

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."

The SAT Disaster of 1991 National Verbal Score Hits New Low And the Dumbing Down Goes On

We are now eight years into the education reform movement started by the "A Nation At Risk" report in 1983. And what have the educators given us? A new low of 422 in the national SAT verbal score. The previous low of 424 was reached in 1980. Eleven years and billions of dollars later we are lower still. The ability of young Americans to use language — the tool of thought and the primary measure of intelligence — is in serious decline. How much longer can the educators fool America?

The College Board's National Report was quite blunt: "The mean verbal score has declined for the fifth consecutive year to a new all-time low, two points below its previous low in 1980, 1981, and 1990."

How was this permitted to happen? To unravel the mystery, one must go back to the source of the new progressive curriculum formulated by John Dewey and his colleagues at the turn of the century. Indeed, it was John Dewey who first advocated a drastic de-emphasis on the study of language in primary education. He wrote in 1898 in an essay, "The Primary-Education Fetich":

There is . . . a false educational god whose idolaters are legion, and whose cult influences the entire educational system. This is language study — the study not of foreign language, but of English; not in higher, but in primary education. It is almost an unquestioned assumption, of educational theory and practice both, that the first three years of a child's school life shall be mainly taken up with learning to read and write his own language. If we add to this the learning of a certain amount of numerical combinations, we have the pivot about which primary education swings. . . .

It does not follow, however, that because this course was once wise it is so any longer. . . . My proposition is, that conditions — social, industrial, and intellectual — have undergone such a radical change, that the time has come for a thoroughgoing examination of the emphasis put upon linguistic work in elementary instruction. . . .

The plea for the predominance of learning to read in early school life because of the great importance attaching to literature seems to me a perversion.

Dewey then argued how important it was for the child to experience life through classroom activities, projects, and social interaction before learning to read about them. And the reading materials themselves had to be relevant to the child's needs. He wrote:

Every respectable authority insists that the

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