



The Phyllis Schlafly Report

VOL. 24, NO. 4, SECTION 1

BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

NOVEMBER 1990

How Children Develop Values

*Statement by Phyllis Schlafly
To the National Commission on Children
Hearing on July 2, 1990*

In attempting to provide some answers to the question of how children develop values, I'll focus specifically on how they develop values in school, and what values they learn. Eighty-nine percent of children in this country are in the public schools. They are supposed to be there many hours every week and 12 years of their lives. Those are formative years. What values are they learning? I believe they are learning values every hour of the day; there is no way to avoid that.

If they learn that you get ahead by doing your work neatly and accurately and on time, then those are the values they learn. If they learn that you are not punished if you steal other kids' lunch money, or you vandalize the lockers, or you sass the teachers, then they will learn those values. It's not a matter of having some "character education" course; it's a matter of what children absorb from all around them during their years at school.

I picked up some old readers around the house, which were used in public schools in the early part of this century, and I found that so many of the old stories given to elementary school children teach lessons. Here's a random sample of the lessons that these old readers were teaching to children — not as some special course in values, but just as part of learning to read: thrift, honesty, family love, respect for elders, where there's a will there's a way, the golden rule, true courage, manliness, kindness to the less fortunate, obedience to parents, the consequences of idleness and truancy, crime doesn't pay, and why virtue and love are worth more than material riches. You can search all the readers in school today and you won't find those kinds of moral lessons taught in any modern stories.

By the 1950s, in the heyday of Dick and Jane, the readers were cleansed of such values. Dick and Jane just looked up and looked down, they heard the duck quack and the cat meow. But they didn't learn any moral lessons.

By the 1970s, the values question in public schools had become very much worse than value-neutral stories. We now have had at least 20 years of the influence of noted psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and

Sidney Simon. Basically, their approach to education tells the little child: you can construct your own value system by getting in touch with your feelings; anything is okay which you are comfortable with. There isn't any right or wrong; there aren't any absolutes; you must not be judgmental about other people's behavior. Children are now taught in a thousand ways that values don't come from authorities such as your parents, but instead come from within yourself.

Many of the classrooms are really a kind of encounter session. The teacher is no longer an authority — one who sets standards, imparts wisdom, and guides good behavior. She has become a facilitator, a discussion leader. Nobody is supposed to criticize anybody else's lifestyle. Elementary school children are taught to look within themselves to construct their own value system. The children are given endless moral dilemmas in which they must make a decision, and they are told that any decision they make is okay; nothing is labeled right or wrong.

The classic and typical example of this type of teaching is the famous lifeboat game. The little child is told that there are ten people in the sinking lifeboat, and he must throw out five of them to drown so that the other five can live. The students sit around in class and discuss the individuals. Will you throw out the senior citizen, or the rabbi, or the handicapped person, or the pregnant woman, or the black militant, or the college co-ed, or the Hollywood dancer, or the policeman? The children must select which lives are worth saving and which are expendable.

I've had reporters tell me that they've been given some variation of this lifeboat game in every one of their 12 years in elementary and secondary school. This type of exercise is the classic Values Clarification exercise from Sidney Simon's book of the same name. You must understand that it is unacceptable for the child to answer that all lives are equally worthy, so it is not true that *any* answer is okay because *that* answer is *not* acceptable. The child is compelled to say *who* must be killed and *who* must be saved.

This "game" comes into the classroom in different vari-

ations. Sometimes it comes as a fallout shelter game; there is not enough room in the fallout shelter, so you have to put out five to die. Sometimes it is a kidney machine game; you can put only five persons on the kidney machine. Or, you are starting a new race and must decide which people you want to start a new race with. This game was defended in Ann Landers' column, and its use is extremely widespread.

This is the way children are cut loose from their parents' values and standards. They are told that whatever the children decide is okay.

The more usual term that currently describes this type of public school teaching is "nondirective education." As Carl Rogers said, we have to "change the name just as fast as needed to keep ahead of the critics." It is now called nondirective education and often "decision making." The little child is told that he can make, and has the capacity to make, his own decisions.

For example, here is a quotation from a much-used textbook: "Steps in decision making can apply to something so simple as buying a new pair of shoes. It can also be applied to more complex decisions, such as religious preferences, use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs." What a terrible thing it is to tell a child that he has the capacity to make the decision on alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, and that it is just the same type of decision as buying a pair of shoes.

You can see this type of nondirective education most clearly in what is called "drug education." Contrary to what most people believe, drug education is not drug *prevention* education; it is telling children *about* drugs and telling them they can make their *own* decisions.

I have read dozens upon dozens of these drug courses, and here is a typical example of what is given to fourth graders. We all live in a drug society; your parents take drugs. The child is shown a picture of a "drug family tree" with all the branches coming out of the same stem: coffee, tobacco, Tums, Pepto-Bismol, alcohol, sleeping pills, glue, aspirin, cough syrup, marijuana, heroine, LSD, and cocaine. The child is told that all these drugs are out there, and that it's up to the little fourth grader to make his own decision.

Society has already decided that illegal drugs such as crack and cocaine are wrong. It is evil to tell a fourth grader that it's *his* decision and not give him any guidance. What this does is to leave the child a sitting duck for the peddler out on the street and for peer pressure.

It's no accident that the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company is a contributor to this type of nondirective drug education course. They are using the public schools as part of a marketing plan to tell the little fourth graders and fifth graders that they have the capacity to make this decision and don't need to listen to any other authority. You, little kid, make your own decision! So then he goes out on the street where he gets the hard sell and is pressured by his more experienced peers.

The children are never told that these things are wrong, bad, unhealthy, and they might die.

This same type of education is used in other areas, too, such as what is taught about sex. Again, it is nondirective. It's no accident that a leading contraceptive manufacturer is a leading promoter of sex education in schools. They want to create a new market among young people for their products. They want to teach little children to think they have the capacity to

decide whether to engage in premarital sex with contraceptives.

We don't let under-age children drive cars, or drink alcohol, or get married, or do all kinds of things. To tell them that they are capable of making adult decisions about taking hard drugs, and about engaging in unhealthy premarital sex, is absolutely evil.

Nondirective education is pervasive in our schools. It erects a value system that *any* value a child selects and is comfortable with is okay, and that he need not listen to the wisdom of his elders, the authority of his parents, or even the laws of our land. There are 15,500 school districts in our country, and I wouldn't say that every one of these bad things is everywhere. But this type of nondirective education is pervasive.

I close on one optimistic note. Congress passed a law recently which mandates that public schools, if they receive federal money (and all public schools do), must teach that illegal drugs and the illegal use of alcohol is "wrong and harmful." This is a sensational law. It will revolutionize teaching *if* the public schools obey the law, which is yet to be seen. I have not yet discovered one single drug course in this country which teaches children that illegal drugs are wrong and harmful. Thank you, Congressmen and Senators, for passing this law.

Now let's see if the schools obey it.

The National Commission on Children was established by Public Law 100-203 "to serve as a forum on behalf of the children of the nation." It is a bipartisan body of 36 members appointed by the President and Congressional leaders.

A Landmark New Federal Law

A little-noticed new federal law requires every public school receiving federal funds to teach students that "the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol is wrong and harmful." This landmark law is the first attempt by the Federal Government to mandate instruction in a specific subject area in order for schools to receive federal funding.

This strong message is to be included as part of a "program to prevent the use of illicit drugs and alcohol by students or employees" which every public school district must adopt as a condition of receiving federal funds. No later than October 1, 1990, acceptable drug prevention programs must be taught in all grades ("from early childhood level through grade 12") of every federally-assisted school.

In addition to teaching that drug use is "wrong and harmful," the required classroom programs must address the "legal, social and health consequences of drug and alcohol use." The courses must also "provide information about effective techniques for resisting peer pressure to use illicit drugs or alcohol."

The new provisions are contained in Section 5145 of the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986, as amended by Pubic Law 101-226, which President Bush signed into law on December 12, 1989. The new law is classified in the United States Code at Title 20, Section 3224a. It applies to all public schools, since all receive some federal money.

"Drug education" is already commonly taught in public schools but these courses are usually **not** drug **prevention** courses. Few if any of these curricula comply with the new

law because they are typically non-judgmental and non-directive. They consist of lessons in "decision-making," "self-esteem," or "values clarification." These courses lead the student to believe that he is the final authority and can make his own personal "choices" and "decisions." These courses teach the student that he can construct his own value system concerning drug use independent of family, religion, the law, or other authority.

Many drug curricula used in public schools confuse the child about "drugs" as a category that includes everything from aspirin to crack, and some courses do not even mention the fact that use or possession of certain drugs is subject to criminal penalties. Some drug education teaches that only the "abuse" of drugs is harmful, thus implying that moderate or occasional use of alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine might be an acceptable option.

In order to comply with the new law, drug courses must clearly teach that the *use* — not just the *abuse* of illegal drugs is "wrong" as well as "harmful."

Some drug curricula do include material that some illegal drugs are "harmful," but that is not sufficient to comply with the new law. It is not sufficient to offer the student "options" or "choices" in which some harmful consequences of illegal drug use are mentioned. To comply with the law, the curriculum must teach that illegal drugs are **wrong** — and if they are **wrong**, then there is no "decision" or "choice" for the child to make, since our society and our laws have already made the decision for the child.

New Disclosure Requirements

The new public disclosure section of this law gives parents and others the right to review all teaching materials used in drug education courses. The new law requires that every local school district "shall, upon request, make available . . . to the public full information about the elements of its program required by" the law.

It is shocking the way that many schools currently deny parents an adequate opportunity to read and review school drug curricula in detail. Many schools throw roadblocks in the path of parents seeking this information by making the curriculum available only to parents who come into the school during office hours and look at a 500-page curriculum under the supervision of school personnel, thereby denying the parent the opportunity to make copies for review by other parents whose employment obligations prevent them from coming to the school.

The new law also requires all tax-supported schools and colleges to adopt standards of conduct for both students and employees (including teachers and faculty). In addition to criminal penalties already provided by law, schools and colleges must impose their own sanctions — "up to and including expulsion or termination of employment and referral for prosecution." This will overturn the practice of many colleges and universities of serving as a sanctuary where students are protected from local police trying to enforce the law regarding drug use or underage drinking.

Regulations to implement the law make it clear that schools and colleges that violate the law will suffer the cutoff of "any form of federal financial assistance" (not just Education Department grants) and, in addition, may be required to pay

back all funds received during any period after October 1, 1990 in which the district was not in compliance.

The U.S. Department of Education reported in October that nearly all public schools, colleges and universities have certified that they are in compliance with this new law. This makes it possible for any parent or taxpayer to walk into any public school and demand to see the proof that the school is teaching that the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol is "wrong."

What Parents Object To In Drug Ed

Many drug curricula are on the market for schools to buy, and most of them have the same defects. Those who are searching for these defects should demand to see the teacher's manual, since it frequently is more open about the objectionable processes than the student's workbook. Here are some of the selections from various drug curricula which parents find offensive and believe actually promote experimentation with drugs instead of a "just say no" attitude.

- The child is subjected to a process called "decision making," which turns the child inward toward himself as the only source of authority and requires him to examine "alternative courses of action." It is positively evil to require a good child who is **not** doing drugs to consider "alternative courses of action." Since the school gives stern rules on some matters (come to school regularly, don't drive on the wrong side of the road, do wear helmets when you play football), but students are told to make their own decision about doing drugs, they conclude that any decision is acceptable. They therefore become easy prey for the hard sell from the drug peddler.

- Students are repeatedly told that "it's up to me" to decide all sorts of moral dilemmas, including doing drugs. They are told again and again that we live in a drug society ("look in your medicine chest at home and you will see that your parents take drugs"), and that it's up to the student to decide whether and how much he should use. This directly attacks the authority of the parents and even of the laws against drugs.

- The teacher is usually admonished to present the information "nonjudgmentally" and to "avoid a lecturing tone." The teacher is told, "don't advise, evaluate, or moralize."

- Students are often taught the "positive" reasons for doing drugs, such as to take medicine, to celebrate, to feel sociable, and to relax. One drug course tells fifth graders that socially acceptable drug use includes the use of wine at communion in church and in spaghetti sauce, toasting the bride and groom at a wedding, anesthetics during surgery, and having hot chocolate at bedtime. This gives a double message which is not nullified by other information about the harm that drugs can cause.

- The child is subjected to therapeutic techniques such as "focusing . . . accepting . . . drawing out," all of which can be dangerous in the hands of amateurs (which is what the teachers and counselors are, having had only a few hours of training).

- The courses are morbidly preoccupied with discussion and exploration of their "feelings," particularly negative feelings. Sometimes students are given long lists of "feeling" words to discuss in the classroom, most of which are negative

and many of which are downright depressing. One drug course takes primary school children through extensive exercises to discuss or demonstrate their feelings when they are angry, afraid or worried. Sometimes they sit around in class and discuss such downers as "what is the ugliest thing you know?" or "what one day in your life did you enjoy the least?"

- The courses have many "open-ended questions" which do not admit of a yes or no answer, or a right or wrong answer. Sometimes these are unfinished sentences which the student must complete. Questions which have no right or wrong answers are not academic; they are psychological and destabilizing; they depend on feelings and attitudes, not objective information.

- The courses have many portions which are privacy-invading. These may be questionnaires, surveys, "encounter groups," "magic circle" exercises, or just require that the lessons "relate to their lives and not be about life in general." They compel the student to reveal personal information about his attitudes and feelings, and to inform on his parents about what goes on inside his family. Many of these questionnaires are very explicit (such as detailed questions about sex experiences) and traumatic (such as detailed questions about suicide).

- Some of the courses are anti-family or anti-parental authority. Students may be advised "not to pursue the issue at home" if they find their families object to the course. Sometimes they may be told that it is "unacceptable" for parents to "forbid" the child to do anything or even to talk to other parents about rules for parties and curfews.

- Role-playing is a favorite technique in drug curricula. Elementary schoolchildren are told to role-play how they behave when they feel angry or afraid (and are encouraged to "scream, stomp feet, throw things," etc.). Middle school children are told to role-play negative roles in a drug scenario.

- Many drug courses are anti-parent. They may ask the child such questions or dilemmas as "Do you think you should use your own judgment or follow your parent's rule?", "do you think marijuana should be legal or illegal?", or "how many children make up an ideal family?"

- Some drug courses include ridiculous assignments. In one widely-marketed course, fifth graders are told to rewrite the fairy tale of Goldie Locks and the Three Bears so that she samples pills instead of porridge, and to write "Dear Abby" letters voicing complaints such as Mom keeps a whiskey bottle in her closet.

- Some courses include some religious or pseudo-religious practices commonly associated with the New Age ideology. These exercises include guided imagery, visualization, progressive relaxation, meditation, and telling the child he can consult with a wise man living inside him or a wise rabbit in a green pasture.

- School personnel are given workshops on how to deal with parents who object to the course. These tactics include falsely denying that the course is based on values clarification, exhausting the parents in a long and involved complaint procedure, and refusing to engage in debates about the course or go on radio talk shows about them because they "can't control the environment."

The above offensive characteristics are taken from many different drug curricula and are examples of what to look for

when you evaluate a particular drug curriculum. Some offend First Amendment rights of parents and children, others should be ruled illegal because they are group psychotherapy in the classroom, and all are offensive because they promote experimentation with illegal drugs and take time away from academic work.

Are Schools Obeying the Law?

Parents who have studied drug curricula doubt that any public schools are in compliance with the new law that requires schools to teach that the use of illicit drugs is **wrong**. Parents believe that most drug curricula used in public schools during the last decade generally encourage drug experimentation and anti-parent antagonism. Children are required to spend dozens of hours of classroom time discussing stress, social skills, and self-esteem, but they are not told that illegal drugs are wrong.

We urge all citizens and parents to go to their local public schools, insist on seeing the drug curriculum, and demand that the new law be obeyed without delay.

In addition, since the new law directly feeds federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education into local public school programs, it triggers the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), a 1978 federal law. Under the PPRA's 1984 regulations, "No student shall be required, as part of any program . . . to submit without prior consent to . . . psychological examination, testing, or treatment, in which the primary purpose is to reveal information concerning . . . mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his or her family (or) . . . illegal, anti-social self-incriminating and demeaning behavior."

The PPRA regulations define "psychological treatment" as an activity that is designed "to affect behavioral, emotional, or attitudinal characteristics of an individual or group." Certainly, drug abuse programs encompass all those things. In addition, many schools are subjecting the children to privacy-intrusive questionnaires which include detailed questions about sex, suicide, and behavior of family members.

Public schools should be put on notice that they must get written parental consent before using psychological classroom curricula, questionnaires, or counseling on drug abuse.

Phyllis Schlafly writes and speaks frequently on education subjects, particularly on parental rights in education and on how psychological curricula of all kinds have replaced academic teaching in the public schools. The book she edited on this subject, entitled *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, was recently called "required reading for every parent" by Hoover Institution scholar Thomas Sowell. She is the president of Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund which publishes the *Education Reporter*, a monthly newspaper with current news on these same subjects (\$25/year). Her weekly Saturday call-in radio program is devoted to education topics.

The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
ISSN0556-0152

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

Subscription Price: \$15 per year. Extra copies available: 50 cents each; 4 copies \$1; 30 copies \$5; 100 copies \$10.