

Education: Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory

By Marda Kirkwood, 5/17/04, revised 1/3/05 and 6/16/07

“The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.”
~ Abraham Lincoln

As Lincoln made clear, education affects everyone. It controls our future. A significant portion of our resources is devoted to educating our young. Here in Washington, 45 – 47% of the state’s operating budget already goes to K-12 public education. What do we get for our money? Are we on the right track?

What Education *Should* Be

Ideally, education is the passing on of a body of knowledge and a shared culture from one generation to the next. It should be largely an academic pursuit. The acquisition of knowledge is the most important component.

The traditional basics (as opposed to the “new basics” – more about those later), also known affectionately as the three R’s, are what the educrats¹ currently refer to as “lower order thinking skills.” It is hard to miss the attitude of derision with which they spit out the words. They promote “higher order” or “critical thinking” skills. Of course, that is the ultimate goal, but trying to teach someone critical thinking when he has nothing to think about is useless. It is like trying to build a house from the roof down. The fundamentals are foundational.

Traditional education got us to the moon, created our abundant lifestyles, and basically served us pretty well. The schools certainly weren’t perfect in the past. We have had to confront many serious issues because the problems of the culture are reflected in the schools. Even so, schools used to be pretty successful because they did their job. They had a limited and focused mission – teaching knowledge.

As little as forty years ago, our country had a social consensus. Parents could be confident that the school would uphold their values, or at least not undermine them. Schools focused mainly on imparting knowledge through academic course work. Behavioral training was limited to enforcing discipline so that learning could take place for all. Attitudinal instruction was restricted to patriotism and a positive view of the American system, and (when discussed at all) a traditional view of marriage and the family. Vocational education was offered, but not mandated for all. College preparatory curricula were the norm, so that students’ choices were not limited too soon. Excellence was rewarded. Those who received a diploma were able to function in the society and get decent jobs. Problems ultimately could be fixed at the level of the school board. Education was a local function, controlled by the citizens of the district.

The modern schoolhouse is a wholly different entity. You would not recognize what it has become. No, this is ...

Not Your Daddy’s Classroom

The goal of education has changed. We have moved from a system that attempts to impart knowledge, to one that attempts to create ‘human capital’. Educrat Dr. Shirley McCune² admitted, "The school is moving out of the business of ‘schooling’, into the business of human resource development." The

¹ “Educrats” are education bureaucrats and high-level union officials – *not* the average classroom teacher. Classroom teachers are just like the rest of us. Some are liberal, some conservative. Most really want to do the best thing for children, but either are not sure what the right course is or are powerless to buck the system.

² Dr. McCune is currently second-in-command of Washington’s education bureaucracy. We will learn more about her later. This quote is from *Creating the Future*, edited by Dee Dickenson.

difference is who is in control. Looking at it from a business perspective, let's compare the traditional model with the new system, which the proponents like to call 'progressive'³, but which is really socialist.

	Traditional	Progressive/Socialist
Education	product	means of production
Student	client	product
Parent	customer	raw materials supplier
Teacher	trusted expert	systems facilitator
Business	interested by-stander	customer
Mandated statewide testing	Check on how well the schools serve the needs of students	product (i.e. student) quality control

Note how the role of parents has changed. The schools want the parents to be partners. That may sound good to you. However, it doesn't mean the school wants to work with you. It means we have ceded ground to the opposition. Partners have equal rights and equal responsibility. Parents are not partners; they are solely in charge. If you accept the role of a partner, you have given away the store.

This change in worldview is the reason for the emphasis on career planning. Schools have become human capital factories, stamping out little "kidgents" to fit the needs of the local employment market. Those needs are determined by a government board, funded by taxpayers. In Washington, that entity is the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. If a student wants to go into a field for which there is no need in this state, there will not be a career track for him in his school, once the school-to-work system is fully in place.



Since the advent of education restructuring via Goals 2000, educrats have been advocating the philosophy of holistic education, or educating the whole child. Behavioral psychologists have divided the child into three areas of function. (See Figure 1.) The areas are the cognitive, the affective, and the behavioral.

Traditional education focused mainly on the cognitive, or knowledge-based area. It dealt with behavior only as necessary to maintain discipline. The affective domain – the area of emotions, feelings, and beliefs – was left to the parents. Not so in today's classroom! The marketing slogan of the restructuring movement is that we need "outcomes" to tell us what the child should "know [cognitive], do [behavioral], and be like [affective or attitudinal]." McCune⁴ also said

The basic function of schools in any society is to socialize and prepare children and youth with the knowledge, attitudes and skills, and behaviors that they will need to fulfill their individual and societal roles as adults.

³ Don't be fooled by educrats' use of words. "Progressive" is a lot more palatable than "socialist." Semantic deception is one of their best and most used tools.

⁴ *Creating the Future*, edited by Dee Dickinson

The very first Certificate of Mastery⁵ was issued in June of 1994, in Oregon, to Jay Tennison. On the left side of the document was listed what he had become: “Involved Citizen, Quality Producer, Self-Directed Learner, Constructive Thinker, Effective Communicator, Collaborative Contributor.” On the right side was listed what he could do: “Quantify, Apply Math/Science, Understand Diversity, Deliberate on Public Issues, Understand Positive Health Habits.” His mother was not impressed with these lists. She posted the following on the Internet.

Of course, he cannot diagram a sentence, conjugate a verb, construct proper sentences, or spell (English is NOT taught at Cottage Grove High School). He has not been taught Algebra I or II, geometry, or trigonometry. He can, however, work story problems from his Alice in Wonderland story books and tell his teacher how he ‘feels’ about his story problems. (This is College Prep, Interactive Math). He is in his 12th year of school and has not studied biology, geography, civics, English, etc. He spent an entire year in a World of Work class based on the Dept. of Labor’s SCANS report. He has written a résumé, can read a phone bill, speak publicly; has been taught how to receive merchandise on a loading dock, work well in groups for group grades (no individual achievement is recognized), has studied Death, Dying, and Suicide, gone to a mortuary to see how a dead body is processed, and role-played when to have sex and discussed what kind of protection to use.

This case in Oregon may seem extreme, but it is the planned future for us all. Most districts get the agenda in bits and pieces so we won’t take too much notice too soon. (Remember the frog in the pot?) Death and dying education has been going on at Columbine High School in Colorado⁶ for decades. In Pennsylvania, 5th and 6th graders were given involuntary gynecological exams without parental knowledge or consent. The same thing happened to Head Start preschoolers in Kansas. A grade school in Oregon incorporated astrology into their winter solstice (*not* Christmas) program⁷. Everybody everywhere is getting fuzzy math and whole language. According to educator McCune, speaking at a governor’s conference in Kansas in 1989,

What has changed in education today is that we no longer see the teaching of facts and information as the primary outcome of education.

This brings us to the “new basics” – not the three R’s, but a whole new philosophy of what schools are all about. Check out the quote below from the 1994 Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board publication, *High Skills, High Wages*.

To succeed in high performance work organizations, today’s students must master the new basic skills – teamwork, critical thinking, making decisions, communication, adapting to change and understanding whole systems.

The new basics have already arrived at your local schools. They have been steadily pushing out the old reliable three R’s. Cognitive learning (academic instruction) has been relegated to a reduced role in order to make room for behavioral and affective training. The effect of this shift in philosophy has been:

1. **Poorer academic performance, as shown in lower and lower SAT scores and poorer showings in international performance rankings.** The SAT was becoming such an embarrassment that it was changed several years ago. Scores had fallen so low that it was renamed. In addition, it was

⁵ During the 2004 legislative session in Washington, a bill was passed in which the Certificate of Mastery was renamed the Certificate of Achievement. Name changes are common when the public begins to object to a program, curriculum, etc.

⁶ Columbine High School was the site of the worst school shooting incident in history. Dozens were killed and injured before the shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, committed suicide. Harris had just completed his last will and testament as a part of a Death and Dying class.

⁷ Each of these incidents actually occurred. The Rutherford Institute sued in the intrusive medical exam cases. Details of the Pennsylvania incident can be found at <http://www.curewashington.org/forcedexams.htm>.

made easier by allowing the use of calculators for the first time, reducing the number of problems on the math portion, and allowing more time to take it. When this occurred, the press assured us that they would always reference the changes so that scores from years prior to the changes would never be compared directly with scores from years after the changes. Of course, we never heard about the changes again, and scores across those years are regularly compared.⁸

2. **Behavioral reconditioning.** The children are being taught, for instance, that group work is more important than individual achievement. They are required to begin planning for careers no later than 7th grade, and in some cases, by kindergarten. You may have noticed that your child has become a recycling fanatic. Many schools have instituted mandatory voluntarism as a graduation requirement. (Yes, Virginia, that *is* an oxymoron.)
3. **Affective reconditioning.** Today's schools have Planned Parenthood teaching sex education in health classes. Gay student clubs, such as the Gay-Straight Alliance are common. Expressions of Christianity, as the dominant religion, are severely limited, while alternate religions are often taught or integrated into the curricula. In California, middle school students who were studying Islam, as a part of a mandatory course in multiculturalism, were required to wear Muslim garb, pray to Allah on a prayer rug, fast, and learn and recite religious phrases in Arabic. Our old friend McCune, who co-authored a New Age book⁹ explains it this way (emphasis added).

Clearly, there are many benefits to receiving the codes that the Universal Language of Light has to offer. Obviously, this step in evolution will change the way in which we conduct activities here on Earth, such as the schooling of our children. Are we prepared for this leap of consciousness? Are we prepared to accept the many benefits that will come from this higher consciousness? What awaits us on the horizon is truly fascinating and exciting.

Accountability

Most folks think accountability means that government officials are accountable to the citizens for how they perform and spend our money. Unfortunately, it really means forcing the citizens into compliance with the government agenda. If this were not the case, why would we have all the required testing in the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)¹⁰? Activist Republicans seem just as confused as the general population. The 2004 platform adopted by the King County Republican Party included an education plank that endorsed NCLB (i.e. federal control) in the same *sentence* in which it called for more local control. This is not only intellectually inconsistent; it is down right ridiculous!

In our state, the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is the official accountability measure. It will be high stakes¹¹ for students, teachers, administrators, schools, and districts. It has been designated as the approved means to comply with federal testing requirements. We will soon have WASL-like tests at all the required grade levels in order to comply with NCLB. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has even managed to talk the legislature into getting rid of the norm-referenced, standardized tests.¹² As the WASL is about half essay (even in math), a student's score depends on who does the scoring. If he's lucky he gets an easy grader who is well rested and in a good mood. There is no possible way to make an essay test valid and reliable in the numbers that have

⁸ Those involved in researching education restructuring issues can confirm that the press has been complicit in hiding the problems and pushing the agenda forward.

⁹ *The Light Shall Set You Free*, by Dr. Shirley McCune and Dr. Norma Milanovich – Under Acknowledgements, this book states, "much of the information in this book was channeled from the Ascended Masters." Some of them are listed. They include Jesus and Walt Disney.

¹⁰ This legislation was written in the office of Ted Kennedy. Why it was embraced by a Republican president is a mystery.

¹¹ Students of history may recognize the testing and tracking model – where students are tested and placed where their skills best meet the needs of the state – as that of the former USSR, and also of Hitler's Germany.

¹² Contrary to what you may read in the papers, the WASL is NOT a standardized test. There is nothing "standard" about it.

to be scored. The Seattle Times reported in August of 2000 that scorers spend an average of two and half minutes scoring a writing essay and 20 seconds scoring a math essay. I certainly wouldn't want my child's future determined by a flawed system such as this. Even the technical reports on the OSPI web site say the results of the WASL should not be used for high stakes decisions.

Not only does the WASL fail in terms of validity and reliability; its costs are outrageous. It costs about \$73 per student to administer and score the WASL. By contrast, the ITBS¹³ costs only \$2.88 per student.¹⁴ The WASL is a gold-plated, bi-partisan disaster and a money pit. During the 2004 legislative session, Republicans and Democrats alike voted to allow WASL retakes up to four times, and to create an alternative assessment for those who cannot pass it. Hang on to your wallet! If you think education is expensive now, "you ain't seen nothin' yet!" This likely will double or triple current WASL costs.

The Hall of Shame

The most common questions I am asked are, "Why are they doing this?" and, "Who is responsible?" The 'why' question is much harder to answer, as it requires speculating on the motives of others. However, over a decade of reading and listening have convinced me that those who actively pursue the agenda fall into one or more of the following camps:

- ardent socialists (progressives) who believe that the individual exists for the needs of the state and that the average person is incapable of making appropriate decisions for himself
- passionate post-modernists (Marxists) who absolutely believe that there are no absolutes – as in right and wrong – and that all traditional schooling (i.e. phonics, traditional math instruction) is a social 'construct' created by the powerful to oppress the weak¹⁵
- committed New Agers hoping to train converts
- misguided or greedy businessmen who want the schools to train their workforces for them
- those pursuing personal power or money who are currying the favor of the powerful interests pushing the agenda forward
- those who are taken in by the high-sounding arguments of the others and actually believe children will learn more with this system

The answer to the 'who' question comprises our **Hall of Shame**:

Marc Tucker – The chief architect of the system at the federal level, he wrote a nine-page letter to Hillary Clinton just after the 1992 election, outlining his plan. It later became a document called "A Workforce Development Plan for the United States." The infamous "Dear Hillary letter" is posted at http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/marc_tucker/marc_tucker_letter.html. Tucker worked with both Mrs. Clinton and Ira Magaziner in formulating the plan. He has his fingers in a half dozen organizations that push the agenda forward in the various states. More is available about these groups in a report by Diana Fessler of Ohio at <http://www.curewashington.org/fessler.htm>.

Frank Shrontz – The former Boeing CEO has led both the national and state Business Roundtables, major proponents of Goals 2000, etc. He started up the Partnership for Learning (the propaganda arm of the Washington Business Roundtable's education organization). He was also a founding member of Achieve, a self-appointed national school board composed of six CEO's of major companies and six governors.

¹³ Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a norm-referenced, standardized test, required until 2005, for some non-WASL grades. It is computer-scored.

¹⁴ These costs are the most recent available as of May 2004.

¹⁵ These are the people who have given us whole language reading, fuzzy math, and self-discovery science, in which the student is expected to rediscover theory (created by giants standing on the shoulders of other giants over centuries) by himself, without a text, by doing labs off a worksheet in class.

Terry Bergeson – She is currently (2007) our Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), and was formerly director of the Commission on Student Learning that created Washington’s Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR’s), our outcomes for Goals 2000/OBE. They are neither essential nor academic. Under her watch, the infamous WASL was developed and implemented.

Shirley McCune – This former director of the Mid-Continent Research and Education Laboratory (MCREL)¹⁶ is currently serving as Bergeson’s second-in-command. Her job is Education Liaison to the federal government. She is most famous for her quote, “What is happening to America today... what it amounts to is a total transformation of our society.” uttered at a governor’s conference in Kansas while still at MCREL. What she means by “total transformation of society” becomes clear when you see two more quotes from her book, *The Light Shall Set You Free*. (Emphasis added.)

*For many, it is difficult to grasp the concept that we are more than our human form and that we are also beings of Light. Consequently, training the mind to accept expanded concepts of who and what we truly are can be an arduous task, requiring time, patience, and a desire to explore areas **not commonly taught in the classrooms of today**. When one acquires the ability to connect with the Light within, everything observed and experienced through the five senses in the outer world takes on a new meaning, which releases the child within to want to relearn that which we already know. **This path requires a whole new curriculum and set of guidelines to describe our existence.***

*The higher vibrations of the Fourth Dimension provide us with experiences (**a new curriculum, if you will**) that require us to choose life-styles and behaviors that may be considerably different from those which we exhibited in the past.*

Chris Vance – The former Washington State GOP chairman helped to write the education restructuring law, ESHB1209, in the 1993 session when he was a wet-behind-the-ears legislator. He has yet to repent of his education sins.

Booth Gardner – He was governor when we accepted Goals 2000 money, appointed the Governor’s Commission on Education Reform and Funding¹⁷, which put together the recommendations that became ESHB1209. He also served in a leading role on the Education Commission for the States, an organization of governors created to try to implement the agenda.

Judith Billings – She was SPI when ESHB1209 was passed, accepted Goals 2000 money, and launched us on the Schools for the 21st Century project (a Goals 2000 pilot program that was never fully evaluated before its provisions were implemented).

The Trojan Horse of “Choice”

It is astounding that people who are not fooled by the rhetoric of “choice” when used in the context of abortion are completely taken in when it is applied to education. We have had true choice in education for a long time. We call our choices private schools and homeschools. That they are not government-funded is a good thing. When the government comes offering money, it always expects something in return – compliance. “He who pays the piper calls the tune,” as they say.

Charter schools have not shown themselves to perform any better than regular public schools for the decade plus they have existed. Some succeed. Many more fail. Fraud has not been unusual. As public schools, they must follow whatever laws the legislature chooses to impose on them. In Washington,

¹⁶ The research laboratories, such as MCREL, are quasi-governmental agencies. They get most of their funding from the US Dept. of Education, but are supposed to be independent.

¹⁷ Consultants to GCERF included McCune (prior to her working at OSPI) and David Hornbeck, a Tucker flunky.

every proposed bill has required that they must comply with all the worst of the education restructuring nonsense, including the WASL. If that is choice, what is the point? If the blueprint is the same, we should not be surprised when the result is the same. Form follows function. For more on why charters are not the conservative answer to education's problems, see "Charter Schools Are Not Your Friend" at <http://www.curewashington.org/charterschools.htm>.

Vouchers have similar problems. In the highly touted voucher programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee, private schools that accept vouchers may not refuse enrollment to any student unless they are full. They may give preference only to the siblings of current students. They may not require a voucher student to participate in religious instruction (which is usually integrated into the school's entire curriculum). In Cleveland, they must also abide by the state's non-discrimination code in hiring and firing. That means religious schools may not require teachers to believe the school's creed. They lose control of their curriculum, their staffing, and their enrollment. What else is there?

Tax credits provide the only possible way to allow choice while getting some of our taxes back to use ourselves. Even so, the laws authorizing them must be carefully crafted to avoid unintended consequences and legal challenges.

What Can We Do?

If you see, like I do, how dangerous it is for the government to be molding the characters, attitudes, and opinions of its future citizens, action is imperative! First and foremost, we must get the federal government out of the business of education. Ronald Reagan had it right when he called for getting rid of the entire department. **The more the federal government has been involved in education, the worse things have gotten.** We must be able to complain directly to the officials whose decisions are causing the problem.

Next, we must elect an SPI that is not a part of the system. Only an outsider can make the wholesale changes necessary to make a difference. A complete purge of OSPI is required. Following that, the Workforce Board, the A+ Commission, and all these appointed sovereigns over us must go. It is also imperative that the State Board of Education be elected directly by the people.¹⁸

We must repeal the 'progressive' agenda and return to the pre-1209 system. Just getting rid of the federal department will not change the fact that we changed our laws to comply with Goals 2000.

These are all very difficult to do and will take years to accomplish – if we are ever able to do it. In the mean time, take an active role in your child's education. If you can, homeschool or find a private school that works for you. (Warning! Some private schools have embraced the public school agenda. *Caveat emptor.*) If you cannot leave the public school, get involved. Make sure you know what is going on, what curricula are being used, etc. Do not assume you can trust the teacher, principal, etc. Yes, some are trustworthy. But some are not. Make sure you know which are which.

Educate others – your friends and relatives, but also (and especially!) your legislators. If the legislators won't listen, work to replace them. That is real accountability. Don't be fooled by party labels. The education mess is a bipartisan foul-up.

Now you know. So what are you going to do? The future of our nation depends on what we do now.

¹⁸ Under the current system, less than half the members of the state board are chosen by members of local school boards within a congressional district, each one representing a congressional district. The rest are appointed by the governor.