



The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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Outcome-Based Education Nonsense

The most controversial words in the education world today are Outcome-Based Education (sometimes called Performance-Based Education, and formerly called Mastery Learning). Parents recognize it as a process that rejects the basics, subject-matter knowledge, competition, meaningful report cards, and the Carnegie units, and substitutes material that is subjective, often psychological, and usually not capable of measurement.

Parents object to Outcome-Based Education because it uses children as guinea pigs in an experimental process that has not been proven anywhere. There is absolutely no research that proves academic gains from using Performance or Outcome-Based Education.

Outcome-Based advocates use Kentucky as their Exhibit A. Kentucky embarked on a massive restructuring in 1990 and spent more than \$1 billion of additional tax money on the changeover. Yet Kentucky Commissioner of Education Thomas Boysen said last October that test scores show "no clear difference between schools that have been deeply involved in reform efforts and others that have made no changes."

Kentucky's Learning Goals and Outcomes prove that the whole system is a cheat — on students, on parents, and on taxpayers. It starts with platitudes, then progresses through bureaucratic jargon, then spells out subjective outcomes that cannot be scored, and finally descends to specifics that range from the ridiculous, to a waste of time, to the downright offensive.

Kentucky's six "Learning Goals" established by the State Legislature sound like Mom and apple pie. Here is the second of the six: "Students shall develop their abilities to apply core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, the arts, the humanities, social studies, practical living studies, and vocational studies to what they will encounter throughout their lives."

The Learning Goals then moved into the hands of the state Department of Education, which wrote the Learner Outcomes. Here is Learner Outcome #2.32 listed under the above Goal: "Students demonstrate positive strategies

for achieving and maintaining mental and emotional wellness." How is the school going to grade the child's performance of "emotional wellness"? It is obvious that this kind of "outcome" is wholly subjective and psychological, as well as non-academic.

But stay tuned. Now we move to typical specifics of how the schools actually teach Mental and Emotional Wellness. The quoted material below is taken directly from Kentucky's published Goals and Outcomes.

1. "Establish goals for improving and maintaining self-esteem; plan, implement, and record accomplishments." Tell me, how would you "plan" a self-esteem accomplishment? How would you score it? How would a child get an A or an F? No wonder Outcome-Based Education eliminates traditional letter grades.

2. "Identify and analyze stressful situations in your life." That's an outrageous invasion of the child's privacy!

3. "Interview a graduate from a substance-abuse program; create a case study of his/her drug history."

4. "Research as a class the issue of teenage suicide by engaging in the following activities: Read a novel and watch a movie that focuses on teenage suicide. Interview a psychiatrist who has worked with teenagers who have attempted suicide. Read articles and books about teenage suicide. Interview parents of teenage suicide victims." This depressing activity is calculated to destroy a child's emotional wellness, rather than improve it.

5. Here is the activity specified for the Science class: "Role-play a doctor who has diagnosed a patient as being HIV positive."

6. Here is the activity specified for the Mathematics class: "Identify dependent and independent variables in situations involving stress." It's no wonder that American students are scoring last on international math and science tests when classroom time is wasted on this kind of nonsense.

7. Here is the activity specified for Social Studies class: "Examine the mental and emotional wellness of past or present world leaders." So, this is how History has been degraded; instead of studying George Washington's great

achievements, the student is taught to psychoanalyze his mental and emotional wellness.

There are so many things wrong with putting this type of teaching in the public schools that it's hard to know where to begin. It is not education; it's experimentation. It's not academic; it's psychological. It's not uplifting; it's depressing. It's a terrible invasion of privacy. It won't improve students' test scores. It's not capable of objective scoring. No wonder parents are up in arms against it!

Parents don't send their children to school to study self-esteem or to engage in gab sessions with drug abusers, HIV victims, and people who are thinking about suicide. Parents send their children to school to be taught reading, writing, mathematics, history, geography and science. When will the schools bring traditional basics back to the public schools?

Schools Produce Juvenile Delinquents

Study after study of adolescents at correctional institutions has shown that the one thing they have in common is that they cannot read. With a research grant funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Michael Brunner set out to determine if the latter causes the former.

He spent two years analyzing and integrating the literature on illiteracy and recidivism. In a new book called *Retarding America: The Imprisonment of Potential*, he comes to the chilling conclusion that reading failure is a major cause, rather than just a correlate, of anti-social behavior.

The measure of literacy expectations in the past has always been what an individual can talk about and comprehend. Studies show that most juvenile delinquents simply cannot read and write what they can talk about and comprehend.

Brunner found that a high percentage of incarcerated juveniles were diagnosed early in school as "learning disabled" even though there was no evidence of specific neurological abnormalities. (It may be just a coincidence, but the more students get labeled "learning disabled," the more state and federal government money flows into the local school system.) These children never received the kind of reading instruction that is successful, namely, intensive, systematic phonics. They never learned how to identify sounds in isolation, to blend individual speech sounds into words, or to segment polysyllabic words into speech sounds.

A number of reading instruction programs have been introduced into juvenile correctional institutions, and Brunner describes the experiences of some of the instructors in these programs. They have discovered that failure to learn to read is a major cause for the frustration and low self-esteem that lead to juvenile delinquency.

Brunner reports a poignant interview with "Joey," who could decipher only four words. His years in the public school system were a time of constant humiliation because he could not read. He said, "I just liked to fight [so] don't nobody laugh at me." In the correctional institution, Joey was successfully taught to read with remedial intensive

phonics.

Another teenager, interviewed at Ironwood Maximum Security Prison after he was successfully taught by the phonics method, almost became a new person as a result of his new accomplishment. "People act like I'm there now that I can read," he said. These teenagers were experiencing success for the first time in their lives.

Brunner challenges the laws that mandate schooling until age 18 and believes that they contribute to juvenile delinquency. Interviews with special education teachers indicate that forcing a child to experience the humiliation of failure over and over again leads to anti-social aggressiveness and juvenile crime.

Brunner relates Pavlov's conditioned reflex experiments: An individual must have a goal, must have sustained pressure to achieve that goal, and must not be denied the means to achieve that goal. If, instead, the child experiences sustained frustration in trying to achieve that goal, anti-social behavior results.

The anti-social aggression that Pavlov created in the laboratory is being created in tens of thousands of classrooms across our nation because the schools use pedagogy that produces failure. All the ingredients to create anti-social aggression through sustained frustration are present in the reading methods used in most public schools today.

The widely-used anti-phonics Whole Language method (which is part and parcel of Outcome-Based Education) makes the goal of reading unattainable for the average child who has not had help from other sources. The student is continually pressured to achieve this unattainable goal by teachers, parents and peers.

The student has no alternative for achieving this goal because elementary schools typically offer no choice in curriculum, and compulsory attendance laws imprison him in a failure-producing environment. For many, this unrelenting frustration explodes into resentment and hostility of a magnitude that is incomprehensible to those who find reading as easy as breathing and typically cannot remember how they learned.

The only immediate solution to widespread illiteracy is for parents to teach their children to read at home by a proven phonics method — and this effort is especially necessary for those children who may be targets for recruitment into anti-social behavior.

Goals 2000: Another Expensive "Reform"

President Clinton's education "reform" bill, called "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," became law on March 31. It puts the education establishment, with the heavy hand of federal control, into all aspects of life from conception until a child enters the labor force. It endorses all sorts of highly controversial programs, including a national school board, a national curriculum, national testing, funding of school-based clinics (the so-called condom clinics), Outcome-Based Education, the "Robin Hood" plan that forces states to equalize funding among school districts, and a national "teachers as parents"

program.

Goals 2000 creates three new bureaucracies to set up national standards. It uses the heavy-handed technique of tying funding to state adoption of federal standards and mandates. Goals 2000 explicitly rejects private school choice in favor of plowing more tax money into the same dinosaur establishment that has failed our children.

Title I establishes seven National Education Goals to be met by the year 2000. These goals broaden the scope of education to cover almost everyone from prenatal babies and preschool children to parents and adults in the labor force.

Goal 1 states that all children in America must start school "ready to learn." This means that the government plans to take over the responsibility for raising infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and for running all kinds of preschool baby-sitting and health-care programs.

Goal 2 states that the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent, with assurances that the graduation rates for minority and non-minority students will be the same. This goal will be facilitated by the current trend of giving everyone high grades, thus making report cards meaningless.

Goal 3 states that all students will leave grades 4, 8 and 12 having demonstrated "sufficient competency" over subject matter including foreign languages and art, history and geography, involvement in community service, and knowledge about the "diverse cultural heritage." There is no mention of schoolchildren learning how to read, which should be the number-one task of the schools.

Title II establishes two new layers of bureaucracy: a National Education Goals Panel and a National Education Standards and Improvement Council. This Council will function as a national school board that controls criteria for certification of teachers, schools, and the so-called "voluntary" standards for national content, student performance, and assessment systems.

Most of the money in Goals 2000 will go in grants to the states and local public school systems. Money would be made available for developing, field testing, and evaluation of systems of assessment, and the states are already setting up their own spending programs to parallel the federal plan.

The bill requires grantees to give special attention to how assessments treat all students in regard to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and language proficiency. Many parents are concerned that this is a device to finance teaching attitudes and outcomes rather than cognitive skills and factual knowledge.

Title III authorizes grants to the states for plans that support the federal takeover of education, including: (1) development or adoption of content, student performance, and opportunity-to-learn standards, (2) improvement and coordination of staff, curriculum, and assessment systems, and (3) coordination of health and social services. The committee report emphasized that the use of federal funds is not restricted to the academic area (and one wonders if any money at all will be spent on academics).

Title IV sets up the third layer of bureaucracy: a National Standards Board to stimulate the development of a national system of skill standards used in industry hiring. When did it become the job of the public schools to advise business on hiring standards?

Title VI authorizes money to train parents. Since when did it become the job of the public schools to train parents? This expansion of the public schools' mission is modelled on the Missouri plan called "Parents As Teachers" (often called "teachers as parents"). This program greatly expands the turf of the public schools by sending state employees inside private homes to evaluate parents and teach mothers how to raise their children.

One Big Victory for Parents

There is only one bright spot in all the bad news about Goals 2000. Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) succeeded in amending this law to include his Parental Rights Restoration Amendment to Goals 2000, which simplifies and puts teeth into the existing Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) by making it more user-friendly for parents seeking its protection for their children. The Grassley Amendment passed the Senate on February 8 by the unanimous vote of 93 to 0 and became law on March 31 when President Clinton signed Goals 2000.

The original PPRA was passed by Congress in 1978, but it was ignored until 1984 when the U.S. Department of Education finally issued regulations in response to public demand. The PPRA was designed to forbid schools, without prior written parental consent, from imposing psychological or psychiatric tests or treatment on children, or to invade their privacy by making them answer nosy questions about sex, attitudes, and family matters that are embarrassing or none of the school's business.

The National Education Association and other school personnel associations had a collective tantrum when the Reagan Administration issued the regulations in 1984. The schools have since used every technicality to prevent parents from asserting their rights under the law. Schools all over the country have been using a form letter to roadblock parents by telling them that PPRA does not apply to whatever curriculum is challenged. It has never been enforced, despite many examples of clear violations.

The Grassley Amendment strikes out the requirements that a challenged curriculum be a "research project designed to explore or develop new or unproven teaching methods or techniques," that the parent show that the student was subjected to "psychiatric or psychological examination, testing, or treatment," and that the parent show that the "primary purpose" of the activity is to reveal private information.

Under the Grassley Amendment, parents will simply have to show that the survey, analysis or evaluation reveals private information in one of seven categories, that it is in a federally funded program, and that their consent was not obtained. This will provide wider protection for parents and students. The Grassley Amendment also places an affirmative responsibility on the educational agencies and

institutions to give "effective notice" to the parents and students of their rights under this section.

Senator Grassley said that his Amendment is important to "empower parents to walk within their constitutional rights." "Not only did the existing law fail to foster a healthy degree of parental involvement in a child's education, it actually discouraged it by establishing barriers to information for interested parents," Grassley said. "Parents will no longer be forced to jump through all these hoops just to know what happens each day at their children's school," Grassley added.

The PPRA passed in 1978 was sometimes known as the Hatch Amendment. The new user-friendly PPRA passed in 1994 should now be known as the Grassley Amendment.

Since the Grassley Amendment, a federal law, applies only to school materials that are federally funded, we hope that State Legislatures will use this law as a model and pass state laws that assure parents' rights in regard to state-funded school materials. Utah has just done exactly that. On March 2, the Utah Family Education Rights and Privacy Act became law, assuring parents of their right to protect their children against psychological and psychiatric testing and treatment in the classroom.

These laws should be of great assistance to parents engaged in curriculum battles, because Outcome-Based Education and many of the current trendy courses in self-esteem, sex, and drugs are based on non-academic techniques and on asking students nosy questions.

Federal Grab for Control of Education

The 700-page Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1994, will do to education what the Clinton health bill will do to health care. That means a federal grab for power, more bureaucratic control over private and local decisions, lower quality, higher taxes, and the implementation of a liberal social agenda that would never be adopted if Americans are allowed to make their own choices.

The feds will acquire national control of curriculum and tests (called assessments). States will be required to adopt a curriculum and a series of tests that conform to the federal mandates laid down in the other education law, Goals 2000.

ESEA legislates the controversial system called Outcome-Based Education. Title II, Sec. 2132 states: "The term 'outcome performance indicators' means measures of specific outcomes that the state or local educational agency identifies as assessing progress." Each state must adopt "content standards" and "performance standards" that specify what "all children are expected to know and be able to do," and that describe three levels of performance: "proficient," "advanced," and a "third benchmark" described as "lower-performing." The states must inform the feds in detail about how the children are "mastering" the material.

Don't be under any illusion that this means higher academic standards. Cutting through the jargon, ESEA

forbids schools to teach reading by phonics or arithmetic by drills such as the multiplication tables. It arrogantly writes into federal law the utterly false statement that teaching children "basic skills" ("with emphasis on repetitive drills and practice") "before engaging in more complex tasks" is a "disproven theory."

ESEA is a federal grab for power to regulate homeschoolers and private schools. It forces each state to describe and enforce standards based on tests (assessments) "for all children." The phrase "all children" is used repeatedly. It puts the squeeze on each state's public school bureaucracy to regulate "all children" in order to receive its federal funding.

ESEA authorizes school-based health clinics for every school, as well as school cooperation with Planned Parenthood. ESEA authorizes schools to "coordinate and collaborate with other agencies providing services to children, youth, and families, including, but not limited to, health and social services."

In the name of "gender equity," ESEA sets up a federally financed bureaucracy to hire radical feminists to evaluate, censor, and insert feminist propaganda into "curricula, textbooks, and other educational materials." This will provide federal funds to hire a feminist gestapo, make grants to radical feminist organizations and individuals, and issue censorship instructions to publishers and school administrators.

ESEA requires all parents to sign a "school-parent compact." This will put parents in a contractual relationship with "the entire school staff" in order to make parents "partners" to "share the responsibility" for educating their children. This law assumes that parents need the approval of schools in order to function as parents. It sets up a system for government agents to go into the homes of preschool children to evaluate and monitor parents in order "to help parents become full partners in the education of their children."

ESEA sets up a two-step system for national certification and licensure of teachers and administrators. First, it forces certification requirements on the states, and then it authorizes federal funds to provide "financial or other incentives" to corral teachers into a process of being certified by the union-controlled National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

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