



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



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Don't Give Obama More Power Over Schools

After spending most of the summer giving President Obama new authority (called fast track) to negotiate trade deals with low-wage countries in Asia, Congressional Republicans are now poised to give Obama new authority over education in America's public schools. This is a big disappointment for those of us who worked hard to elect a Republican Congress last November. We expected the new Congress to take power back from the president, not give him more.

For the past 50 years, the engine of federal control over local schools has been Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. It was the first in a series of socialist laws that President Lyndon Johnson promised would lead to a "Great Society" after we won his declared "war on poverty." Johnson's Great Society legislation was speedily enacted by a Congress in which Democrats outnumbered Republicans by more than two to one (295-140 in the House and 68-32 in the Senate). Despite the trillions of dollars spent since 1965, we are no closer to achieving a Great Society. By many measures, America's education and social welfare are much worse today than when those programs were launched 50 years ago.

Republicans had an opportunity to dismantle the failed regime of federal control when they regained control of both Houses of Congress in 1994 and then elected a president in 2000. Unfortunately, George W. Bush campaigned on the slogan "Leave No Child Behind" as his signature domestic agenda item, and John Boehner, then chairman of the House Education Committee, produced a bill that rebranded the old ESEA under the new title "No Child Left Behind." No Child Left Behind (NCLB) promised to bring all children (including all demographic minorities measured separately) to 100% proficiency by 2014. Of course that didn't happen, and nearly everyone now recognizes NCLB was a complete failure.

With their current historic majority in both Houses, there's a new opportunity for Republicans to dismantle the 50-year failure of money poured into local public schools

with strings attached. Unfortunately Republicans, once again, are on the verge of just rebranding the same failed programs with new and overly optimistic slogans: the "Student Success Act" (in the House) and the "Every Child Achieves Act," ECAA (in the Senate).

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), has been speaking in front of a sign saying "Fix No Child Left Behind," as he touts the ECAA bill as a bipartisan "consensus about how to fix it." A former Secretary of Education in the Bush 41 administration, Lamar almost didn't return to the Senate this year after he won less than 50% of the Republican vote against an underfunded tea party challenger.

The claim that ECAA is somehow a "fix" for NCLB is laughable. Equally false is the claim that it gets rid of the hated Common Core. While it makes a great show of disavowing the name Common Core, Lamar's bill continues and extends the standards-and-testing mandate that Common Core was designed to incorporate into the public school curriculum. The proof that ECAA will indirectly reinforce federal control is the way it requires states to force testing on students whose parents want to opt them out of that mindless exercise, as tens of thousands have already done.

One method the schools have used against students whose parents opt them out is to force kids to sit quietly at an empty desk — forbidden to read, write, or draw — while other students take the test. Parents call this form of punishment "sit and stare."

In Oldmans Township, New Jersey, 9-year-old Cassidy Thornton, whose parent opted her out of the mandated PARCC exam, was humiliated to tears by being excluded from the end-of-year cupcake and juice-box party with the rest of her class. Cassidy's mom called it bullying, but the school defended its decision to reward test-takers because federal rules require 95% of students to be tested.

Education has become a critical issue for 2016 presidential candidates. Even Donald Trump, in his speech at Trump Tower announcing his candidacy, made a point of declaring that "Common Core is a disaster. Education has to be local."

But Jeb Bush, whose foundation took millions from Bill Gates and corporations such as Pearson to promote Common Core, remains unmoved by grassroots opposition. Two years ago, Jeb derided parents concerned about Common Core as people who are “comfortable with mediocrity.” That insult rivals Arne Duncan’s slam at “white suburban moms who all of a sudden [realize that] their child isn’t as brilliant as they thought they were.”

Jeb actually praised the heavy-handed federal role in public education: “Look, I think Secretary Duncan and President Obama deserve credit for putting pressure on states, providing carrots and sticks. I think that’s appropriate.” No, Jeb, it’s not appropriate. Tell your U.S. Senators and your Member of Congress to vote No on any bill to reauthorize a federal role in public education.

Schools Don’t Teach Kids to Read

A high school English teacher at Rosemount High School in Minnesota, which was called a “top ranked school” by the Minnesota Department of Education, given the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award by the U.S. Department of Education, and named a top school in the nation for 2014 by *Newsweek* Magazine, wrote a shocking letter alerting parents and the public that her high school juniors can’t read. Her letter published by the *Minnesota Star Tribune* on December 4, 2014 was eloquent, so I quote it verbatim:

“We are in the midst of one of the greatest literacy crises ever encountered, and we are fighting an uphill battle. Every day I experience firsthand what it means to be illiterate in a high school classroom. Average students with average abilities can fervently text away, but they cannot read.”

She said some of her students just sleep away an assigned unit. Others resort to depression or aggression. She gave them a not very difficult test, but they couldn’t read the test. When she assigns her students a book to read, they often don’t even try to read it. Ask them why, they say “It’s boring.” She wrote that this translates into “It’s too hard to read.” The teacher appeals to parents and the public, saying, “I need your help.”

Don’t count on the shift to Common Core to teach school kids to read. Common Core will change the assigned stories and books, but it won’t change the fact that elementary school kids are only taught how to memorize a few dozen “sight,” mostly one-syllable, words, but not taught phonics so they can sound out the syllables and then read the bigger words in high school and college assignments.

Students are not assigned or motivated to read whole books. In the name of “close reading,” they are given

short so-called “informational” excerpts to read over and over in class, almost until they are memorized. You don’t find the students going to the library to take out and read the classics, and students don’t acquire the vocabulary necessary to do college work.

Limited reading skill means that what the students read is tightly controlled. Common Core has rewritten the history of America’s founding to present James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and other Founders to fit the leftwing narrative of gender, race, class, and ethnicity, and students have neither motivation nor skill to seek out the true history of the Founders. Common Core does, however, find space for stories that many parents find morally objectionable such as *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison.

The change from teaching school children to read by phonics, and replacing phonics with the so-called “whole word” or “look-say” or sight method, was fully debunked in the landmark book *Why Johnny Can’t Read* by Rudolph Flesch in 1955. Unfortunately, the truth had no impact on public schools which stuck with the new method because it was part of “progressive” education. It was brought to Teachers College at Columbia University with a \$3 million grant from John D. Rockefeller Jr., who then sent four of his five sons to be educated by Dewey’s progressive ideas.

Publishers responded eagerly to the opportunity to sell new books to all elementary schools, and the *Dick and Jane* series seemed much more attractive than the widely used McGuffey readers. Reading suddenly appeared to become easy because the whole word method teaches the child to guess at the words from pictures, to memorize a few dozen one-syllable words that are used over and over again, and to substitute words that fit the context.

The *Dick and Jane* books were full of color pictures and only a couple of short sentences on every page. A typical page showed Dick and Jane on a seesaw. The kids could easily “read” the two sentences below: “See Dick up. See Jane down.”

Nelson Rockefeller, who became Governor of New York and ran three times for U.S. President, described his reading handicap in *The Reading Teacher* in March 1972: “I am a prime example of one who has had to struggle with the handicap of being a poor reader while serving in public office.” Rockefeller hired expensive speech writers, but he said that many times he threw away the speech and told the audience he was just going to give his “spontaneous thoughts.” He confessed that the real reason was that he could not do an adequate job of reading the speech prepared for him.

If parents want their children to be good readers, parents will have to do the teaching as I did with my children and grandchildren. When the book I used for

my six children was allowed to go out of print and its publisher went out of business, I wrote *First Reader* to teach phonics to my grandchildren at age 5 or 6 (now available at **FirstReader.com**) and *Turbo Reader* for kids over age 8 (available at **TurboReader.com**).

Crimes Against Your Children

Parents are up in arms against the new attempt to federalize what schools teach called Common Core, but the even more basic “crimes of the educators” are described in the new book by Samuel Blumenfeld under that title. If you want your children to be smart and successful, rather than join the millions who graduate from high school unable to read their own diploma, or go into debt taking remedial courses in college, you need Blumenfeld’s book.

If your child is not a good reader, chances are he is not stupid or afflicted with some brain disability. It’s much more likely that your child was never properly taught how to read. The failure to teach schoolchildren how to read in the first grade means that they fall farther behind with each passing year and soon become bored and resentful of school. By the time they get to the fourth grade, American students are scoring below children of many other nations.

Blumenfeld’s book details the process by which this happened, and it wasn’t any accident. It was planned that way by the socialists who believe that the way to undermine the U.S. capitalist system is to get rid of high literacy and independent intelligence so that the younger generation will accept Big Brother in the driver’s seat of our economy. Blumenfeld traces the evolution of this system from an 1898 article called “The Primary-Education Fetich” by the father of so-called progressive education, John Dewey. In that article, Dewey wrote: “The plea for the predominance of learning to read in early school life . . . seems to me a perversion.”

Under Dewey’s progressive system, children are no longer taught phonics (how to sound out syllables so they can read big words), and instead are taught what is called the “sight” or “whole-word” method. That means they are

taught to memorize a few dozen frequently used words, guess at other words from their shape, and predict the content of the article from pictures on the page. If children don’t catch on to this system, parents are falsely told that their children were born with a disability called dyslexia. Students who become disorderly are given drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall.

John Dewey wrote in 1896, “It is one of the great mistakes of education to make reading and writing constitute the bulk of the school work the first two years. The true way is to teach them incidentally as the outgrowth of the social activities at this time.” According to Blumenfeld, “To Dewey, the greatest obstacle to socialism was

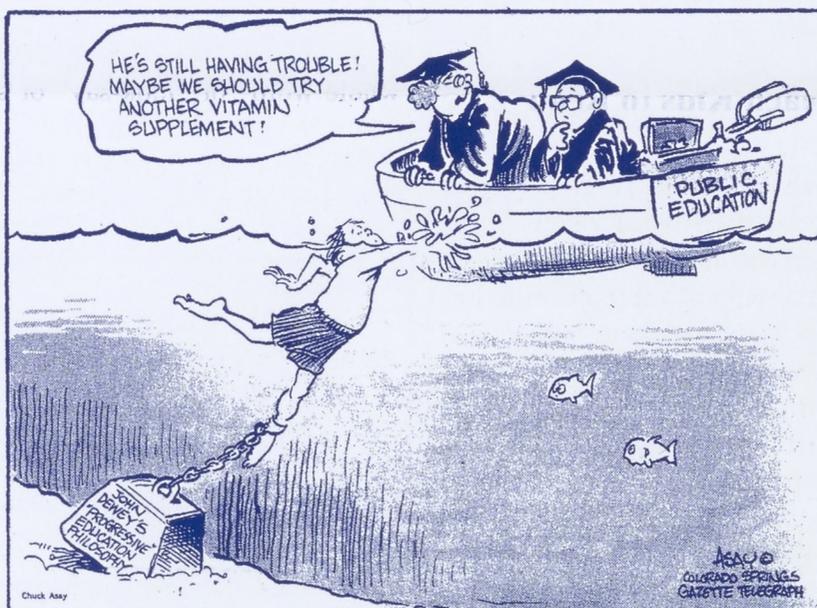
the private mind that seeks knowledge in order to exercise its own private judgment and intellectual authority. High literacy gave the individual the means to seek knowledge independently.”

So Dewey developed and propagated the system that discouraged high literacy and inflicted children with a method that would prevent them from reading the great books and from developing high

levels of independent intelligence. Dewey introduced his theories at Johns Hopkins University. Dewey’s study of individualism led him to believe that we could develop the socialized individual by first getting rid of the traditional emphasis on language and literacy in the primary grades and turning children toward socialized activities.

John D. Rockefeller Jr. became Dewey’s sponsor with a \$3 million grant. His sons, who were then subjected to the Dewey system, later admitted how handicapped they were as public officials. Both Nelson and his brother David admitted that they were poor readers which school officials blamed on dyslexia. Nelson admitted he could not read the public speeches written for him by high-priced speechwriters and had to toss the scripts aside and speak off the cuff.

Blumenfeld recognizes Common Core as “an educational fraud.” Instead of reading the literary classics, Common Core students are given portions from tiresome government documents and technical manuals instead of great literature.



Blumenfeld's use of the word "crimes" in the title of his book is not too strong a word to describe what the progressives have done to America and to our children. Don't let them do it to your children or grandchildren. Immediately get *Crimes of the Educators* by Samuel Blumenfeld from WorldNetDaily.com. The accurate subtitle is *How Utopians Are Using Government Schools to Destroy America's Children*.

No Free Speech to Criticize Common Core

A teacher in Louisiana named Deborah Vailes has been teaching junior high in Louisiana for the past 2 years. She has a stellar record and is especially passionate about helping special needs kids become readers. One day she posted a criticism of the Common Core curriculum on her personal Facebook page. She then was faced with disciplinary action, suppression of her right to free speech, retaliation from school officials, and possible loss of her job.

When the school principal discovered the post, she gave Deborah a written reprimand and ordered her to remove her anti-Common Core post from the website. Deborah was also ordered to refrain from expressing any opinion about public education on social media in any public forum. Two days later, the principal informed the school faculty that Deborah had been reprimanded due to posting a negative opinion about Common Core on Facebook, and ordered the rest of the faculty not to share their personal opinions or speak out in any way.

Deborah had never received any reprimand before. Since her criticism of Common Core, she has received three additional written reprimands, and school administrators are now constantly visiting her class. She has been shifted to a job category that will be eliminated at the end of the school year, which means Deborah's employment will be terminated.

The Thomas More Law Center, a national public interest law firm, filed a lawsuit on her behalf against the school district and the school principal. We don't yet know how this will all turn out, but it certainly demonstrates that the imposition of Common Core on public school children is highly controversial, and it's no wonder that moms and many teachers are up in arms all over the country in an effort to remove it from the classroom.

Washington bureaucrats should stop trying to mess with a system that worked successfully for generations and should allow educators to use the successful phonics method. The only thing worse than using a bad method is making a bad method mandatory for all schools across the country. That is what Common Core does and why parents are against it.

Common Core Pledge for Candidates

You are probably aware that Common Core is one of the hottest issues at the grassroots level. Parents and students across the country have been in an uproar against Common Core in their school districts, state boards of education, and legislatures. The Common Core State Standards have bombarded our students with all sorts of issues: politically biased lessons, ridiculous "new" ways to solve math problems with no right answers, new federal oversight on testing, and the collection of extremely intrusive, personal data on our kids.

As parents have demonstrated their outrage in so many states across the country, public office holders and prospective candidates have taken notice. Candidates' positions on Common Core affected many races in 2014, and it will play an even bigger role in the 2016 elections. That is why Eagle Forum introduced a national "Stop Common Core Pledge." Voters deserve to know every candidate's position on this vital issue. Those hoping to be public servants can sign our pledge and tell the voters very clearly where they stand on this issue.

I pledge to —

- oppose Common Core in all its forms and no matter what name it is given;
- do my best to try to limit or eliminate the various aspects of Common Core that are currently being implemented, including data collection, directed vocational education, and nationalized standards and assessments;
- make public my opposition to Common Core.

EagleForum.org/stop-common-core-pledge.html

We need YOU, the constituents and parents, to help us put this pledge in the hands of every lawmaker, state executive, and prospective 2016 candidate so they can add their names to the growing ranks of those signing our pledge. Defeating Common Core is a *must* if we want to protect our kids, and we must be steadfast in our resolve to hold every public official accountable.

Save the Date!

Eagle Council 2015 ☆ September 11-13, 2015

St. Louis, Missouri

Register here: EagleCouncil.com

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<http://www.eagleforum.org>

eagle@eagleforum.org