



How to Evaluate Your Child's School (Part 2)

First, find out where your child's teacher got his or her training. You should try to ask the question in as friendly a way as possible, as if you want to know if the teacher went to the same college you did and is a fellow alumnus. If you didn't go to college you might pose the question this way: I hope my child will go to college when he or she graduates from high school. Can you recommend a college for Johnny or Suzie? Which one did you graduate from? Would that be a good college to aim for?



If the teacher tells you that he or she went to a state teachers college, then you know that that teacher attended the equivalent of a humanist seminary where humanist indoctrination was the daily fare. If that teacher happens to attend your church, then it should be easy enough to elicit information about the problems a Christian teacher faces in dealing with humanist doctrines. Christian teachers in the public schools know their place. They must keep their Christian beliefs to themselves, or else they will be reprimanded if not fired.

But if your child's teacher is obviously a humanist, he or she will know exactly what you are up to and will go on the defensive and try to turn the conversation elsewhere. It becomes a privacy issue, as if the parent has no business trying to find out the life philosophy of his or her child's teacher. In other words, you are required by the system to accept the teacher without knowing what he or she believes in. When you put your child in the hands of a diehard humanist, then you know that teacher will do all in his or her power to wean your child away from your family's religion.

In any case, most parents haven't the faintest idea of the religion or beliefs of the teacher they are giving their children up to. He or she may be Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, or humanist. But that teacher can have a profound influence on your child for better or for worse, usually for worse.

If you are a Christian parent and concerned about what may happen to your child's faith in the public school, I strongly recommend that you watch Colin Gunn's powerful film *IndoctrinNation: Public Schools and the Decline of Christianity in America.*, in which he travels across America in an effort to find out what is happening to Christian children when God is removed from their education. He interviews Christian teachers, parents, students, pastors, leaders. He interviews a father who lost a son at Columbine High School, a Christian father who regrets that he sent his son to that school. The article I wrote about the film was posted online in *The New American* here on January 5, 2012.

You should also find out what textbooks are being used in your child's class and look them over carefully. Some books are brought home by students in their backpacks. But some are not. So you will probably have to get permission to spend several hours in the school library reading those books. Be aware that the textbooks were written, for the most part, by humanists with the intent of changing your child's religious faith from Christianity to humanism.

If the principal or teacher wants to know why you want to look over these textbooks, simply tell them



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on April 6, 2012

that you've been told by educators that parents ought to take an interest in their children's education, and that's what you are doing. But they will no doubt suspect that you are a potential troublemaker, a Christian parent up to no good. But as long as you are polite and assert your parental rights and tell them that your aim is to help your child do well in school, they should be reassured that you are not one of those right-wing extremists opposed to government schooling. Otherwise, they will think you don't trust them. And, of course, you shouldn't.

If your child is in first grade, find out how they teach reading. There are now so many different reading programs on the market that you must ask to see the actual teaching materials being used by the teacher. Most of the reading programs being used in today's schools are whole-word oriented, with some phonics. These programs are usually called eclectic or balanced. If you ask the teacher whether he or she teaches phonics, the response will invariably be yes. If the child is taught just one beginning consonant sound, in the teacher's mind, that's phonics. But it isn't. If the primer has lots of full-color pictures covering most of the page with just a few words at the bottom, that is not a phonics program.

True phonics is a program of intensive systematic phonics in which children are drilled in the letter sounds before they read whole words. Few pictures are needed in such a program. In true phonics children develop an automatic association between letters and sounds — a phonetic reflex — so that they can become fluent phonetic readers.

The most important question to ask is: Do you teach a sight vocabulary? If the answer is yes, which it invariably is, you will know that the school is using a sight, look-say, or whole-word teaching method. Teaching a sight vocabulary is teaching children to look at English words as little pictures or configurations of meaning like Chinese ideographs with no awareness of the phonetic structure of the word or that the letters stand for sounds. The child develops a "holistic" reflex — that is, he or she automatically looks at all words as whole pictures. Simply put, when you impose an ideographic teaching technique on an alphabetic writing system you can cause reading disability or dyslexia. In my book *The New Illiterates*, I called the sight vocabulary "the Thalidomide of primary education."

Thus, if the school is using a whole-word, eclectic, or "balanced" basal reading program, many of the children in that school, including your own, will become reading disabled. Also, the school may be using a new whole-language reading program with exciting, colorful reading books. Don't be fooled. Although we've been told that whole language is no longer being used in many schools, what is being used is a new version of whole language with or without additional phonics instruction. Indeed, reading instruction in today's public schools is so confusing and undefinable that we continue to get increasing numbers of reading failures.

If you want to find out if your older child has a reading problem, simply ask him to read a text aloud to you. If you see that he omits words that are there, puts in words that aren't there, comes to a complete stop when encountering a word he has never seen before, truncates words (says phone, when the word is telephone, or paper when the word is newspaper), or substitutes words (says pony when the word is horse, or Dad when the word is father), then you know your child definitely is a victim of whole-word instruction. Don't expect the school to turn him into a fluent, phonetic reader. You will have to do it yourself. You can use my reading program, *Alpha-Phonics*, to do the job.

Next, find out if the school actually teaches children how to write or just lets them make their own chicken scratches. Few schools teach cursive writing in first grade, the way it was done before the Progressives took over the schools. You'll be lucky if the school actually teaches some sort of ball-and-stick print-script, called manuscript, or "printing." But if you want your child to become a good cursive



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writer, you will have to teach him or her at home.

Nowadays, children in the elementary grades are using computers in their classrooms. Have they been taught how to efficiently use the keyboard, or are they just hunting and pecking? Back in the old days, I was taught touch typing in junior high school. It helped me become a good typist. Find out what the policy of your child's school is. Do they teach touch typing? They tell parents that cursive writing is obsolete, but if they don't teach touch typing then they are hypocrites by not teaching children how to properly use a keyboard.

Learning cursive helps a child learn to read and spell. Because the letters are joined from left to right, it teaches directional discipline and helps a child learn to spell through repetition of finger and hand movements. Just as the hands and fingers of a professional pianist have knowledge, so the hands and fingers of a good cursive writer acquire knowledge.

Have you heard of "invented spelling?" That's the new idiotic theory that children will teach themselves to spell by spelling words any way they want. To teach correct spelling, the theory goes, is to thwart that child's creativity, which should be spontaneous and bursting with energy. So when does a child learn to spell correctly? *Never*. The school tells him that spelling is no longer important. Of course, tell that to Dan Quayle, whose political career was ruined because he made a spelling error on television. He became the butt of countless jokes by TV comedians.

Find out how they teach arithmetic, if they still call it that. If not, simply look over the math book used in that classroom. Because calculators are now used in primary classrooms, find out whether or not they teach the arithmetic facts at all. Since rote memorization is another Progressive no-no, your child may be counting by ones for the rest of his or her life. Indeed, you may decide to teach your child basic arithmetic at home. Many mathematicians in the higher echelons of science and engineering tell us that memorization of the arithmetic facts is essential to becoming a good mathematician.

Now that you realize that if you want your child to be taught reading by intensive, systematic phonics, instructed in good cursive handwriting, and taught basic arithmetic, you will have to do all of it at home. That may take care of the "cognitive domain," but what about the "affective domain"? Are you willing to let the public educators do a job on your child's values and religion? Ask the teacher if the school teaches values clarification by using lifeboat and fallout-shelter survival games in which children must decide who is to live and who is to die on the basis of the person's social usefulness.

No normal Christian child wants to be put in the position of having to decide who is to live and who is to die. That is God's domain. But in the humanist classroom it's man's domain. In one class, I've been told that a Christian student got a failing grade because he figured out a way of saving everybody. You can see what these humanist games can do to a child's mind and emotions.

To be continued.

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