



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on June 3, 2010

At School-year's End: Why Educators "Don't Get No Respect"

Despite efforts in some states to counter the now-admitted failures of education policy at the state and federal levels, overall it has been a daunting, brutal, and thankless task.

Ting-Yi Oei, a Northern Virginia high-school teacher/administrator who dared to try to maintain discipline (and decency) among students at Freedom High in Loudoun County, Maryland, ("[My Students. My Cellphone. My Ordeal.](#)" the *Washington Post*), found himself defending his principles in court, with no real support from the either of the teachers' unions, and in the throes of an emergency at home, his wife having been diagnosed with a cancerous tumor. (Now there's "compassion" for you!)



Related commentary, "[Texting vs. Teaching: Who Wins,](#)" by Jay Mathews, took on the pervasive problem of "high schools [that] are full of secretly texting, blithely unengaged adolescents."

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Ting-Yi Oei, the author of the first piece, says he still struggles, even after the charges against him were thrown out of court, to understand how his "actions could have been so badly misconstrued" in the "sexting" case at Freedom High School. His life was "turned upside down," his otherwise stellar career and reputation was left in tatters, and all for "trying to negotiate the slippery terrain where rapidly advancing technology intersects with risky adolescent behavior," in this case, for trying to stop his students at Freedom High in Loudoun County, Maryland, from "sexting" nude pictures of themselves.

His article in the *Post* sounded a warning to educators so bold as to attempt enforcement of moral discipline. Bad ideas morph: An even worse instance of sexting occurred this year in another nearby [Maryland county](#), as well as a case litigated in Mississippi involving a lesbian who tried to [take her lover to the senior prom](#).

The dilemmas cited by Ting-Yi and Matthews are easily explained: They happen (a) when schools focus more on non-academic issues (a.k.a. "the affective domain") than cognitive learning; (b) when the authority of children supersedes that of adults for years on end; (c) when youngsters come to school dressed like hookers, pimps, and bums from the earliest grades; (d) when adults, including those with masters' and doctorate degrees in computer technologies, are not permitted to transmit their values to youngsters, unless such values are counterculture, perverted, anti-Christian, or pre-approved by psychiatrists; and (e) when social workers, with ambulance-chasing attorneys at the ready, are calling the shots, and academics and scholars are deemed irrelevant.

Matthews observed, accurately as far as it goes, when he learned that school officials had proposed allowing "students to text during lunch, despite previously attempted cell-phone bans," that "educators



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can't keep up with the latest technocrazes." Mathews further complained:

No one ... asks my question: What do good teachers do about this? The best classes, in my experience, are the ones in which the teacher is holding a conversation with the entire class. Nobody is allowed to sit in a corner and dream about the prom, or text their dress choices to friends. The teacher has her eyes on the entire class, and is calling on everybody. If you are not paying attention, you are going to get caught. If the instructor is particularly good, the frequent texter decides what the class is doing is more interesting than sending another message.

But since such classes are relatively rare ..., bored [students] ... tune out and send messages.

The problem none of the above writers "get" is that teachers aren't in the classroom to entertain, but to transmit knowledge. Unfortunately, such notions started going out the window in the late 1970s, and for good in 1981, when Archie LaPointe and Willard Wirtz wrote their seminal work, "Measuring the Quality of Education," for the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute of Education. That was when the concept of excellence and focus on knowledge was replaced with two different objectives: "functional literacy" (otherwise known as "getting by") and "keeping kids in school" (otherwise known as babysitting and keeping children off the streets during peak work-hours, which equates to social work and policing).

Cellphones, texting, and even "sexting" are *not* the core problems: The trouble *is* that school time is still taken up with politically motivated, special-interest malarkey — junk science; flawed campaigns against drugs, smoking, AIDS, pregnancy, and violence; disruptive, divisive social engineering and "diversity" experiments; age-inappropriate and privacy-invading surveys masquerading as academics; "revised" — even treasonous — history; counterproductive fads like "conflict resolution"; and pro-promiscuity, pro-homosexual rubbish. All this would take years to get out of the system, even if every school started today.

The trouble *is* that time-tested, as well as newer, successful methodologies, continue to be scuttled in favor of failed teaching fads in key subjects like reading and math — the very subjects every President claims national and state assessments are centered on.

The trouble *is* the individual is still denigrated in favor of a "team," or group approach, resulting in group-think and consensus being valued over principle and over individual effort. This subtly undermines the founding principles of this country — adversely affecting key votes and the continuance of the Republic.

The trouble *is* teacher preparation at the university level, coupled to the chaotic K-12 school environment, are not conducive to concentration. The Attention Deficit "disorder" resides in the classroom, not in the kids!

The trouble *is* that good parents are treated like dummies. The trouble *is* lack of discipline and structure (not metal detectors). The trouble *is* students being pressured to spend all day primping and jockeying for social position. The trouble *is* that really good teachers are frustrated, their time being taken up with nonsense and paperwork.

The trouble *is* that bright youngsters, who somehow manage to learn in spite of the system, are either skimmed off the top, or shuttled off to mentor lagging students, causing average and slower pupils to view intelligence and excellence as "uncool" and creating a vicious cycle of more special education and legal drugs as remedies.



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The trouble is that the red tape for private schooling is so onerous that it's prohibitively expensive to start one, leaving only wealthy conglomerates to take up the slack. Vouchers may be better than nothing, but in many parts of the United States, there are few, or no, private schools.

The trouble is goofball ideas like the one during the Bush administration hawking a pro-marriage initiative. It targets funds to unwed parents to encourage marriage once a baby's on the way. Three hundred million a year was earmarked for that one, [and its 2010 sequel](#), reported the May 25 *Washington Times*, just got a boost in Minnesota. Or how about this taxpayer-funded gem, the "Great Sex Workshop": It got a five-year, \$5.5 million budget in 2004: "Get ready for some fun interactive intimacy games to help you keep sex safe and hot! Then share your techniques for finding Mr. Right," the advertisement went. Then, when state officials in Arizona complained that an eighth-grade state math test was too difficult, policymakers worked to make it easier the next year.

Moreover, the trouble is that domestic and social policies — nearly all of them — are geared to the irresponsible and neglectful element of society, instead of to the upstanding, decent backbone of the nation.

No wonder parents opt out of the system, and educators "don't get no respect."

Beverly K. Eakman began her career as a teacher in 1968. She left to become a technical writer for a NASA contractor. She was a former speechwriter for the Voice of America and for the late Chief Justice Warren E. Burger when he chaired the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. She served as a writer for the U.S. Dept. of Justice before retiring from the federal government. She is the author of four books on education policy, mental-health issues, and data-trafficking, with dozens of feature articles to her credit.



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