

The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

OBE and Mastery Learning or Educational Revolution by Stealth

Now that the educationist planners have decided that the traditional educational model is ineffective and obsolete and cannot meet the demands of the future, they are busily paving over the last 150 years of educational experience with a new concept for the government schools: Outcome-Based Education (OBE).

According to William G. Spady, chief wizard behind OBE, the idea for this revolutionary new concept of schooling started in 1968 with an essay written by psycho-educator Benjamin Bloom entitled "Learning for Mastery." According to education researcher Charlotte Iserbyt, who formerly worked for the U.S. Department of Education, mastery learning is based on B. F. Skinner's behaviorist conditioning techniques. In an article on mastery learning in the November 1979 issue of *Educational Leadership*, Carl D. Glickman writes:

Mastery learning is built on the assumption that the majority of children can become equal in their ability to learn standard school tasks. As Bloom has written, "To put it more strongly, each student may be helped to learn a particular subject to the same

degree, level of competence, and even in approximately the same amount of time." . . .

What mastery learning does is replace "page 55" with "criterion-referenced materials" or "learning modules." As Bloom describes it, the more advanced students who finish the work quickly are busy with enrichment materials; the middle third use the full 40 minutes to do the work; and the other third need extra time for reinforcing work, peer tutoring, and individual teacher consultations. Ideally, mastery learning works so that the previously faster, average, and slower students eventually reach the same levels of proficiency, and from that point on students can be taught together as a group, mastering the same materials at the same time.

Does mastery learning actually work? A mastery-learning experiment involving reading instruction was conducted in the public schools of Chicago beginning in the mid 1970s. Concerning the new program, the *Chicago Tribune* of November 16, 1977 reported: "It has been ten years in the making, but Chicago school officials now believe they have in place a complete, sweeping program to teach children to read — a program that may be a pacesetter for the nation."

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