



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on November 17, 2014

## New York City's Educational Woes

Public education is New York City's largest government enterprise. It operates over 1,375 schools, employs over 76,000 teachers, serves over 709,000 free lunches every day, and supposedly educates 1,043,886 students at a total cost of \$18.9 billion a year. It should surprise no one that a public enterprise this large continues to have enormous self-inflicted problems.

For example, according to the Regents Tests of 2009-2010, which are required for graduation: In English 25.5 percent failed, 27.7 percent passed, and only 46.9 percent were deemed College Ready. In Math, 40.2 percent failed, 42.4 percent passed, and only 17.4 percent were considered College Ready. To put it more bluntly, less than half could read well enough to go to college, and 82 percent lack college-ready math skills. No wonder high-tech firms are having difficulty finding young Americans able to fill their well-paying jobs.

Yet no one in the establishment ever blames the schools for doing a poor job of educating their students. They generally blame the students.

According to an editorial in the *New York Times*: "Under the new initiative [of Mayor de Blasio], the city has designated 94 of the most troubled schools as Renewal Schools, based on a list of criteria, including graduation rates and test scores.... Schools that do not meet performance benchmarks face 'consequences,' the city says, including changes in leadership or reorganization.... If they are weak, mediocre or failing schools will continue to operate, instead of being reconstituted or shut down."

As an alumnus of the city's public schools, having attended them in the 1930s and '40s, I don't recall any of the schools in those days being designated failing or dysfunctional. In fact, those schools were busy successfully educating the young Americans who then went on to defeat Germany, Italy, and Japan in World War II. When the war was over, the GI Bill helped most of them go on to college after which they built the world's greatest economy.

But today's public schools can't even teach children to read. They no longer use the simple alphabetic-phonics method that made America the most literate nation on Earth. Instead, the progressives imposed a new sight method that teaches children to read English as if it were Chinese, an ideographic system.

That the new teaching method caused reading problems was so obvious that Dr. Rudolf Flesch felt compelled to write his bestselling book *Why Johnny Can't Read*, published in 1955. He wrote: "The teaching of reading — all over the United States, in all the schools, in all of the textbooks — is totally





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wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense.”

And the same can be said for the way reading is taught in the schools of New York City today. In fact the city’s elementary schools have adopted the Pearson Reading Street Common Core literacy program. According to Pearson, many of their authors and experts helped develop the Common Core.

I had a chance to examine their program for kindergarten on their website and was appalled by what I found. This is clearly the most confusing, ill-conceived, nonsensical reading program ever produced by a committee of masters and doctors of education. As Dr. Flesch said in 1955: “It flies in the face of all logic and common sense.”

For example, the program requires the child to draw pictures of such words as responsibility, waddled, prickly, fierce, island, distance. How do you draw a picture of “responsibility”? It asks such questions as: Lesson 1, What did you read? Lesson 2, What did you learn? Lesson 3, What questions do you have? But the child has not yet been taught to read, so how can he or she answer these questions? Pearson writes:

If you teach with Reading Street Common Core, you’ll teach with confidence. Every lesson focuses on Common Core State Standards, moving children toward higher-order thinking and college and career readiness.

Pearson’s Common Core “Go math” is no better. It states:

GO Math! lessons are designed to fully facilitate conceptual development, as students work from introduction to mastery of each content standard listed in the Common Core. Throughout the lessons, students will use manipulatives, models, quick pictures, and symbols as they apply Mathematical Practices to build understanding. Students are expected to actively engage in reasoning during instruction, so they are prepared to transition from concept or skills comprehension to solving problems in contextual situations.

There is no memorization of arithmetic facts that is essential for the efficient use of our counting system. It goes on:

#### Conceptual Understanding

Remember, this is the core instruction for this lesson, in which conceptual development is key. The goal of this activity is for students to use five frames to show and count to 1 and 2. As students work through Listen and Draw, gauge their level of understanding to make better decisions about how to progress through instruction.

In other words, Common Core will create an even greater educational disaster than the one Rudolf Flesch wrote about in 1955. All of this is scandalous, since we know how to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, doing it as was done when I attended the city’s public schools. But returning to the teaching methods that made sense and worked so well is no longer possible. The education establishment is controlled by the thousands of progressive professors of education in the colleges of education. Their stranglehold over the primary and elementary curricula is what sets the foundation for the rest of the dumbing-down educational process. The only solution for parents in New York City and elsewhere is to take matters into their own hands and educate their children at home. Charter schools may provide escape for a few, but unfortunately the one million in the schools have nowhere else to go.



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