



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 4, 2016

D.C. Leaders Look to Communist Cuba for “Education Successes”

If you have children in government schools in or around the nation’s capital city, beware. Not only are the D.C. government schools mass producing illiterate graduates, top officials and education bureaucrats from Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia [are looking to](#) a mass-murdering communist dictatorship for help and ideas in reforming those schools. Seriously.



But despite what officials may believe, more communism in U.S. classrooms will do nothing to deal with widespread illiteracy or dumbed-down education in America. Instead, what is actually needed to make students literate and educated is very simple: [Proper, systematic, and intensive instruction in phonics.](#)

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According to news reports and official statements, the delegation of government officials went on a trip to Communist Cuba last month to seek out ideas on everything from “strong education” to “high-quality teaching” and even healthcare from the murderous Castro regime. At least some of the officials appear to actually believe the dictatorship’s propaganda, too, with the *Washington Post* reporting that D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and D.C. Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson “spoke positively about their school visit” in Havana. During the visit, brainwashed Cuban children sang propaganda songs glorifying revolutionary communist gangster Jesús Suárez Gayol and took turns quoting mass-murdering former dictator Fidel Castro.

Incredibly, after being treated to the depressing spectacle of indoctrinated young children praising the tyrant who enslaved and impoverished their nation, D.C. officials spoke in glowing terms about the visit. “Given Cuba’s emphasis on a strong education, I know there’s a lot we can learn from each other,” Mayor Bowser told American journalists on a conference call from Havana, where there is not even a semblance of a free press and critics are routinely thrown into Castro’s prisons. “There’s a focus on teaching here and making sure all citizens have access to high-quality teaching.” By “high-quality teaching,” she presumably meant high-quality brainwashing by teachers who earn less in a month than minimum-wage Americans earn in a few hours.

Cuban students also do not have access to outside information, with the Internet and all independent sources being banned across the open-air prison island known as Cuba. But for schools chief Henderson, that was all overlooked. “There’s a sense of pride and a sense of history that they clearly prioritize,” she claimed about the Cuban schools, as if the regime was actually teaching the students history rather than Castro’s lies. “It is important to give people a sense of belonging and self-



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confidence, and I think that's one of the things we're missing in our education system." How communist indoctrination would increase self-confidence or a sense of belonging was not immediately clear.

In an alarming development, descriptions of the Cuban regime's compulsory indoctrination program masquerading as "education" bear remarkable similarities to accelerating trends in American education. [First of all](#), it starts from the [premise that the state is responsible for child-rearing, not parents](#). Secondly, schools [gather vast amounts of data on all children, in part so they can be assigned to jobs serving the regime](#) once their brainwashing is complete. [Data on parents is also gathered](#) by the Cuban indoctrination officials. Even the regime's much-touted national literacy campaign, which the regime itself claims was a success, doubled as an exercise in communist indoctrination.

The trip to Cuba, which included over 40 officials from D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, was reportedly organized by the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. In a [statement](#) announcing the visit, the outfit claimed American officials could learn from the murderous dictatorship how to maintain "high education and health standards," according to reports. The lobbying group also boasted that school officials would visit Castro's indoctrination centers to learn "how literacy, graduation and retention rates, and other education successes remain consistently high."

It is true that the ruthless dictatorship *claims* to have achieved almost full literacy among its victims. But that has never been independently verified. Communist regimes are known for a lot of things — mass-murder, terrorism, starvation, torture, censorship, lying, subversion, stealing, and more — but honesty in government statistics is not one of them. Even if the Castro regime's literacy numbers were accurate, though, that does not mean American schools should be taking tips from a dictatorship with an education system designed to brainwash children and entrench tyranny in the minds of its victims. There is a [much better solution for literacy](#).

Of course, it is true that D.C. has a gargantuan problem when it comes to literacy. According to a State Education Agency report cited in media accounts, about *two thirds* of D.C. residents over the age of 15 are functionally illiterate. Yes, the overwhelming majority of D.C.'s residents, victims of its government schools, are barely able to read anything. While that is even worse than America at large, which also has widespread illiteracy at staggering levels, it should not be a surprise. Over one third of D.C. students fail to graduate. The cause, though, is simple and well known among those who care to look.

Teaching children to read English words as if they were Chinese characters — an approach known variously as "look-say," "whole-word," "sight-word," and other terms — leads to life-long reading disabilities, dyslexia, a hatred of reading, physical deficiencies in the brain, and widespread illiteracy. On the other hand, [teaching students real phonics](#) leads to the high literacy levels that were once taken for granted across America. With phonics, students understand that written words, rather than symbols to be memorized, are actually a combination of symbols, known as letters, representing different sounds. Mastery of the sound-symbol relationship is essential to real literacy. Yet, despite being discredited by mountains of evidence, variations on the quack "whole-word" method prevail.

In fact, the failed method that forms the basis of reading instruction in most government schools in America even today has been exposed as absolute quackery since the 1840s. Back then, Massachusetts Education Secretary Horace Mann, who imported the authoritarian Prussian model of education to the United States, imposed the whole-word method on the schools in Boston. Within a few years, the magnitude of the disaster was so great and so obvious that the experiment was halted. The schoolmasters then joined forces to write a devastating critique of the scheme that rings just as true today as it did more than a century and a half ago. The failed method was resurrected by progressive



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“education” godfather John Dewey, a radical socialist and humanist who, with funding from the Rockefeller dynasty, helped spread it nationwide — along with the illiteracy it produces. Since then, the failed method has continued to be exposed, yet it also continues to be used in government schools.

This writer and the late veteran educator Dr. Sam Blumenfeld wrote a book, published last year, that further exposes this monumental, ongoing crime against the American people. Dubbed [Crimes of the Educators: How Utopians Are Using Government Schools to Destroy America’s Children](#), the book represents 50 years worth of research in the field of literacy and education. D.C. school officials could learn more on teaching reading from one essay by Dr. Blumenfeld than they could from a thousand visits to the communist dictatorship enslaving Cuba — assuming they are actually interested in improving education. Blumenfeld’s *Alpha-Phonics* primer has been used successfully to teach reading to countless children — and even to many adults injured by the quack methods used in government schools. As *Crimes of the Educators* documents extensively with primary sources, however, [the systematic dumbing down of American children and the growing illiteracy epidemic are no accident.](#)

One of the men who inspired Dr. Blumenfeld to launch his life-long quest to save children from illiteracy was Rudolf Flesch, who blew the lid off of the whole-word method with his earth-shattering book *Why Johnny Can’t Read*. He said America could achieve full literacy again, but that it would take longer than in Cuba due to the damage already done by the education establishment and its whole-word reading schemes.

“If we carry out a literacy campaign, we can’t expect to do the job in nine months like the Cubans,” Flesch [explained](#). “Why? Because the Cubans were faced with the relatively easy job of teaching reading and writing to their illiterate peasants, who had never gone to school. We, on the other hand, have to teach millions of people who can’t read because their schools tried to teach them the wrong way. They have been infected with the highly potent virus of look-and-say and have become addicts to the pernicious habit of word-guessing. To become literate, they must kick the habit. The job of teaching them to read must be combined with a program of thorough detoxification, which gets harder and harder the more years of look-and-say teaching they’ve been exposed to. Therefore, what took Cubans nine months will take us at least two years.”

For the campaign to restore literacy in America to be successful, though, Flesch warned that three basic principles were needed. First, Americans must realize that there is an “enormous national problem” — a problem that has only grown more severe since he wrote that, despite the nation’s squandering of close to \$1 trillion per year on “education.” Secondly, Flesch said, Americans must understand the cause of the illiteracy, “the virus of look-and-say teaching.” America’s prevailing teaching methods and material must be seen as what they are — “national enemies like the viruses of measles and polio.” Finally, the literacy campaign must be fought “strictly with the weapons of intensive phonics.”

“As long as we stick to these three basic principles, we’ll make our coming literacy campaign a glorious success and we will become the best-educated nation on earth,” Flesch concluded.

Veteran Texas reading instructor and author [Don Potter](#), a longtime friend, collaborator, and admirer of Sam Blumenfeld, told *The New American* that the Cuban Literacy Campaign was based on intensive training and nationwide implementation to use literate adults and school students to teach every illiterate in the country to read in one year. It used a phonics method geared toward the Spanish syllabic writing system, he said. “There was one teacher guidebook and one student primer,” Potter explained, noting in a follow-up that the campaign was also used to spread socialist ideology. “The



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question for us is this: Could teachers be trained to take Blumenfeld's *Alpha-Phonics* into the illiteracy ghettos created by the government schools and teach everybody to read? I think so."

Indeed, the D.C. schools, like government schools in communities across America, could learn a lot about education in all subjects — and especially when it comes to teaching reading. But there is no need to travel to Cuba, home of one of the most oppressive dictatorships on the planet, to seek answers or ideas. In fact, it is hard to imagine a more terrible source for insight into genuine education than a murderous communist autocracy that so fears the truth that it blocks the Internet, even if it is true that a broken clock is right twice a day and its literacy campaign was a success.

It is undoubtedly true that government schools in America are a major problem, as is shown on every objective metric. As we document in *Crimes of the Educators*, that is all by design. But proper answers to the problems can be found much closer to home. Men like the Boston schoolmasters, Flesch, Blumenfeld, and many others have already offered a proven solution: [a return to systematic, intensive phonics](#). Unfortunately for Americans, the top echelons of the education establishment already know that full well. It is now up to the American people to demand reform.

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Photo of Cuban students: AP Images



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