



# The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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## Big Brother Wants to Be Big Mama

### Early Childhood Education

"Early Childhood Education" is a phrase now frequently heard at State Capitols and education seminars. In the face of mounting public, private, and employer dismay at the failure of public elementary schools to teach children the skills and knowledge necessary to function in a modern society, the education bureaucracy is responding with the collective call, "Give us your children at an even earlier age."

"Early" means "school" for 3-and-4-year-olds. The plan is to make it voluntary today but compulsory tomorrow; start in the ghetto areas, then extend it to all schools. One bill in the Illinois Legislature last year even called for schools to take children "from birth to kindergarten."

Early Childhood Education was quietly inserted in the fine print of many comprehensive so-called "education reform packages" considered in 1985, and these proposals are very much alive today. Regrettably, these proposals sometimes passed and were tax-funded without debate. The education bureaucracy wants to get them in place before the American people realize what is happening, especially since there is no evidence to support this expensive and revolutionary plan of action.

Absolutely no replicable evidence shows that putting children in school at an earlier age makes them brighter, or better able to achieve academically, or better able to socialize positively with their peers as they move along in school. The evidence indicates that it saddles tots with burnout, stress, and frustrations which inhibit later learning.

The American Academy of Pediatricians has expressed concern about the dramatic increase of "stress-related" symptoms now apparent in children in the primary grades. Would you believe? Some schools have put in "stress" courses for 1st and 2nd graders.

Tufts University learning psychologist, David Elkind, warns that early formal schooling is "burning out" our children. University of California's William Rohwer urges that formal schooling wait until much later.

After extensive research, Dr. Rohwer concluded, "All of the learning necessary for success in high school can be accomplished in only two or three years of

formal skill study. Delaying mandatory instruction in the basic skills until the junior high school years could mean academic success for millions of schoolchildren who are doomed to failure under the traditional educational system."

All the learning that takes place in the first grade consumes a maximum of two hours per day. What do the little children do the rest of the day in school? They learn the bad habits of their peers and catch their germs. Some recent findings show that children who attend preschool are 15 times as likely to be sick as children at home, and 15 times as likely to get involved in negative, aggressive acts.

Enormous evidence shows that children who spend more time with their peers than with their parents prior to the 5th or 6th grade will become peer dependent. They learn to knuckle under to the rivalry, ridicule, habits, manners and values of their classmates rather than their parents. They are negatively socialized and become captives of social and moral trends.

Dr. Raymond Moore, nationally known advocate of not putting children in school before age 8, explains what often happens to an average child put in school too early: (1) uncertainty as he leaves the family nest for a less secure environment, (2) puzzlement at the new pressures and restrictions of the classroom, (3) frustration because his brain's learning tools cannot handle the scheduled, formal lessons and pressures, (4) nervousness, jitters and hyperactivity resulting from frustration, (5) failure, and (6) delinquency.

The adverse effect is far worse on the boys than the girls. The "system" requires boys to enter school at the same age as girls, even though it is self-evident that they mature later. The entry of boys into kindergarten and 1st grade at the same age as girls means that many times more boys than girls will fail, become hyperactive or delinquent. In American high schools today, there are eight boys for every girl in classes for the emotionally impaired, and 13 boys for each girl in remedial learning groups.

Early Childhood Education would vastly increase the harm to most children, and give the boys a near-insurmountable disadvantage. Washington State Sena-

tor Sam Guess, a miller, provides an analogy appropriate to Early Childhood Education: "When you grind green grain, you don't get flour. You get gum."

### Full-Day Kindergarten

Across the nation today, there is a tremendous push from the education establishment to legislate compulsory full-day kindergarten. Like the proverbial cat, this movement has nine lives.

Some propose that kindergarten attendance be made compulsory under penalty of arrest for truancy. Some propose that children be denied admittance to the first grade unless they have attended an "accredited and approved" kindergarten.

Some propose that kindergarten be mandated as full-day instead of half-day. Some propose that local school districts be bribed into accepting this with special incentives of state funds.

Some propose that the compulsory school age be lowered a year or two from whatever it is currently in each state. These proposals want to force children into educational institutions at age six, then age five, then age four, then age three.

Some propose that children be tested for "graduation" from kindergarten and "flunked" if they don't display some arbitrary achievement level. One Minnesota school district requires kindergartners to pass a "competency test" before they can be "promoted" to the first grade. In the current school year, 295 are being forced to repeat kindergarten after 489 flunked the test. In the previous year, 234 children were forced to repeat kindergarten after 460 had flunked the test.

There is no evidence that these proposals are beneficial to children. These proposals are designed to (a) provide free baby-sitters for parents, (b) create more jobs for teachers, (c) increase the tax revenues available to the education establishment, and (d) deliver little children into the hands of those who want to mold the attitudes and beliefs of the children.

Illinois now offers extra state taxpayer funds to school districts that institute full-day kindergarten. One school district superintendent who just accepted this offer was very blunt in stating why.

First, she said, the full-day program will benefit parents so they will no longer worry about supervision of their children for the other half of the day. Second, it's a device to get parents to start their children in public schools instead of possibly enrolling them in private schools. She made no claim or argument that full-day kindergarten would benefit the children.

The *State Journal-Register*, the leading newspaper in Illinois' state capital, recently editorialized against full-day kindergarten. It said that "kindergarten should be maintained on a part-time basis, as an introductory level to basic learning and social adjustment, and not as a full-scale educational program."

The newspaper examined the claim that full-day kindergarten is the way to improve student performance in later years. Recent studies show that this is simply not true.

First, the attention span of a five-year-old is so limited that the formal education process reaches the

point of diminishing returns very quickly, long before even the half-day is completed. The editorial predicted, "What is likely to happen with full-day kindergarten is that it will become a free day-care center for working mothers for half a day -- paid for by the taxpayers."

Second, the quality of time children spend in school below age 8 is far more important than the quantity of time. This is where the oft-heard slogan, "quality time, not quantity time," is really appropriate.

A recent study of poverty-area schools conducted by the Illinois Board of Education shows that class size is a much greater factor in measuring learning and performance. Half-day classes with only 16 pupils outscored youngsters in full-day classes of 22-28 pupils in all areas checked -- language, word analysis, mathematics, and vocabulary.

The editorial concluded by urging the school board to take the money spent on kindergarten and instead improve the quality of educational programs in the first three grades of school. This is where the real fundamentals of learning are established.

Children do not develop at the same rate, and parents are the best judge of when their children are ready for formal schooling. As a parent, I found that kindergarten is an environment of germs, not learning, and did not enter my six children in school until the second grade.

The drive to lower the compulsory school age and to mandate kindergarten is a direct attack on the rights of children, parents, homeschoolers, private schools, and taxpayers.

### Schools as Clinics & Nurseries

The welfare-state professionals are on the march. They have a new strategy to achieve their goal of cradle-to-grave dependency for everyone.

This dependency would extend from birth through school years, through job selection and through senior citizen years. It would include comprehensive socialized health care, socialized nurseries, socialized job placement, and socialized activities at every age level in competition with private-enterprise services.

This plan was revealed in a 22-page proposed "Policy Statement" written by New York's State Education Department and presented to New York's Board of Regents in late 1985. It's a plan to co-opt the public schools and transform them into a "school-based delivery system" which will house a tax-funded "network" of agencies and institutions.

The school's "more traditional activities," including "basic literacy instruction" will still be provided, but will be only one part of a "continuum" of public school responsibilities for "unemployment, poverty, incarceration, malnutrition, and dependency on public welfare." Of course, "new programs will be proposed as needed to enable schools to develop their important role as bases of operation for community renewal services."

This is called "one-stop shopping for individuals in need of diverse services." The Policy Statement calls the school "a common focus for an array of community, educational, employment, cultural and social service agencies." It will provide day care, latchkey services,

pre-kindergarten, intergenerational learning, education for parents, counseling, guidance, job placement, and community reeducation.

The argument is made that many individuals "lack the skills and information required to getting and keeping a job" and therefore "counseling, guidance and job placement are necessary elements in the continuum of services needed to become gainfully employed." What nonsense! To be gainfully employed, young people must first be taught to read and write, add and subtract -- the traditional mission of the public school.

The services "should have strong educational, recreational, nutritional, cultural and preventive health care components." Will the government now determine culture and nutrition? "Preventive health care components" mean birth control and abortion clinics.

The new "school-based delivery system" will contain "Health Clinics" to provide "a full range of school-based preventive and basic health care services to... offer non-threatening access to health care for adolescent students." This means the schools will dispense free contraceptives and abortion referrals to teenagers without the "threat" of parental knowledge or consent.

The new "school-based delivery system" will provide "Nurseries for Teen Parents." That means the schools will provide child-care services for sexually-active teenagers.

The plan of action calls for moving first into ghetto areas. The social welfare professionals use the poor as guinea pigs for experimental programs and as bait with which to lobby legislators. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has financed two New York schools to become "Community Education Resource Centers." The Policy Statement reveals that "the ghetto thus provides a ready-made clientele for the wide range of services needed." Like all professionals, the social welfare providers push constantly to increase services to "clients" and expand their numbers.

Aren't the American taxpayers already providing welfare services at generous levels? The defect in the present system, says the Policy Statement, is that current services are "directed to meet individual needs by way of individual entitlements, ignoring the fact that the community at-large is also at risk."

The New York Policy Statement constitutes an arrogant edict that "schools must address nonschool problems" and combine "educational and noneducational services in a comprehensive manner." But isn't the school's primary mission to address *school* problems and teach children basic skills and knowledge?

### Federally-Raised Children

Prior to the time when Jimmy Carter chose his Veep in 1976, Walter Mondale was best known outside of his own state of Minnesota as co-author of the 1971 Mondale-Brademas Child Development Bill. This bill would have created a \$2 billion network of Federal child-care institutions for "comprehensive child development" -- not only custodial -- purposes.

Mondale told his Minnesota constituents that his bill was based on the recommendation of the 1970

White House Conference on Children that "Federally-supported public education be made available for children at age three." That Conference explained: "Day care is a powerful institution. A day care program that ministers to a child from six months to six years of age has over 8,000 hours to teach him values, fears, beliefs, and behaviors."

This bill passed Congress under pressure from the liberals and women's liberationists, but it was vetoed by President Richard Nixon. His courageous veto message called it a "radical piece of legislation," "a long leap into the dark," and said it would "lead toward altering the family relationship." He said, "Good public policy requires that we enhance rather than diminish both parental authority and parental involvement with children -- particularly in those decisive years when social attitudes and a conscience are formed, and religious and moral principles are first inculcated."

In 1975, Mondale and Brademas tried again to get the Federal Government to take over the task of raising children. Their Child and Family Services Bill of 1975 would have created a new philosophy of child-rearing. It stated that "it is essential" that child-rearing be done by a "partnership" of Federal, state and local governments, parents, and community agencies.

The Child and Family Services Bill redefined "parent" as "any person who has primary day-to-day responsibility for any child." That language would have transferred the rights of fathers and mothers to Federal bureaucrats, social workers, or teachers who have supervision over the children put in their care.

The *New York Times* reported that the 1975 Child and Family Services Bill was "considered by educational groups to be the opening wedge in their attempt to establish a universal education program beginning with 3-year-olds." The same news report explained that this program was supported by both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) as "the first step toward opening the nation's public schools to millions of additional children." The *Times* news account, written on the occasion of a national AFT convention in Honolulu, explained that the placement of 3-and-4-year-old children in public schools "is viewed not only as a vehicle to help teachers in a shrinking job market, but also [because] a substantial portion of intelligence is permanently shaped before a child enters kindergarten."

So, there are two reasons why powerful forces want to push little children into government institutions at the age of three and make the government a "partner" in raising children: (a) to find jobs for unemployed teachers, and (b) to mold the "values, fears, beliefs, and behaviors" of the children.

This 1975 bill was killed by a tremendous uproar at the grassroots and an avalanche of letters to Congress. The resentment against the Child and Family Services Bill lingered until finally, in 1980, Mondale was defeated in his bid for reelection as Vice President and John Brademas (D-IN) was defeated in his bid for reelection to Congress.

A reincarnation of this same discredited proposal, called the School Facilities Child Care Act, passed the House in May 1984 with only a handful of Congressmen on the floor. The sponsor was Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro (D-NY), along with other liberals including Patricia Schroeder (D-CO).

The Ferraro bill would have authorized \$30 million per year for three years to help community groups, local government agencies and educators set up before- and after-school child-care programs, preferably in the public schools. Mondale and Ferraro were hoping that public sentiment had changed by 1984, that Americans would more easily accept the notion that child care is not an individual or a family problem or responsibility, but that children are a collective responsibility to be assumed by the Federal Government. They were also hoping that their Federal goal could be realized by playing on the economics of the increasing percentage of mothers in the labor force and on public concern about the problem called "latchkey children."

Fortunately, Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro failed. Most parents want to be more than mere part-time custodians of their own children in a "partnership" with the government.

### Warehousing Children

Congress and the State Capitols are now experiencing a tremendous push to legislate facilities and funding for the warehousing of children. It's called child care, but whatever it's called, it is institutional care rather than home care; it is care provided by wages rather than love.

The problem is that employed mothers find their children inconvenient to their job schedule. Large numbers of women have changed their lifestyle and moved into the paid labor force, but babies have stubbornly refused to change their lifestyle and adapt to an empty home. They are just as demanding as babies ever were.

When mothers look about for someone else to fulfill those demands, they find that child-care services which are bought for money (instead of given freely by mothers) are very expensive. The chief reason for the enormous expense is that, whereas a teacher of grade-schoolers can handle a class of 25 children, a care-provider for pre-schoolers can effectively handle only 3 children on the average, and only two if they are infants.

But employed mothers don't want to pay the high cost of employing other persons to provide the care which the children are not getting at home. The mothers want it free or at least heavily subsidized. They want the real cost of child care to be borne by the taxpayers or their fellow employees.

Nothing could be more unjust. Children are the moral and financial responsibility of their parents. It is grievously unfair to impose a tax burden on those who fulfill this responsibility in order to subsidize those who have chosen a lifestyle which shifts this responsibility to someone else.

Those who want taxpayer-financed child care are demanding that the iron hand of the tax collectors take

funds from one group and transfer them to another. This is not taking from the rich and giving to the poor and needy; it is taking from lower-income traditional families who care for their own children and giving to higher-income two-earner couples who don't care for their own children.

Families who provide in-home mother-care to their children have an average annual income at least \$5,000 less than the two-earner couples who are demanding taxpayer-subsidized child care in order that both parents can remain employed.

Suppose you saved and budgeted your income in order to buy a car. Do you think it would be fair to tax you extra to buy a second car for someone else who has an income of \$5,000 more than you do? Would you like it any better if you were told, "But the other family **needs** a second car so that both spouses can get to work?"

The injustice of transferring the cost burden of child care is only one depressing factor involved in forcing taxpayers to subsidize child-care institutions. An even bigger problem is the unhappy effect on children who are warehoused with hired care-providers (who may change almost as often as the diapers) instead of being reared in a home with a 24-hour-a-day mother.

Women who have visited hundreds of child-care institutions report a dreary situation. They say a handful of children adjust well, a handful cry all the time, and most just wander around a crowded room with no lap to sit on, no one to hug, no individual attention, and no "bonding" to a caring adult who is always there. Incidents of real child abuse are, fortunately, only an occasional occurrence.

The Centers for Disease Control call child-care institutions "a major hotbed" for the spread of infection. Diseases that plague child-care institutions include hepatitis, H-flu meningitis (a brain inflammation that can cause retardation or death), ear infections that cause deafness, measles outbreaks, diarrheal diseases (because at least a million infants in day-care institutions are still in diapers), and colds all the time.

Society simply has not invented a better way of raising children than the traditional family with a father-breadwinner and a mother-homemaker. The division of labor is cost-efficient, the environment is healthy, and the children thrive on the "object constancy" of the mother.

The taxpayers have a responsibility to provide for the desperately needy who have no other financial support or resources, but it is unjust for taxpayers or fellow employees to be forced to provide institutional care for children of two-earner families.

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