



Education's Armageddon

A statistic like 75 percent gets people's attention. Worse, the *Times* article quoted an education advocacy group's finding that "80 percent of college students taking remedial classes [in 2008] had a high school GPA of 3.0 or better." So apparently, even when students score well, they don't know much. How is that even possible?

At least one luminary at the U.S. Department of Education (DoEd) decided not to sugar-coat it: Longtime former U.S. Commissioner of Education Statistics, Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D., now *persona non grata* within the department's hierarchy, issued an indictment of American schools in 1999 that surfaced on the Internet, despite mighty efforts by component agencies like the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to scuttle it.



"Our idea of 'advanced' is clearly below international standards," he admonished in his now-famous speech.

Same story in 2011. Associated Press publicized the news September 14 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 1995," as written in a *Washington Times* report by Justin Pope.

Predictably, explanations — or excuses — for the poor showings ranged from the "increasingly diverse group of test-takers" to the ever-broadening "test pool." But at the end of the day, Bob Schaeffer, public education director of a group called Fair Test, admitted in the *Times* piece: "Yes, changing test-taker demographics matter, [but] no, they don't explain an 18-point drop [in combined scores] over five years."

Dr. Forgione quotes other worthies such as Jean McLaughlin, president of Barry University, who has long criticized the public schools' foray into "social re-engineering" at the expense of proficiency in subject matter. This view was seconded by the superintendent of the nation's fourth largest school district in Miami-Dade, Florida, who complained: "Half our job is education, and the other half is social work."

It's more like 61 percent — a combination of attitudinal propagandizing, personality profiling, and mental-"health" screening, as was initially discovered in Pennsylvania's Educational Quality Assessment (EQA), discussed further on.

Dr. Forgione exposed how schools systematically let kids down. "By grade 4, American students only score in the middle of 26 countries reported. By grade 8 they are in the bottom third, and at the finish



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line, where it really counts, we're near dead last. It's even worse when you notice that *some of the superior countries in grade 8 (especially the Asians) were not included in published 12th grade results. They do not [even] need 12 grades.*"

Dr. Forgione is highly credible. An Internet search of his various appointments, reports, and testimonies over the years reveals an intimate familiarity with all aspects of DoEd's data-collection, assessment, and computer systems, as well as international, cooperating agencies working directly or indirectly with the U.S. education establishment. So, when Dr. Forgione says that pupils' ongoing poor showing in science, math, and reading is directly tied to weak curriculum, he ought to know.

The DoEd soon devised a remedy for that. Given Dr. Forgione's stinging reproach, department heads at NCES talked European educators into integrating the one remaining legitimate test in the world, the TIMSS (Third International Math & Science Study) with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), then watering both down to reflect the United Nations' psycho-political and social engineering goals rather than intellectual ones. Beginning *this school year*, the TIMSS merged with NAEP — dubbed an "assessment" for a reason — because it is not a *test!* "T" now stands for "trends" instead of "third."

Student Assessments

The DoEd's NCES 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.*" (Emphasis added.) Another important source, *Constructing Curriculum for the Primary Grades* by D.T. Dodge, et al., states: "Assessment is the process of gathering information about children in order to make decisions about their education. Teachers obtain *useful information* about children's knowledge, skills, and progress by observing, documenting, and reviewing children's work *over time* [aka *longitudinal study*]. Ongoing assessment [also] occurs in the context of classroom *activities.*" (Emphasis added.)

What they are talking about here is "noncognitive feedback," intended to determine controversial opinions on issues ranging from the importance of the United Nations, to acceptance of homosexuality and climate change. Anyone schooled in marketing or public relations would recognize the formula: what-would-you-do-if queries, confession-style probes, and psychological "fishing" expeditions. There is never a "right" or "wrong" answer, only "preferred" ones, as noted in tightly held "Interpretive Literature" for assessments such as Pennsylvania's EQA. Such surreptitious methods of data-collection allow attitudes and worldviews to be tallied and followed over the child's school years, then on into college — and even the workplace. Former students have been surprised to discover that an assessment question they answered at age 16 affected not only their college acceptance, but even their career path. (There's a reason that the Scholastic Aptitude Test — SAT — was renamed the Scholastic Assessment Test in 1990.) They are even more dismayed to receive "follow-up surveys" well into their adult years.

Take, for example, the March 23, 2010, commentary by *Washington Post* staff writer Justin Moyer entitled "Government surveys high school seniors, then tracks them for decades." In this first-person narrative, Moyer described how, in his not-terribly-distant younger days, he was given a survey in high school that "looked like the SAT," as it was printed on a type of paper that resembled that of standardized tests. He didn't think too much about it at the time and was told "participation was voluntary" and that "answers ... would remain anonymous."

He answered questions about drugs ("Had I used tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, heroin, cocaine,



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methamphetamines? How often?”), sex (what kind, specifically, and how often?”), and driving habits (“From where?” “To where?” and “How often?”). He was 16: “There wasn’t much to hide.”

Then, that all-important error in judgment, which “there was no taking ... back,” Moyer wrote. “Apparently I’d signed up for a long-term project: No matter where I went or what I did, follow-up surveys dogged me.... I moved to Connecticut ... to Cape Cod ... to Washington ... [all] around Washington. But about once a year, I’d open the mail and see ... another survey, embossed with [an official] logo ... ‘Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth.’ Return address: the University of Michigan.”

Unbeknownst to Moyer, he was describing a “longitudinal study.” And today, kids a lot younger than 16 are getting them. The aim is to assess psychological and political attitudes, to see who is swallowing the propaganda that passes for academics and who is either waffling or “not buying.” If too many don’t “buy,” then curriculum is altered using a more heavy-handed approach.

Today, the propaganda is morphing right along with the technology to collect, store, and “share” information. These surveys and curricula usually begin with “pilot projects” in one or two localities to gauge resistance and get the bugs out before “going national.” That’s what happened with Pennsylvania’s Educational Quality Assessment (EQA), the “trial balloon” for the NAEP. Under the Cooperative Accountability Project (CAP), the man who would eventually become the second Secretary of Education, Terrell Bell, was tasked with launching the EQA (since renamed) as a seven-state, coordinated data collection-testing-“programming” project, laying the groundwork for the National Assessment, or NAEP. Whenever youngsters failed to “internalize” politically correct biases, remedial curricula entitled *EQA Resources for Improvement* were brought in.

Titles III and IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) comprise the enabling legislation — which is why the act’s continued reauthorization every few years is absolutely essential to statisticians. However, the logos “EQA” and/or “ESEA” on the covers of the remedial curricula, *Resources for Improvement*, should have been the dead-giveaway that state *and* federal funds were involved. Public Law 96-88, Section 103b, specifically prohibits the federal government from involvement in curriculum, even though a loophole of sorts is provided further on, in Section 209, allowing the DoEd to split hairs and claim it merely funds development of curricular frameworks and instructional materials, not the forbidden direction, supervision, or control of curriculum. Even so, a winnable case could have been made — had parents pursued it aggressively in 1986, when a few scattered groups first noticed the logos, then recognized the federal source. But the moment passed, mostly for lack of court costs.

Pervasive Propagandizing

Today, propagandizing is pervasive, with the help of far-left extremist groups. For example, being launched this year in Maryland is an “environmental literacy” graduation requirement subsidized by an advocacy group most folks have never heard of, No Child Left Inside Coalition (NCLI). According to the Competitive Enterprise Institute’s Matthew Melchiorre, who reported for the *Washington Times* August 31, 2011, the Maryland State Board of Education has approved the requirement “at the behest of organizations that promote a far-left political agenda based on misinformation and anti-capitalist fervor.” NCLI pushes “major societal change ... in response to global warming” — i.e., “central planning, sustainable development, and de-industrialization based on climate-alarmism.” Experts now say climate issues appear to be cyclic and related to sunspot activity — not to manmade activities. Nevertheless, the curriculum’s stated intent is to convince students that humans, not nature, have the greatest impact on global climate, writes Melchiorre, as well as “the long-debunked notion that



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population growth has made resources scarcer.” Assignments, such as “identify[ing] ... the location of [a] toxic waste facility in the neighborhood ... and propos[ing] possible solutions,” typically involve door-to-door petition drives and take time away from the hard sciences.

This program will “go national.” It is the kind of curriculum Drs. Forgione and Schmidt condemned when they alleged that weak curriculum and poor texts were letting kids down. Melchiorre echoes Dr. Forgione’s allegations about test results, citing a 2009 report by the Program for International Student Assessment. It compared 15-year-old students among member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. U.S. kids ranked 25th in math, 17th in science, and 14th in reading.

For years, Dr. Forgione notes, people have taken false comfort in the notion that while student performance may be poor overall, America’s strength lies in our top students. But that is a misperception, with the United States’ advanced math and science students ranking 15th and 16th respectively.

Little wonder, then, that “75 percent [of college freshmen] likely will spend part of their [first] year brushing up on high-school-level course work,” as per the *Times* article. Further on, we discover how much these little refresher courses will cost: “about \$5.6 billion — \$3.6 billion in ‘direct educational costs’ such as taxpayer contributions to state universities and another \$2 billion in lost wages.” In response to this news, Education Secretary Arne Duncan regurgitated the same song everyone has heard for years: “States need to raise ... standards and commit to education reforms.” That’s *federal* education “standards” and *federal* “reforms” he’s talking about — both highly suspect.

Touchy-feely “Reforms”

One obvious question, of course, is how do U.S. schools get away with swapping touchy-feely “reforms” and “standards” for genuine science, math, and reading?

You have to dig to find it, but part of the answer can be found in a 1986 document by James P. Shaver, “National Assessment of Values and Attitudes for Social Studies,” which (fortunately) was entered into the federal education database, ERIC (Educational Resource and Information Center). Shaver put a new spin on what most people understand as “cognitive learning.” He wrote that there is an intellectual component *plus* an “affective,” or emotional, element in every shred of knowledge that passes through a person’s awareness. In other words, one must have *some* feeling-or-other about information in order to remember it, and those perceptions are rarely neutral. On that basis, Shaver reasoned that it was permissible to include attitudes on societal and controversial issues in *both testing and curriculum*. Attitudinal testing advocate and test creator Richard M. Wolf went even further, justifying the “permissibility of deception” in testing children because an institution has a right to obtain information necessary to reach its goals, though he admitted in *Crucial Issues in Testing* that if the deception leads to results that work to the disadvantage of the test-taker, say in employment, then “deception in testing can be considered a form of entrapment” — a legal issue that, he allowed, had not been fully determined in real time.

But attorneys Charles W. Sherrer and Ronald A. Roston, among others, had already voiced objections. Writing in the influential *Federal Bar Journal* in an article entitled “Some Legal and Psychological Concerns About Personality Testing in the Public Schools,” they cautioned that the courts had “recognized a common law action for invasion of privacy” and that “it is highly unlikely that the average parent knows to what he is consenting when he signs a piece of paper stating that the school



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psychologist can examine his child.” The behavioral science community definitely was aware of this, and other, authoritative warnings, yet forged ahead.

Parents, of course, were mostly unaware that behavioral scientists — a cabal of left-leaning psychologists — were intimately involved in creating tests, aka “assessments,” as well as in writing legislation like ESEA that was friendly to their cause. The Effective Schools Movement of the 1970s morphed into Mastery Learning in the 1980s. That quickly fell from grace and took more left turns as America 2000, then Goals 2000, and outcome-based education (OBE) in the 1990s.

OBE was followed by the highly deceptive No Child Left Behind Act, which incorporated most elements of the mental “health”-based 1997 Texas Medication Algorithm Program (TMAP) under then-Texas Governor George W. Bush. The program went national in 2004 under President George W. Bush’s newly appointed New Freedom Commission on Mental Health.

By then, it no longer mattered which political party was in control. The successive waves of “reform” integrated increasingly ham-fisted social-engineering schemes — and finally turned nasty, with the psychiatric drugging of “slow” and naughty children.

The development and implementation of TMAP tells us all we need to know about the thrust of education from 1997 on, with sponsorships from such entities as the National Institute of Mental Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, the Center for Mental Health Services, the United States Pharmacopoeia Convention Inc., Mental Health Connections, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Eli Lilly and Company, Forest Laboratories, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Glaxo-Wellcome, Inc., Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp., Pfizer, Inc., and Wyeth Laboratories — entities heavily invested in the psychotropic drug market. Most parents had no grasp of how mental-health screening with school-based psychiatrists was changing not only education, but society.

Choices and Challenges

The ramifications of bad child-rearing advice and poor schooling, both at the hands of education psychologists, go beyond jobs. Immigrants aren’t interested in assimilating, and high-school and college graduates have little idea what the philosophers, scholars, and artists prior to 1945 said or believed, even though their works greatly affected the evolution of governance in Europe and, in turn, America — underscoring the reasons why the Founders took such a different route from today’s U.S. politicians. There no longer exists anything resembling “a common body of knowledge,” a term coined by the late historian Henry Steele Commager.

The recent phenomenon of “flash mob” violence is symptomatic of how the education establishment’s 50-year emphasis on “socialization” and “progressivism” (psychologized schooling with political overtones) has backfired: Aimless, anarchistic youth have decimated shops and neighborhoods — not only in seven U.S. cities, but in London, England. The phenomenon is spreading to other industrialized nations with similarly compromised “education” systems.

Take, for example, the once-vaunted Swiss schools: As late as the 1960s, it was *the* place to send kids for rigorous education — if one could afford it. Some private schools in America incorporated its highly structured approach. But by the 1970s, the Swiss had absorbed the UN’s (specifically, UNESCO’s) nebulous, psycho-politicized model. The proof appeared August 29, 2011, in the *Christian Post*: “Swiss Kindergartners to Be Taught About ‘Pleasures of Sex’ From a ‘Sex Box’” — a report by Nicole Menzie. Parents in Basel, Switzerland, are furious, having sent some 3,000 letters of complaint to Education Minister Christoph Eymann. As in the United States, the agenda is everything, and government doesn’t



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care what citizens think. So, Swiss tots, as young as four, will learn how to “enjoy” sex through “toys” made to look like male and female genitalia, according to the Swiss newspaper *Blick*.

“The toys are part of a kit ... given to teachers that includes dolls, books, and wooden [male organs], among other things,” writes Menzie. Regurgitating a familiar line from our own Planned Parenthood and Sex Information and Educational Council of the United States (SIECUS), Swiss Minister Eymann retorted, “Unfortunately, the education of children on the subject of sex had been left to the schools since parents were not doing their jobs at home” — hard to believe, given today’s post-modern sexual revolution. Even if such were the case, explaining sexual pleasure to a four-year-old strains credibility. Like so many others, this program will “go national” — and probably international — taking time away from authentic subject matter and compounding moral degeneracy.

Having had a long history of better education, so far Swiss youngsters are faring better on comparative tests, but with the merging of the TIMSS into America’s NAEP, and a worldwide emphasis on UNESCO educational objectives, the last five years have seen a slide — the recent sex education/sex toy dust-up being the last straw for many Swiss parents.

In short, an educational Armageddon is unfolding: a smorgasbord of sports, surveys, questionnaires, and “remedial propaganda” that consumes hours in what were once institutions of learning. Cynicism, unemployment, alienation, resentment, moral and cultural decline, fatherless children, and the predictable entitlement surges that accompany all of these, already are converging to produce social pathologies that cut across ethnic, racial, and economic lines worldwide, leading free-world nations toward the kind of national security breakdown and financial crisis that eventually will “require” imposition of marshal law internationally, which is what leftists would like to see, followed by a police state. The recent imposition of government-mandated youth curfews here in America, complete with parent fines, is only the beginning.

The UN stands poised to pick up the pieces. The UN Police (UNPol) is gearing up for an unprecedented expansion, in response to “a shift in the nature of conflicts.” Don’t believe it? Just ask UNPol Chief Andrew Hughes: “We help reform, restructure, and rebuild the whole system of courts, prisons, prosecutors, public defenders, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and civil society.” Its catchphrase is “The UN Works — for People and the Planet.”

That’s change you can count on.

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