

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."

Values and Public Education: The Cultural Civil War

The following is the text of a lecture given by Sam Blumenfeld at Hillsdale College, March 11, 1991, in a seminar sponsored by The Center for Constructive Alternatives.

There is a myth extant among a significant body of educators in America that a teacher can be value-neutral in the classroom. A corollary to that myth is the notion that a teacher must not impose his or her own set of values on the students, and that the students must be free to develop their own values. The process whereby this takes place is known as values clarification — the means whereby the student works out or discovers his or her own set of values based on his or her desires, experiences, beliefs, and inner personal instincts.

The first question that arises from this view is: how is it possible for any living human being to be value-neutral? Indeed, what does value-neutral mean? In classroom practice it has meant bringing up moral issues for discussion among the students, with the teacher remaining mute, refusing to in-

terject his or her views. Somehow, it was expected that through the enlightening process of clarification, the students would arrive at a suitable personal moral code, all by themselves, without adult guidance.

Now there is something obviously suspect in such an idea. Why bring up the subject of morals in a class if the teacher is not going to teach morality? Would that same teacher decide to bring up the subject of World War II and remain mute, while the students in their ignorance discussed it? The implication is that you can teach history but you cannot teach morals. Children must discover them for themselves.

Can children come up with a well-thought-out personal set of values merely through a rap session on moral issues? I hardly think so, for the simple reason that children have simply not lived long enough or experienced enough to understand the serious ramifications of their naive, juvenile decision making. If this is what ordinary common sense tells us, then why do educators expect children to accomplish in a few

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