tests, even NAEP tests, are designed to guide attitudes and behavior rather than to test knowledge.

Since nosy surveys requiring students to reveal personal information about sex, drugs and suicide have been objected to by parents for many years, Reps. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Todd Tiahrt (R-KS) sponsored a Parental Freedom of Information Amendment to require parental consent for all such surveys (thereby expanding the reach of the PPRA). This was watered down to merely requiring a one-time notice at the beginning of each school year to list the surveys that might be given, thus putting the burden on parents to discover such surveys and opt out their children.

A provision sponsored by Rep. Van Hilleary (R-TN) and Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) will deny federal funds to any state, district or school that discriminates against the Boy Scouts of America. This amendment passed the House by a voice vote and passed the Senate by 51-49, with Senator Ted Kennedy as the most vocal opponent.

Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO) proposed an amendment to require parental consent before a child can be placed in bilingual education, but this was watered down to require only parental notification. The law quadruples federal spending on bilingual education, despite the fact that it is so unpopular with parents that referenda in California and Arizona killed spending funds of those states on bilingual education.

The big controversy about choice for kids to move to another school faded away with a whimper. Only after a school has been identified as failing for two years can a student be allowed to attend another public or charter (but not private) school within the district.

The original purpose of this bill, which dates from Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and has since been renewed every five years, was to "close the gap" between achieving and nonachieving students. Even though the government's own evaluations prove that billions of dollars have produced no measurable results, this law's only approach is still more federal spending and more federal control. That now goes under the name of Bush Bipartisanship.

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