



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on October 1, 2012

Federalized Progressive Education Marches On

As I have mentioned on a number of occasions, education is the orphan issue of this year's presidential campaign. Why? Because the subject is so complex, involving massive federal programs, expenditures of billions of dollars, millions of students who can't read, politicized teacher unions, national tests, etc., that the only thing any candidate can say about education is that he's in favor of improving it. But "it" remains untouchable, for to say anything significant about "it" can get you into a lot of trouble.



That's why Beverly Eakman's new book, [Agenda Games](#), is so welcome. She takes on this elusive subject in a way that no contemporary political writer would dare. She writes: "Education is the game-changer conservatives love to hate. But education will determine, ultimately, on which side America will fall in 2013 and beyond — Nanny State socialism or representative democracy."

It's hard to imagine that we can continue educating our school children to become dumbed-down socialists without this nation becoming eventually a socialist society. That's why the kind of Congress we get in 2013 will determine whether or not we continue down this road to socialism or finally reverse course.

Eakman is one of the best writers on education in the country. Her landmark book, [Educating for the New World Order](#), published in 1991, gave us a firsthand, detailed look at what behavioral scientists were doing to American education. She revealed the sinister origins of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing program as the preparation of the eventual creation of a national curriculum, now being promoted by such "conservatives" as Jeb Bush as a Common Core of Standards. The proper stance for true conservatives is to get the federal government out of education, not more deeply into it.

Even though Congress in 1970 placed an amendment in the General Education Provisions Act specifically prohibiting federal control of education, the process of federal control continues unabated. This is advanced by the fact that every state now has its own assessment test to complement the national test. For example, in Massachusetts it's called the MCAS test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. In Pennsylvania it's the PSSA, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. In Texas it's the TAKS, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test.

This is how the Arizona Department of Education describes its assessment system on its website:

The Assessment Section is responsible for statewide assessment of students enrolled in Arizona Public Schools. ... All Arizona public schools, including districts schools and charter schools, are required to properly administer state and federally mandated assessments.

Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) is a Standards Based Assessment. AIMS measures student proficiency of the Arizona Academic Content Standards in Writing, Reading, Mathematics, Science and is required by state and federal law.



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Note that federal law requires this state assessment, which means that federal standards now regulate and control Arizona's education system. Eakman writes: "State Departments of Education are virtual clones of their federal parent, the U.S. Department of Education (DoEd). The state versions are referred to as State Education Agencies (or SEAs)."

The federal government is also expanding its reach into the lives of younger and younger children. How much younger? Here's what the National Education Association said in its Resolution on Early Childhood Education: it supported "early childhood education programs in the public schools for children from birth to age eight." Yes, you read correctly: from birth to age eight.

Considering that the public schools are doing such a lousy job of educating children from K through 12, why does anyone think they can do a better job with kids from birth to kindergarten?

The reason they want those kids as early as possible is so that they can put socialist, humanist ideas into their heads before their parents can transfer their own values to their children.

The seminal law that has permitted the federal government to expand its control over local public schools is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. Its periodic reauthorization by Congress has made it possible for liberal congressmen to add new amendments to the law, thus expanding the federal role in public education. President Bush's No Child Left Behind added new testing requirements in order to evaluate schools. Obama's Race to the Top is, according to Eakman, a Race to the Trough of more and more federal dollars. She writes:

ESEA came out of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society Program, and never produced an iota of improvement in academic achievement. Titles I, III, and IV proved particularly onerous — making the Act's continued reauthorization every few years absolutely essential to government. It was also essential to get every state onboard with a series of "reforms" so that all state and local education agencies would in some way be at the mercy of federal dollars.

Eakman is right on the mark with her statement that the ESEA has never produced an iota of improvement in academic achievement. Indeed, she cites an Associated Press report of May 25, 2012, finding that SAT reading scores for the high school class of 2011 were "the lowest on record, and combined reading and math scores fell to their lowest point since 1955."

Also, a 2009 study by the Program for International Student Assessment showed U.S. 15-year-old students ranking internationally 25th in math, 17th in science, and 14th in reading. Not much to show for the billions of dollars spent on American public schools.

But Eakman finds the most totalitarian, the most un-American component of the Department of Education to be its National Center for Education Statistics. Although it sounds so very benign, the purpose of the NCES is to collect data on every student in America including an individual's attitudes. She writes:

It defines the difference between an assessment and a test. "An assessment is any systematic procedure for obtaining information from tests and other sources that can be used to draw inferences about characteristics of people, objects or programs." ... The aim is to assess psychological and political attitudes, to see who is swallowing the propaganda that passes for academics, and, more importantly, who is either waffling or "not buying." If too many don't "buy," then curriculum is altered using a more heavy-handed approach.



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Since I was able to obtain copies of the Data Handbooks issued by the NCES, I know whereof Eakman speaks. There is no place in our (hopefully) still free form of government for a computerized data system that contains the most personal information about every individual in the public school system, including teachers. There is only one reason to gather such data: to control the behavior of American citizens. All totalitarian nations need such a system in order to easily identify potential adversaries so that they can be nipped in the bud. Eakman explains further:

The routes to federalizing schools are data collection, assessments and curriculum. ... How the Left, in collusion with government agencies, subagencies (offices and bureaus) and influential foundations, took advantage of the data-cross-matching breakthrough to transform society and ensure that parents were kept out of the loop represents a master stroke of subterfuge and government aggrandizement that today serves as a model for other agencies hoping to enlarge their spheres.

So whom can parents trust? When Jeb Bush, former governor of Florida, created the Foundation for Excellence in Education, no one was sure what it stood for. Of course it stands for “better education.” But its program calls for more of the same. Its website explains:

The Foundation supports academic standards that are aligned to college and career readiness, including Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and math.

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.

The Foundation supports standardized measurement of student learning, including annual comprehensive assessments in elementary and middle school and end-of-course exams in high school.

In other words, the Foundation for Excellence in Education is just another establishment group that supports the present federal involvement in education. Since it must know that the present curriculum is controlled by the progressives who will continue to dumb-down America, the Foundation’s role seems to be to lead American parents and taxpayers to support the nationalization of American education and to get Republican governors to go along with that plan. But nationalization will make us more like Europe, and less like America.

That is why neither Bev Eakman, nor John Taylor Gatto, nor Charlotte Iserbyt, nor this writer will ever be asked to join the Board of Directors of the Foundation. That being said, a movement must be mounted by true conservatives to get the federal government out of the education business and to restore the public schools to local control. A good case can be made that that is the only way that education in those schools can actually be improved.

I attended public schools in New York City back in the 1930s and ‘40s, when there was no federal interference in what the schools were teaching. No state or national assessments were necessary, except a Regents Test for graduates. Every teacher in those days knew exactly how each child was doing by simple quizzes whenever needed. By the end of the term he or she could easily know what final mark to put on a report card. In those days we were the most literate nation in the world. So we know how to create educational excellence. It’s no great mystery. But as long as we adhere to the present progressive curriculum, there is no way that we shall achieve the kind of excellence the establishment says it wants, while refusing to give up the curriculum which is preventing excellence from being achieved.



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Bev Eakman covers much more in [Agenda Games](#) than just education. There is the Health Care Game, the Budget Game, the National Security Game, the Justice Game, and much more. I know of no other writer who can analytically cover so many crucial subjects as she does in this one book. A remarkable achievement. She writes in her Preface:

What is this grander scheme? It is nothing less than a replacement of the Founders' vision of an independent, self-sufficient nation, based on individual resolve and grit, and minimal interference from government, with a super-State based on Old World notions of dependency, maximum government intrusion, crushing regulation and regimentation.

Will we actually see all of this come to fruition in our lifetime? The progressives, be they socialists, leftists, liberals, or communists, have never been nearer their goal than they are now. The election in November will inform us of the outcome of this life-and-death contest. Will the American people give the Left what it wants? Or will they decide that they still want to remain free? Stay tuned.



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