



An Open Letter to Gov. Jeb Bush and “Chiefs for Change”

I am writing you and your colleagues this open letter in order to help you achieve your stated goal of improving American public education so that Americans can face the future with confidence and creativity. I have written ten books and hundreds of articles on this subject, and know why our failing public schools are not producing the well-educated young Americans who are needed to sustain our nation in the highly competitive 21st century. All of which obviously means that my concern is as great as yours.



I am 86 years old and attended public schools in New York City where true learning took place. In those days there were no school shootings or massacres, no widespread reading failure, no drug addiction among young Americans, no need for Ritalin to control student behavior, and no teen suicide problem. So why are things so different today?

The answer, believe it or not, is quite simple. The educators have removed from public education the one component that gives children the incentive to excel: a belief in God and that their life has a divine purpose. Through the teaching of evolution, children are taught that they are animals no different from a cat or a dog and that life has no purpose or godly meaning. This destruction of the spiritual basis of education has had its negative consequences in the self-destructive behavior of children and the decline in academic skills.

This does not mean that the public schools I attended in New York were Protestant parochial schools. It merely meant that biblical religion was respected and that the principal could recite the 23rd Psalm at assemblies, thus giving children the knowledge that there is a God who loves and protects them. That's all that was needed to give all of the children, regardless of their family religions, the sense that life had meaning, and that we were all put here on earth for a purpose.

Without purpose life is meaningless. And that is why so many children emerge from our schools unhappy and depressed, living according to their emotions and physical pleasures instead of their God-given brains.

Many of our public schools also use faulty teaching methods in reading, thus needlessly creating reading disability among a large number of students. The history of our reading problem has been well documented in the literature. As you may know, it was John Dewey, the philosopher of Progressive education, who advocated changing the way reading is taught in our schools. Dewey and his colleagues were socialists, determined to use the public schools as a means of changing America into a socialist society. To him high literacy was an obstacle to his plan because it encouraged individualism. As a result, his Progressive colleagues got rid of the alphabetic-phonics method and replaced it with a whole-word methodology that teaches children to read English as if our words are like Chinese characters. Were the Progressives aware that their new reading instruction methods would cause widespread reading failure and dyslexia?



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They found out pretty early at the expense of four of the richest boys in America. Believe it or not John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was a great admirer of John Dewey, and he put his four sons, Nelson, David, Laurence, and Winthrop, in the Lincoln School, one of the experimental schools called for by Dewey. Rockefeller donated over \$3-million (worth \$300-million today) to the school. The result? All four boys became dyslexic! But of course that didn't stop the progressives from implementing their plan.

By 1929 this new method was causing so many reading problems that Dr. Samuel T. Orton, a neuropathologist at Iowa University, was compelled to write an article, "The 'Sight Method' of Teaching Reading as a Source of Reading Disability," which was published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in February 1929.

In 1955, Dr. Rudolf Flesch wrote his famous book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, which told Americans why their children were having problems learning to read. He said: "The teaching of reading, all over the United States, in all the schools, in all the textbooks, is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense."

What was the reaction of the educators? They circled the wagons, denounced Flesch, and kept using the whole-word method in teaching reading. By 2007, American literacy had declined to such an extent that the National Endowment for the Arts issued its own alarming report on the situation, *Reading at Risk*.

Endowment Chairman Dana Gioia stated: "This is a massive social problem. We are losing the majority of the new generation. They will not achieve anything close to their potential because of poor reading." The survey found that only a third of high-school seniors read at a proficient level. "And proficiency is not a high standard," said Gioia. "We're not asking them to be able to read Proust in the original. We're talking about reading the daily newspaper."

What was disappointing about the report is that it did not state the cause of this decline in national literacy: the refusal of our educators to use the time-tested, traditional phonics reading instruction programs that once made Americans the most literate people on earth.

The crucial question now is, can the Foundation for Excellence in Education achieve its goal without attending to the reading problem? Its mission statement reads:

Our mission is to ignite a movement of reform, state by state, to transform education for the 21st century.

These reforms include using advanced technology in the schools:

Digital Learning Now is a national campaign to integrate current and future technological innovations into public education to better prepare students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and careers.

And what is the Reform Agenda?

The Foundation supports performance-based promotion, particularly in the third grade for students who can't read.

How can students reach the third grade without learning to read unless they are being taught by whole language or some other faulty method? In other words, the Reform Agenda will not address the problem of teaching methods in the primary grades. The Agenda continues:

Digital Learning: The Foundation supports the use of technology to provide a customized education for each and every student. High Quality Teachers and Leaders: The Foundation supports an end



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to tenure, data-based evaluations and compensation, and alternative paths to certification/licensure. Rigorous Academic Standards: The Foundation supports academic standards that are aligned to college and career readiness, including Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and math. School Choice: The Foundation supports policies that empower families with the financial freedom to attend the school of their choice, including public, charter, private and virtual school.

But as you can see, Governor Bush, nothing in your Reform Agenda addresses the spiritual component in education. Neither digital learning, nor high quality teachers and leaders will address the problem of atheist education. Rigorous academic standards without a sense that life has a purpose, which only belief in a Higher Power can provide, will not produce excellence. This has been proven by the failure of all the reform movements that have preceded yours.

The National Endowment for the Arts report, *Reading at Risk*, is an indicator that the educators are not making the changes in teaching methods that must be made but which your Agenda doesn't address. If you do not insist that your primary school teachers teach intensive, systematic phonics, all of your efforts will fall short of your goals. In addition, nothing in your goals addresses the spiritual life of the student. The simple truth is that the spiritual health of the nation requires an educational system that acknowledges the existence of God and the power He exerted over the founders of this nation. George Washington said in his Inaugural Address:

It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States.... No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency; and in the important revolution just accomplished in the system of their united government the tranquil deliberations and voluntary consent of so many distinct communities from which the event has resulted cannot be compared with the means by which most governments have been established without some return of pious gratitude, along with an humble anticipation of the future blessings which the past seem to presage.

All of our other presidents have been equally affected by the belief in a providential God who has blessed this nation from its very beginning. But can the words of these presidents be read in the public school? The teaching monopoly that the atheists have in our schools is clearly unconstitutional. Acknowledgment of the existence of God and that we were made in His image is not a government establishment of religion. It is the general belief of most Americans based on the Bible, the one book that all of our founding fathers believed in.

It would be useful to have a book quoting what all of our presidents said about God to be distributed and read in all the public schools of America. I would be happy to write such a book for your Foundation. Also, if evolution is to be taught, then Creation Science should also be taught. Let the students decide whether they want to live as nihilists or believers. Let them decide if their lives have divine purpose or not.

Governor Bush, I greatly admire your courage and determination to reform American education for the better, and I deeply hope that you will succeed. But there can be no success unless the knowledge and



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power of God is brought back into the schools and that the teaching of reading returns to the traditional phonetic methods used when we were the most literate nation on earth.

American children deserve nothing less from their national leaders who are charged by the Almighty with the responsibility of educating our children to love life, to love learning, to love their country, and, above all, to love God. If God is not brought back into American education, I fear that all of your efforts, and the efforts of your esteemed colleagues, will be in vain.



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