



# The Phyllis Schlafly Report

VOL. 30, NO. 3

P.O. BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

OCTOBER 1996

## Poll Shows Schools Are Our #1 Worry

The *Washington Post* just conducted a public opinion poll to find out what are the top “worries” of Americans. The results are informative and useful to policymakers, officeholders, candidates, and the media.

Topping the list of worries in the *Washington Post* survey, identified by a whopping 62 percent of respondents, was this: “The American educational system will get worse instead of better.” Although this worry outranked crime, drugs, taxes, health care and welfare, it is seldom if ever addressed by our national political leadership or media elite. Ask yourself how many times you have ever seen this subject featured on the nightly television news programs of NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, or PBS. Many subjects on which television news programs lavish most of their high-priced minutes, such as Saddam Hussein’s latest outrage, didn’t even rate a mention in the survey as a worry.

The American people recognize what the Federal Government, the education establishment and the media have failed to notice: that public schools are a disaster area and that so-called “reforms” and the influx of more and more taxpayers’ money aren’t doing any good. If the pollsters would question people further, here are some of the specifics they would find that Americans are worried about.

Violent crime against students and teachers inside the public schools has caused an unprecedented level of fear and intimidation. A *USA Today* survey found that 43 percent of public school students avoid the school restrooms because of fear. School administrators are afraid to take any disciplinary action against criminal or gun-toting students. Governor George Allen of Virginia reported that the U.S. Department of Education threatened to withhold \$50 million in special ed funds if Virginia continues to discipline criminal students.

The chief reasons why the educational system is so inferior and is getting worse is the refusal to teach basic skills and knowledge in the elementary grades and the dumbing down of the textbooks and courses of study by about three years below what it was a generation ago.

The goal of the schools now is to inculcate self-esteem in schoolchildren instead of to give them the skills necessary for individual achievement. The schools have been pumping up kids with inflated notions of their self-worth and importance, eliminating the discipline of competition, insulating them from failure, and shielding them from the knowledge that poor performance can be remedied by hard work and perseverance.

The schools have reduced the time spent on academic subjects to about one-fourth of the school day. The majority of the day is spent on psychological courses, counseling, social services, and other non-academic activities. Even worse, these non-academic courses use a methodology that used to be called values clarification and is now known by its generic name of non-directive. That means that schoolchildren are presented with dilemmas, situations, and various problems of modern living, but given no direction as to the correct or expected behavior.

Schools have abandoned their responsibility to correct students’ mistakes, all the way from encouraging “inventive spelling” in the elementary grades to “make your own choices about sex and drugs” in high school. A call to respect “family values” is meaningless to a generation that has been systematically taught that everyone can choose his own values, and that one person’s values are as good as the next person’s.

While the American people have accurately identified the problem that public schools aren’t doing their job and are getting worse, they haven’t figured out whom to blame. It’s a fraud when presidential or congressional candidates promise to remedy the problem, because education is a state and local (not a federal) problem and only six percent of public school funding comes from the federal government.

The only action that federal officeholders should take is to stop imposing national mandates that override local authorities and parents’ rights. Yet, most

proposed congressional legislation is still moving toward more federal, rather than local, control.

President Clinton's offer to spend \$2.75 billion to send volunteers into the schools to teach illiterate third graders how to read is a four-dimensional sham. Teaching kids to read is not a federal responsibility, the teachers union won't allow volunteers into the classroom, the children ought to be taught how to read in the first (not third) grade, and the schools are still refusing to use the only proven method of producing good readers: intensive, systematic phonics.

The *Washington Post* survey is an important contribution to public discussion and policy development. It should be used by politicians and the media to address the American people's number-one worry. And those who want to know *why* public schools are such a disaster, both academically and morally, should watch Eagle Forum's new television documentary, *Crisis in the Classroom*.

### ***Why Are More Kids Doing Drugs?***

The alarming rise in illegal drug use by teenagers is big news. Although drug use by adults has leveled off and is actually down since 1985, drug use (mostly in marijuana) among teens aged 12 to 17 is increasing every year, doubling since 1992 to eleven percent in 1995.

Marijuana damages the memory, energy and general learning power of children. Children who start out on marijuana are 17 times more likely to progress to hard drugs than if they had never used marijuana.

The drug experts call this "very scary." Their explanations include neglect by parents, the misleading messages from political leaders, the glamorization of drugs by the entertainment industry, the failure of the media to cover the issue, and denial of the problem.

There is another reason they are overlooking: the failure of drug education in the schools. So-called drug education may even be counterproductive. On a youth roundtable on drugs on the Lehrer NewsHour on September 25, one teen offered his explanation that drug courses in school actually *cause* experimentation with illegal drugs.

Congress has poured billions (not just millions) of taxpayers' dollars into drug education in public schools. In 1991, Congress's watchdog agency, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported to the Senate on the \$1.1 billion that had been spent on drug education up to that date. The cover of the report summed up the result: "Impact Unknown."

The GAO report listed 21 classroom drug curricula commonly used in public schools. They typically presented students with a lot of "nonjudgmental information" combined with a process of "decision making" that urged students to consider the "alternatives." A couple of courses vaguely described

"refusal skills," but not a single course was based on a "just say no" approach, or stated that illegal drugs are wrong, or warned students that they must not consider the "alternative" of using illegal drugs. The courses did not comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act which requires all public schools to teach that "the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol is wrong."

Teaching students that anything is "wrong" is so anathema to public school curriculum writers that they simply ignore the law's mandate. Under prevailing public school methodology, all teaching (especially about sex and drugs) is "non-directive." For example, the GAO report described a drug education course called "Me-ology." It called for sixth grade students to spend 17 hours of class time "choosing actions that conform to personal beliefs after considering alternative choices." The course did not teach that it would be wrong to choose cocaine as the "alternative" that conforms to their personal beliefs.

The GAO descriptions of the 21 drug curricula show that most of the courses spend most of their class time playing psychological games under the rubric of "enhancing students' self-awareness and self-esteem." The education theorists have convinced themselves that drug abuse is caused by students' lack of self-esteem.

Subsequent investigations of drug education courses have produced similar disappointing results. Dr. Richard Clayton, director of the Center for Prevention Research at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, told the *New York Times* on September 18 that the popular course called DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) "has been evaluated in a reasonably rigorous way by five to ten different researchers in different parts of the country," but researchers "failed to find lasting effects."

In 1995, the Michigan State Senate exposed a giant scandal in the use of federal anti-drug funds by the Michigan State Department of Education. The bureaucrats had illegally diverted more than \$50 million of federal anti-drug funds into pressuring local school districts to adopt the bureaucrats' pet project: a controversial health, sex and psychological curriculum called the "Michigan Model."

Some diverted funds were spent on an organized campaign to discredit and intimidate parents by keeping files on parents, making photos and videos of them, training coordinators how to "handle" parents, having a computer bulletin board to exchange information on parents, labeling them with epithets, and inviting People for the American Way to assist in the anti-parent campaign.

Meanwhile, Michigan Drug Control Director, Robert Peterson, was reporting alarmingly high drug-use rates among Michigan youth. Maybe the teenagers wouldn't have fared any better if the money had been

spent on non-directive drug education (instead of sex and psychology), but the illegal diversion of funds shows that the educators just weren't interested in addressing the increased use of drugs by teenagers, even when they were given plenty of funds to deal with the problem.

According to the GAO report cited above, federal drug education funds were also diverted to psychological and attitudinal "touchy-feely" courses in Los Angeles and Cleveland. Nancy Reagan's "just say no" campaign never made it into the classroom.

The scandal of what is called drug education is ripe for a thorough Congressional investigation. Exposing the misuse of the funds already spent will not only help us to tackle increased drug use by teenagers, but it will go a long way toward showing parents that the public schools have taught children it's okay to make their own behavioral choices without regard to standards of right and wrong.

### ***Report on the 104th Congress***

The 104th Congress's record on education was mixed. The House tried to zero out Goals 2000, but the Senate put the money back in. The House tried to stop the flow of wasted drug education money, but Congress acquiesced in Bill Clinton's tantrum and restored it.

**The good news** about the 104th Congress was that it did **not** pass the conference report on the controversial bill called the CAREERS bill (H.R.1617) or its Senate companion, the Workforce Development bill (S.143). This was a remarkable achievement, since H.R.1617 passed the House in September 1995 by a vote of 345 to 79, and S.143 passed the Senate in October 1996 by 95 to 2. This massive legislation would have expanded and institutionalized the federal mandates contained in the Goals 2000 Act and the School-to-Work Act, both passed in 1994 and signed by President Clinton.

These bills were designed to implement the plan laid out in an 18-page letter written by Marc Tucker to Hillary Clinton on November 11, 1992, to use schoolchildren as "human resources for the global labor market." It is clear from the writings of Marc Tucker, Ira Magaziner, Hillary Clinton, Robert Reich, and the legislative history of H.R.1617 and S.143 that the goal is to transform public school curricula into specific workforce tracks determined by **unelected** local workforce development boards. The proper name for this is National Economic Planning, *a.k.a.* Socialism, a system that has failed all over the world.

Speaker Newt Gingrich was sent a letter signed by 63 Republican members of the Missouri House objecting to the way that H.R.1617 "centralizes unprecedented powers at the federal level," "supersedes state laws," and "amends out the state legislature,

replacing it with the Governor." The letter asserted that "this practice of avoiding the Legislature is unacceptable and flies in the face of the principle of local control of education."

A letter signed by 14 California State Senators called on Congress to "kill" H.R.1617. Among the many reasons cited were the extraordinary powers given to Governors and the setting up of a National Electronic Data Base.

S.143 was largely written by a staffer for Senator Ted Kennedy, the late Steve Spinner, who worked on it for three years. On the floor of the U.S. Senate, both Kennedy and Senator Nancy Kassebaum paid tribute to Spinner as the principal author of the bill and of the whole concept of using the public schools to carry out "workforce education and employment functions" and turn schools into "a comprehensive one-stop delivery system." The Congress should be thanked for **not** passing these bills.

**The bad news** about the 104th Congress is that it failed to pass the Family Privacy Protection Act. Designed to protect pupil and family privacy, the bill was straightforward in stating that schools may not, without prior written parental consent, ask minors to answer questionnaires about political affiliations or beliefs, mental or psychological problems, sexual behavior or attitudes, illegal or self-incriminating behavior, appraisals of other family members, or religious affiliations or beliefs.

This bill was noncontroversial when it sailed through the House in 1995 by 417 to 7. In May 1996, the school establishment went into panic when it discovered that it was pending in the Senate and, if passed, might interfere with plans to build files of personal information on public school pupils and their families. The *New York Times* devoted a whole page to phony alarms about this bill on May 19, 1996.

This bill was eminently reasonable because schools have no business eliciting personal or family information from students. But we now live in an era when schools even assert their right, without parental knowledge or consent, to pass out condoms and to force little girls to undress and undergo intrusive genital examinations.

The hysteria of the school establishment against this bill was encapsulated in the lead sentence in the *New York Times* news article: "Research into illegal drug use by American adolescents could be stifled by legislation pending in Congress." This was followed by quotations from several Ph.D.s ominously predicting that the bill "will leave us conducting the war on drugs largely in the dark."

One of these Ph.D.s who was crying around about how the law would "cripple" his surveys of schoolchildren, said sarcastically, "We also couldn't find out whether they believe in God, which some

people think is important." However, schools should not be allowed to ask public schoolchildren whether or not they believe in God! (Where is the ACLU when we need it?)

The widespread use of intrusive surveys and questionnaires in the public school classroom started in the mid-1970s and resulted in the passage of the first Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment in 1978, sponsored by former university president and Senator Sam Hayakawa. The public school establishment was powerful enough to prevent regulations from being written until President Ronald Reagan ordered them issued in 1984. National Education Association agents in the Department of Education and public school administrators nationwide then circled the wagons against this law. Despite egregious violations, it has never been enforced.

Take, for example, the infamous 149-question survey which has been given, despite parental objections, to nearly all 6th, 9th and 12th grade Minnesota pupils. Parents were up in arms about it, not only because it was privacy-invading, but also because it assumed that illegal drug use, promiscuity, and suicidal tendencies are normal teenage behavior.

Another serious objection was that it encouraged pupils to inform on their parents. That sort of interrogation of children should not be tolerated in a free society. Here's a typical question: "Has drinking by any family member repeatedly caused family, health, job or legal problems? If yes, who? (Mark all that apply.) Parent who lives with me, Parent who doesn't live with me, Brother or sister, Other relative, Other person who lives with me."

Many questions conveyed the notion that the majority of teenagers are using illegal drugs. "If you use marijuana, how old were you when you started? If you use any other drug, how old were you when you started? How often do you get drunk?" Some questions interrogated the child about his religion. "How often do you attend religious services?" "How important is religion in your life?"

Some questions would be downright traumatic for some children. "Have you ever tried to kill yourself?" "How often have you run away from home?" "Have you felt so discouraged or hopeless that you wondered if anything was worthwhile?" Of course, the survey also included Peeping Tom sex questions. "Have you ever had sexual intercourse (gone all the way)? If you have sexual intercourse, how often do you and/or your partner use any birth control method? Have you been pregnant?"

The public schools have no business requiring children to answer any of these nosy questions without prior written parental consent. To assert that restricting these surveys will hamper our "war on drugs" is ridiculous.

## ***Reading, Writing, and Ritalin***

An estimated two million children (three times as many boys as girls, and four times as many as in 1990) have been labeled with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The most widely used drug to treat this condition is methylphenidate, known as Ritalin. A powerful stimulant, it juices up the central nervous system, takes effect in 30 minutes, and peters out in three to four hours. Ritalin is classified as a Schedule II controlled substance in the same category as cocaine, methadone and methamphetamine.

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, under contract HS92017001, gave the Chesapeake Institute of Washington, D.C. the funding to produce two slick videos: "Facing the Challenges of ADD" featuring actress Rita Moreno, and "One Child in Every Classroom" with Frank Sesno as moderator. Parts of the videos sound like an infomercial for Ritalin.

In a PBS documentary following eight months of investigation, a Department of Education spokesman was asked if he was aware that the parents who spoke so enthusiastically about Ritalin on the videos were board members of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD), and if he knew that CHADD has received cash grants of \$900,000 plus in-kind services from Ciba-Geigy, the manufacturer of Ritalin. Obviously embarrassed, the bureaucrat denied such knowledge. It's clear that the Department of Education does not adhere to professional standards of disclosure.

Parents of a child who is diagnosed, labeled, or treated by school-paid personnel would be well-advised to seek an independent, unbiased medical opinion.

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### **Sworn Statement of Ownership**

*The Phyllis Schlafly Report* is published monthly at P.O. Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002.

Publisher: Phyllis Schlafly, P.O. Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Editor: Same. Owner: Eagle Trust Fund. Known bondholders, mortgagees, or other security holder: None.

Information on circulation not required as no advertising is carried.

### **The Phyllis Schlafly Report**

PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002

ISSN0556-0152

Published monthly by the Eagle Trust Fund, PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Periodicals Postage Paid at Alton, Illinois. Postmaster: Address Corrections should be sent to the Phyllis Schlafly Report, PO Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002.

Subscription Price: \$20 per year. Extra copies available: 50¢ each; 3 copies \$1; 30 copies \$5; 100 copies \$10.