



# The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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## Let's Abolish the Department of Education

Abolishing the Department of Education was one of Ronald Reagan's campaign promises when he ran for President in 1980. Fulfilling that promise is long overdue, and the time to do it is now.

Education is not a department that has always been with us like State, Treasury, and Justice. The Department of Education was created as a payoff to the National Education Association (NEA) for its early endorsement of Jimmy Carter's presidential candidacy in 1976. That NEA endorsement was a significant factor in giving Carter national visibility and momentum. At that time, the little-known one-term Governor of a southern state was considered a long shot by most observers.

The NEA has the same symbiotic relationship with Bill Clinton. On his way to the 1992 Democratic National Convention that nominated him, he stopped off for a visit with Keith Geiger, then NEA president, and promised to invite him to sleep in Abe Lincoln's bed at the White House.

Contrary to the gloom-and-doom fearmongering of the education lobby, U.S. public schools will not collapse if the Department of Education is abolished. Public schools flourished before there was any Department of Education (and academic standards were much higher), and public schools will continue to exist if the Department is abolished. Federal spending in public schools amounts to only about six percent of their total budget. Every week we read about corporations successfully downsizing their workforce and thereby achieving greater efficiency, so public schools should have no difficulty downsizing by six percent. Their top-heavy and redundant administrative bureaucracy is a scandal, anyway.

Congress doles out 70 billion federal tax dollars per year on what is euphemistically called education. The mere listing of the programs is awesome and depressing. The Department of Education spends \$33 billion a year of this amount administering 244 different programs.

The remainder of the \$70 billion is spent by 30 other federal agencies on 308 programs, which the General Accounting Office says "often are duplicative and overlapping."

More than 90 federal preschool and child care programs are administered through eleven federal agencies and 20 offices that target children of similar ages and provide similar services. There are 86 federal programs in nine federal departments that offer teacher training. At least 46 federal programs administered by eight federal agencies are working on what is called youth development. Fourteen different programs provide food and food-related assistance.

This federal spending imposes a costly paperwork burden on local schools. A 1991 survey of Ohio school districts reported that schools must complete 173 federal reports and forms.

We should face the fact that, like welfare, our 30-year experiment in federal spending on education has failed. Illiteracy has reached epidemic levels and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores have dropped 73 points since 1960. Incidentally, the decline in SAT scores is now going to be concealed from the public starting this year by the simple device of raising every test score nearly 100 points. They call this "centering," but another word for it is cheating.

The 1994 election sent a strong message to Congress: cut federal spending, reduce government, eliminate agencies. Unfortunately, some Congressmen seem to think they can pretend to abolish the Department of Education while merely shifting the functions and the spending to other agencies.

It is a bafflement how any Congressman could think that the constituency eager to abolish the Department of Education could be appeased by transferring the functions and the spending to Labor Secretary Robert Reich or Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala. Yet those are the most discussed proposals for education "reform."

Out across America, the mood of the people is just the opposite. Three states this year actually rejected federal funding for Goals 2000, a truly remarkable reaction to the offer of goodies from the federal treasury.

The U.S. Constitution doesn't mention education, and there is no authority in the Constitution for the Federal Government to meddle in local schools. Education is not a proper federal function. If the Federal Government has no constitutional authority to ban guns from schools (which the Supreme Court ruled in this year's *Lopez* decision), then it follows *a fortiori* that the Federal Government has no authority to impose curricular requirements or hand out funds according to the whims and the politics of federal officials.

Public schools in America were vastly superior before the Federal Government turned on the funding faucet. It's time to write *finis* to federal aid to education and return that \$70 billion per year to the American people in tax cuts.

### ***Education Reform, Ted Kennedy-Style***

Two senior Republicans, Steve Gunderson (R-WI) and Bill Goodling (R-PA), have introduced a bill called "A Proposal for the Establishment of the Department of Education and Employment." Riding the tide of the movement to abolish the Department of Education, their bill would simply consolidate it with the Department of Labor and put Robert Reich in charge.

This bill would convert public schools into "Workforce Preparation" centers "to meet the challenges of a competitive global economy in the 21st century." Schoolchildren would be trained, rather than educated, and schools would become "efficient delivery systems" to serve the global economy.

A variation of this same goal, called the "Consolidated and Reformed Education, Employment, and Rehabilitation Systems Act" (H.R. 1617), known by its acronym CAREERS, was introduced on May 11 and speedily passed out of committee on June 22. H.R. 1617 would repeal the School-to-Work Act passed in 1994, as well as some other cumbersome and redundant jobs and education programs.

However, H.R. 1617's 233 pages contain much more dangerous replacements. Three key provisions in the Republican CAREERS bill parallel the key provisions of a bill introduced earlier this year by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) called the "Workforce Development Act" (S. 180).

The first key provision is that both bills give government the responsibility for job placement and development through a "Workforce Development Plan." Kennedy's "Workforce" bill would implement this through federal, state and local boards. The CAREERS bill specifies that each Governor shall submit "a

strategic state workforce development and literacy plan to provide policy guidance with respect to workforce development progress" that meets the requirements of the U.S. Secretaries of Education and Labor.

The second key provision of both "Workforce" and CAREERS is a labor market information system (LMIS). "Workforce" calls for a "comprehensive, integrated labor market [information] system to assure that workforce development programs are related to the demand for particular skills in a local labor market." CAREERS would amend the 1933 Wagner Act to enumerate the information that will be collected, managed and shared between the private and public sectors.

CAREERS sets up a "comprehensive and coordinated labor market information system" that will "project employment opportunities and trends" based on "profiles of employers" and the "education and training of job seekers." The data collection system will record how well the schoolchild did on the "performance assessments" of the state's "goals and objectives" that are part of "Goals 2000," and be so thorough that even the "level of satisfaction of the participants" will be measured and recorded. The premise of the LMIS is the assumption that government committees know what is best for the individual and for the economy. This is the structure under which the Soviets managed their planned economy for so many decades, with Five-Year and Ten-Year Plans that always failed.

Government economic planning is an abysmal failure worldwide, and it's hard to think of anything that would be a bigger detriment to future economic growth. Can you imagine, for example, that any government planning board would have decided in 1980 how many workers needed to be trained for the immense computer and communications industry that has arisen since then?

The third key provision in both Kennedy's "Workforce" bill and the CAREERS bill is "one-stop career centers" (probably located at public schools). This is where the individual comes in contact with the national economic planning system. Based on economic projections by the different tiers of boards and the vast collection of data on individuals, the "one-stop career center" will train individuals for designated job slots.

The bottom line of these bills is to give the Federal Government the power over every individual's ability to earn a living. If we let the government decide what jobs are "needed," what jobs young people may be trained for, what performance and "outcome" standards may be enforced on schoolchildren, and what certificate qualifies them to be hired, and then track each individual's performance and behavior in school and through the workforce on a national computer data base, we will have lost freedom in America.

## ***The Scandal of Drug Education Funds***

Billions of taxpayer dollars have been spent through the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA) to try to educate schoolchildren not to use illegal drugs, but the results range from waste to corruption. A Michigan Senate investigating committee, after months of investigation and hearings, released a report exposing a giant scandal in the way the funds were spent in that state. Chances are that, if other legislatures tracked the use of their state's DFSCA funds, they would discover similar misuse of taxpayers' monies.

The Michigan committee found that bureaucrats in the state department of education illegally diverted millions of dollars of federal anti-drug funds into development and expansion of the state-authored, controversial health, sex and psychological curriculum called the "Michigan Model." That course was the pet project of the Michigan public school establishment, but parents fought it all the way because it was anti-parent Values Clarification (*i.e.*, group psychotherapy).

The Michigan public school establishment was determined to ram this psychological curriculum down the throats of schoolchildren despite the opposition of parents. This was the state with the strongest branch of the National Education Association, so the bureaucrats were confident they could steamroller it through.

When Congress appropriated the DFSCA funds, a veritable river of federal money started flowing into the state and the educrats saw their opportunity to use it to enforce use of the Michigan Model. It didn't deter them in the slightest that Congress very specifically legislated that DFSCA funds could be used only for drug prevention education. According to the new Senate report, the Michigan educrats diverted some DFSCA funds into an organized campaign to discredit and intimidate the parents who opposed the Michigan Model. These state education department bureaucrats kept files on parents, made photos and videos of them, and trained coordinators how to "handle" parents.

The state education department bureaucrats used federal anti-drug funds to run a computer bulletin board to exchange messages regarding how to obtain information, pictures and videos of parents opposed to the Michigan Model. Parents were sarcastically ridiculed as the "Bob and Mary Show." The state bureaucrats even invited People for the American Way to assist in this anti-parent campaign. They all joined in labelling parents with nasty epithets such as "extremists."

The educrats diverted other DFSCA funds into an organized campaign to force local school districts to "sign their drug prevention funds over to Michigan Model regional coordinators," who would spend the federal anti-drug money for the Michigan Model instead of for drug education. The Michigan Model has a

modicum of drug information in it, but federal funds could legally be spent only for that small portion.

The diversion of DFSCA funds included a variety of unethical actions in the granting of contracts. The committee exposed conflicts of interest, double-dipping by state employees, markups on materials, excessive administrative overhead and travel budgets, and unnecessary payments to high-priced sex education consultants and friends of the bureaucracy.

According to the committee, the educrats probably violated federal law by using a federally funded bulletin board to lobby Congressman William Ford against Governor John Engler's drug education plans and to lobby state legislators for funds and support. State employees also engaged in a deliberate attempt to cover up their actions.

The result is that there was no effective anti-drug program for schoolchildren. Michigan Drug Control Director Robert Peterson testified that Michigan students are using nearly every illegal drug at significantly higher rates than the national average, and that Michigan eighth graders use inhalants and marijuana at twice the national average.

Back in 1990 the General Accounting Office reported that the \$2 billion spent by that date through the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act had no measurable effect in reducing the use of illegal drugs. Billions of dollars later, there still isn't. Congressmen should close down the DFSCA and zero out all its funds.

## ***Gay-Lesbian Agenda Surfaces in Iowa***

Iowa residents were shocked earlier this year when the Des Moines Public School District unveiled a "Multicultural Nonsexist Education Plan" prepared by its Sexual Orientation Advisory Committee. This plan laid out comprehensive long-range and short-range goals for using the schools as a conduit to impose the gay/lesbian lobby's value system on schoolchildren.

It is unclear why this curriculum was unveiled first in Iowa, but it surely is indicative of what will be attempted in public schools all over the country. It is a detailed and explicit statement of the gay rights lobby's strategy for targeting schoolchildren.

The most revealing part of the 900-word document is its repeated use of the word "infuse" and its plan to develop gay/lesbian information modules that can be "fully integrated" into various courses. The goal is clearly to infuse (*i.e.*, cause to penetrate) the gay/lesbian propaganda into every level of school: every grade K through 12, every academic subject, and every school and social activity.

The flavor of the curriculum is shown by these direct quotations: "To use the instructional materials selection cycle to infuse information regarding gay/lesbian/bisexual issues into the curriculum." "To include in the

elementary, middle, and high school curriculum a discussion of the nature of families including same gender families and parenting." "To emphasize gay/lesbian/bisexual issues in the mandatory cross-cultural awareness training." "To include the evolution of the modern gay/lesbian/bisexual identity [and] cross-cultural representations of homosexuality" in psychology and sociology courses.

The curriculum calls for presentation to students of "information on gender/sexual orientation and the natural diversity present in human beings." Diversity has become a common code word for homosexual teaching.

The plan became a public controversy when an alert math teacher, Tom Lutz, caught wind of the proposal, obtained a copy, and blew the whistle just before it was scheduled to be quietly adopted at the January school board meeting. He organized a rally at the First Federated Church the night before the board meeting, and an amazing crowd of 3,000 parents showed up. The group was addressed by local talk show host Jan Mickelson, who warned, "This is not an agenda for tolerance. This is an in-your-face gay agenda seeking taxpayer support to target your kids."

Indeed, the curriculum is aggressively activist. It calls for encouraging staff and student attendance at the annual "Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth Conference," for providing "information on the National Marches on Washington for Lesbians and Gay Rights," for "advertising the Gay and Lesbian Resource Center in school newspapers," and for providing "support for gay/lesbian/bisexual staff members."

The curriculum is determined to use the public schools as a change agent to create "student awareness of homophobic thinking and behavior and to compare these with other forms of prejudice and oppression." It calls for a ban on "heterosexual bias in language" and for increasing "gay/lesbian/bisexual materials in school libraries and multimedia centers."

Parents may have thought that, when the New York City Board of Education fired Chancellor Joseph Fernandez, and expressed outrage against the elementary school readers entitled *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*, they put a stop to gay/lesbian advocacy in school curricula. But that was only one skirmish in the cultural war.

Unless parents, teachers and talk-show hosts everywhere are as alert as they are in Iowa, they will wake up one day and find gay/lesbian advocacy so infused in the curriculum that it can't be disentangled from English, History, and other subjects. Parents should find out if their local school district has a Sex

Orientation Advisory Committee and what kind of mischief it is up to.

### ***Why Don't Schools Teach Reading?***

Parents want schools to teach children basic knowledge and skills, *not* federally mandated "standards," *not* how to be a group worker for the "global economy," *not* psychobabble and values clarification masquerading as drug education, and *not* "diversity" in lifestyles.

But the public schools are adamant (even belligerent) in their refusal to teach children to read by systematic, intensive phonics. The word-guessing system called Whole Language (which is part and parcel of Outcome-Based Education) is dominant in the schools today. Perhaps one explanation for this peculiarity is that so much money has been invested in the materials that promote the failed Whole Language method.

One example of these expensive anti-phonics materials is the video curriculum called *Storylords*, designed for use in the third grade. *Storylords* is a series of twelve 12- to 20-minute videos that instruct children in Whole Language techniques.

Here is how *Storylords* instructs children: (1) Try to "guess" what the story is about by looking at the pictures on the cover, reading the title, and thinking about them. (2) Try to "predict" what will happen next by looking at the pictures. (3) When you don't know a word, "skip over it. Read ahead. Look for clues to help you figure out the mystery word. . . . If you're a good word detective you'll be a good reader."

*Storylords* shows children a book with only pictures, no words, and tells them to "look for clues" to figure out what the pictures are "thinking or saying." *Storylords* tells children that, before reading a book, they should examine the illustrations and ask themselves, "What do I already know about this topic?" and then use that knowledge to "predict" what the story might be about.

This is a cheat on pupils, parents, and taxpayers. Guessing, predicting, and skipping over words are *not* reading. With these mischievous instructions, children will never be able to read any books unless there are pictures on every page.

Incidentally, the story content of *Storylords* is filled with New Age characters, artifacts (e.g., a crystal ring with "powers"), and practices (visualization, communicating through the "powers" of the crystal, incantations, and the occult).

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