

# 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."

## Outcome Based Education or How to Turn a Dinosaur into an Octopus

In some of our past writings we have called public education a "sick dinosaur" being kept alive by a life-support system known as the education establishment. The latter, through considerable political power, has managed to keep this ailing, obsolete, nineteenth-century anachronism alive because so many careers not only depend on it but must continue to use it as their means to wield power over society. We have predicted the demise of this dinosaur because, like its extinct ancestor, public education has a huge body, a voracious appetite, and a tiny brain. And the establishment knows this.

And so, they have worked out a new plan, not merely for survival, but for a major enhancement of their power which, if successful, will transform the doomed dinosaur into a huge octopus with tentacles so large, so blood-sucking, that it will embrace the entire American people. The plan is called "Outcome Based Education" or OBE for short. It can also be described as the last nail in the coffin of traditional education, not that there is much of it left by now.

The most radical feature of OBE is that it

does away with the traditional requirements for graduation based on the Carnegie units. Under the Carnegie units, you were required, for example, to take 4 years of English, 2 years of American history, 3 years of math, etc. Each unit was worth a number of credits, and when you obtained the necessary credits you were eligible for graduation with a diploma attesting to the fact that you had covered all of these subjects successfully.

The success of the system was based on the effective teaching of these subjects by competent teachers who knew what they were doing, with the students passing a number of tests to verify that they had learned whatever it was they were supposed to learn. All of us who went through the system remember studying, or cramming, for the midterms or finals. You hoped to get an "A" or a "B plus", or a "B." If you got a "C" you passed. If you got a "D" or an "F," you were required to do some sort of makeup or repeat the class.

All in all, the system, with its compulsory attendance laws requiring children to attend school from the age of 6 to 16 or 18,

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seemed to work fairly well as long as the schools taught the subjects properly. But when the schools started teaching look-say in reading, and students began having serious reading problems, the system began to break down. It became impossible to expect the ever-increasing number of nonreaders to do the kind of reading required to pass the more difficult subjects in the higher grades. The result was social promotion, grade inflation, and a general deterioration of academic standards.

What we have learned from all of this is that the traditional system cannot work if its academic heart has been cut out and replaced by teachers pretending to teach and students pretending to learn. In fact, it is now quite possible to get through twelve years of public schooling and emerge at the end of the process knowing virtually nothing. That's why there's been so much public clamor for back-to-basics reform in the last 30 years. But so far, there hasn't been any real improvement in the system, mainly because the educators don't want to get back to basics.

And so the educators have had to come up with a new idea to appease the public, an idea, however, that permits the educators to keep their progressive revolution in education intact while making sweeping changes. The idea is: "Let's change the system. Let's get rid of the whole traditional system and start afresh."

And what exactly is to replace the old system? Outcome based education. I found a very good description of the new OBE program in a project manual which was given to me during a recent trip to North Carolina, where the Gaston County schools are implementing an OBE program called Odyssey. The program document reads:

The Odyssey Project describes a formal system of basic schooling for students ages 3 to 18 with a developmental prenatal to age 3 component. The

project will use an outcome-based education model that focuses on the knowledge, skill, and attitudes that students should possess when they graduate from Odyssey learning centers.

So first we learn that OBE begins with the prenatal child and not only focuses on knowledge and skill, but also on attitudes. Will new compulsory attendance laws be required to include prenatal children? Since the educators have so badly botched up teaching children from 5 to 18, what makes them think they can do better with infants from 0 to 5? And what kind of attitudes do the educators think the students ought to have when they leave the "learning center"? Humanistic ones, no doubt. The summary continues:

Five basic exit outcomes will provide the focus for the instructional program proposed by the project: (1) Communicator; (2) Collaborator; (3) Creative Producer; (4) Critical Thinker; (5) Concerned and Confident Citizen.

Odyssey schools will subscribe to the theory of multiple intelligences and will seek to develop each student's unique talents. . . .

Performance outcomes set for each level of Odyssey schooling will include substantive assessment of each student's mastery of English, social studies (including geography), science, and mathematics objectives. . . . Each Odyssey student will study a second language, music, art, drama, and kinesthetics at each level of schooling. The computer will be used as a basic tool for instruction and management in all the disciplines. The curriculum will emphasize critical thinking and problem solving, and students will examine relevant ethical issues and learn how to make sound choices. In all curriculum areas an emphasis will be placed on understanding global issues.

Notice that "critical thinking" is a very important component in Outcome Based Education, not logical thinking, or clear thinking, but critical thinking. Critical thinking was the primary method the philosophers of the Enlightenment used to destroy faith in Christianity in eighteenth-century Europe. Peter Gay, in an introduction to his anthol-

ogy of Enlightenment writings, in which he used the French word "philosophe" to represent the critically minded Enlightenment philosopher, writes:

What united [the philosophers] was the common experience of shedding their inherited Christian beliefs with the aid of classical philosophers and for the sake of a modern philosophy. . . . And what united the philosophes above all was confidence in the critical method.

Here we have reached the core of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment as a movement. The philosophes of all countries and all persuasions were lyrical in their single-minded praise of criticism. . . .

For the philosophes, criticism . . . was an act of aggression. The Christian centuries through which Western civilization had passed, and the Christian faith in whose grip the civilization still found itself, had erected protective walls around the most important areas of human activity, notably religion, politics, and sexual morality. Now criticism impartially claimed the right to criticize everything. . . . "Everything must be examined," Diderot wrote in the *Encyclopedia*, "everything must be shaken up, without exception and without circumspection." (p. 18)

The philosophes' passion for criticism has led historians to charge them with a passion for destruction, with equating negative criticism with good thinking. . . . But the philosophes would have found the charge incomprehensible. . . . The philosophes were destructive because they thought one must clear the ground before one can build; one cannot construct the city of man under fire from the enemy, on rubbish, or on a swamp. The world that religion had shaped for so long was—in the philosophes' language—prey to the wild beasts of fanaticism and enfeebled by the poisonous fruits of the tree of superstition.

And so, to the Enlightenment philosophers, Christianity was nothing but superstition which had to be wiped away by unrelenting criticism so that a new atheist-humanist civilization could be built. The political results in Europe were the French Revolution with its reign of terror, the rise of socialism, Nazism, and Communism, two world wars, concentration camps, gulags, slave labor, and millions of corpses.

The Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, who was imprisoned for 14 years in Europe for his

outspoken views against communism, wrote a remarkable book, *Marx & Satan* (Crossways Books, 1986), in which he convincingly shows the close relationship between Marxism and Satanism. On page 80, he writes:

Just as Satan came to Jesus with Bible verses, so Marx used texts of Scripture, though with much distortion.

Volume 2 of *The Works of Marx and Engels* opens with Jesus' words to His disciples (John 6:63), as quoted by Marx in his book *The Holy Family*: "It is the spirit which gives life." Then we read:

Criticism [his criticism of all that exists] so loved the masses that it sent its only begotten son [i.e., Marx], that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have a life of criticism. Criticism became masses and lived among us, and we saw its glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father. Criticism did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made itself of no reputation, taking the form of a bookbinder, and humbled itself up to nonsense—yes, critical nonsense in foreign languages.

Those knowledgeable in Scripture will recognize this as a parody of Biblical verses (John 3:16; 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8). Here again, Marx declares his own works to be "nonsense," as well as "swinish books."

And so, critical thinking has been at the core of anti-Christian philosophy among socialists and Marxists. For example, one finds the theme of critical thinking central in the writings of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian Marxist educator-philosopher and exponent of Liberation Theology. His works are widely read and admired by American radical educators. Radical professor Henry A. Giroux writes in his introduction to Freire's book, *The Politics of Education* (Bergin & Garvey, 1985):

Central to Freire's politics and pedagogy is a philosophical vision of a liberated humanity. The nature of this vision is rooted in a respect for life and the acknowledgment that the hope and vision of the future that inspire it are not meant to provide consolation for the oppressed as much as to promote ongoing forms of critique and a struggle against objective forces of oppression. By combining the dynamics of critique and collective struggle with a philosophy of hope, Freire has created a language of possibility that is rooted in what he calls a permanent prophetic

vision.

Freire's book was reviewed by the *Harvard Educational Review* which commented:

*The Politics of Education* contributes to a radical formulation of pedagogy through its revitalization of language, utopianism, and revolutionary message. ...Freire not only heightens our awareness but invites us to engage in the emancipatory process brought about by critique. His politics puts history back into our hands. Beyond the power of the alphabet is the power of knowledge and social action. This book enlarges our vision with each reading, until the meanings become our own.

The reviewer in *Contemporary Sociology* wrote:

The Politics of Education is an affirmation of Freire's prodigiously activist approach to popular education and its capacity for securing transformation change.

Paulo Freire himself writes: "There is no way to transformation; transformation is the way." And there is no greater transformation taking place in American education today than Outcome Based Education where the emphasis is on "critical thinking."

OBE also radically changes the school calendar. According to the project document:

All learning centers [schools] will have common characteristics. All will operate on a year-round schedule. Four terms of ten-weeks each will comprise the learning year. Learners will attend each of the four terms for a total of 200 days each year. At the end of each term, a three-week mini-term will be provided. Learners who accomplish all performance outcomes during the regular ten-week term may attend enrichment or extension sessions or may take leave time from their schooling. Learners who do not accomplish all performance outcomes will attend a five to seven day mini-term that extends their learning time.

Nowhere in the document are we given much of a hint as to what the "performance

outcomes" are to be. The crucial question in all of this is: "What will the children be taught?" They say that the learners will be required to master English, social studies, geography, science and mathematics. They tell us that the OBE curriculum will conform with international curriculum standards. But that still doesn't tell us what the contents of these courses will be. How will they teach reading: by whole language or intensive phonics? How will they teach writing: print first or cursive first? How will they teach spelling: invented spelling or correct spelling? How will they teach arithmetic: through concepts, calculators, and problem solving or memorization and practice first? What will they teach in social studies? That collectivism is superior to individualism? That socialized medicine is better than private medicine? That abortion is a woman's right and that the fetus is just a blob of protoplasm? That the Enlightenment was more important than the Reformation?

And what will they teach in science? That evolution is truth and that creationism is based on myth and superstition? And what happens if your performance outcome is not what the educators want? Will you have to proclaim evolution as truth before you can pass? These are questions that parents must ask before they put their children under OBE control.

We are also told that grade levels are to be replaced by a new system. The document states:

In the five levels of schooling proposed by The Odyssey Project, traditional designations of grade levels will not be used, rather a Greek letter will designate an age range for learners who attend a particular center. "Alpha" will designate the preformal component of schooling for children ages 0 - 3; "Beta" will be the center for learners ages 3 - 6; "Gamma" for learners ages 7 - 10; "Delta" for learners ages 11 - 14; and "Odyssey" for learners ages 15 - 18. At all levels movement in and out of learning cadres will be determined by accomplishment of performance outcomes not by age, grade levels, or time frames.

Note that OBE takes charge of your child's education from birth onward! That means the psycho-educators must get into your home even before the child is born. Does that mean that you will have to register with the government "learning center" when you become pregnant? The document states:

Centers will contract with many different agencies to provide health care, social services, wellness and other essential support programs. Many of the agencies will be housed at the centers. This inter-agency arrangement will provide holistic support services to learners and their families.

In other words, when you enroll your child in school you will actually be enrolling your entire family. A "holistic" approach is a total approach. The psycho-educators will want to know everything about your child and your family. The document spells it out quite clearly:

Family involvement with their child's schooling will be a primary goal of The Odyssey Project. Family members will provide service hours at each Odyssey center and will attend a minimum number of progress conferences with center professionals each year their child attends the center.

Nor will the OBE program leave you alone after you "graduate." The educators intend to help you develop "life-long leisure activities." The document states:

If Odyssey is developing individuals who can balance themselves spiritually, intellectually and physically, then life-long leisure activities have to be seen as a basic part of public schooling.

Note the psycho-educators' interest in the learner's spiritual well being. That's part of the holistic concept of education. According to Ron Miller, who publishes the *Holistic Education Review*:

Holistic education seeks to nurture the development of the whole person. It is not enough to educate for academic achievement and vocational skills alone;

the human personality is an integrated complex of intellectual, physical, social, moral, emotional, and spiritual possibilities. All of these must be taken into account in the education of children. . . .

Holistic education is a spiritual worldview rather than a materialist one. It is a belief in, and a reverence for, a self-directing life force that lies beyond our rational, intellectual understanding. It seeks to support and nourish the natural unfolding of the human soul within the lives of individuals. . . . The holistic perspective is an inclusive, phenomenological, ecological, global perspective that seeks to encompass all aspects of human experience. . . .

[H]olistic education is a radical break from traditional ways of understanding human development. . . . [T]he holistic approach represents a new paradigm. In essence, it is the educational approach of a new culture—an emerging postindustrial, post-technocratic civilization, in which the whole human being may yet be nurtured. (*Whole Language Catalog*, p. 427)

In short, holistic education is the new humane totalitarianism in which the psycho-educators involve themselves in the child's intellectual, physical, social, moral, emotional and spiritual life. Obviously, all of this is quite revolutionary and represents a "new paradigm." According to *Webster's New World Dictionary* (Simon & Schuster, 1988), a paradigm is "a pattern, example, or model; an overall concept accepted by most people in an intellectual community, as a science, because of its effectiveness in explaining a complex process, idea, or set of data." The Odyssey document states:

The Odyssey Project not only breaks the mold of traditional schooling, but it also breaks the mold of traditional thinking about school governance.

A program as radical as this will require the considerable retraining of teachers who will become known as "facilitators." The document states:

The Odyssey Project requires teacher training programs that are solution-centered, with theory and practice integrated through classroom application. The training will be a joint effort of university instructors, school unit specialists, and consultants from

public and private sectors.

How will classes be conducted in an OBE setup? We get something of an idea from the Odyssey document:

All centers will use Paideia concepts as the primary instructional delivery system. The appropriateness of the three levels of instruction — didactic, coaching, and seminars — will be understood, properly balanced, and consistently used during basic schooling.

At the four formal Odyssey levels — Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Odyssey — learners will stay with the same cadre of learners and facilitators for CORE learnings during their years at each center. During CORE-PLUS time learners from different cadres will work together. . . .

For all students at all levels a Learning Support Center will be provided. Located in proximity to the information center, the LSC will play a key role in learners' accomplishment of performance outcomes.

At the three upper levels of Odyssey schooling, learners will be required to attend weekly learning seminars that address national and world citizenship ideals and values. These seminars will focus on multi-cultural issues that prepare learners for living in the global society of the twenty-first century.

That sounds very much like an educational plan to prepare our children for world government. "World citizenship," "multi-cultural issues," and "global society" are the key phrases and concepts that run throughout OBE documents. Notice also that the school is a "learning center," the student is a "learner," the teacher is a "facilitator," the class is a "cadre," and a grade is a "level." The use of these new terms will help parents and teachers adjust to the new system. A new paradigm requires a new vocabulary.

CORE, by the way, is defined in the document as "the common learnings for all learners." As for the CORE-PLUS curriculum, the document explains it as follows:

Odyssey's CORE-PLUS curriculum will provide opportunities for learners to extend, explore, enrich or expedite CORE curriculum learnings by creating a responsive environment for learners, help-

ing them make interconnected discoveries about the physical, cultural and social world. The curriculum will be organized around major topics and developmental tasks. Learners will be able to choose from (or based on learners' needs, learning facilitators will assign learners to) a wide range of course offerings that focus on areas such as: technology mastery and understanding, cooperative living, basic survival skills, development of life options, self-directed learning, thinking, creative problem-solving and decision-making, communications, national and world-wide citizenship, current national and international issues and problems, and character building.

Sounds like one long, open-ended bull session with lots of room for values clarification, death ed, sex ed, drug ed, lifeboat survival games, and anything else that can be thrown into the hopper. How will "learners" be graded in the new system? The document states:

The basic grading system will most likely be based on standards ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 meaning the learner does not meet the standard, 2 meaning the learner is below the standard, 3 meaning the learner has met the standard and 4 meaning the learner has exceeded the standard. This system can easily be converted into a grade point average if one is necessary or desired. . . . A portfolio system determining that the learner is a good collaborator, communicator and so forth will probably be advantageous for the individual applying to college.

How will special education students be integrated in the OBE program? According to the document, very nicely:

Odyssey will strive to reduce the labeling of learners to basically two labels: those who need extended learning time and those who are learning different, which describes every learner. One of the main tenants [sic] of outcome based education is that all children can learn and succeed and that schools control the conditions of that success. . . . So, in a sense, Odyssey will have "special education programs", but will not label children for the purpose of teaching as they are now labeled.

In Gaston County, the Odyssey project is being implemented by a 10-member de-

sign team, a 9-member support team, and a project director. The description of the teams in the project document reads like something out of Star Trek:

The support team is responsible for the planning, implementation and dissemination of the project during Phases I, II and III, and has been divided into three teams: Archimedes, Diogenes and Epsilon. Team Archimedes derives its name from the Greek scientist, mathematician and inventor, who is credited for saying: "Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough and I will move the earth." Team Archimedes is responsible for project operations and provides technological, research and communications support services. Team Diogenes, named for the Greek cynic who was said to have carried around a lantern looking for truth, is the direct link between the school system and Odyssey. The team is responsible for curriculum and instruction development and training for both Odyssey team members and other personnel from Gaston County schools. Team Epsilon was so named because it represents the missing Greek letter in Odyssey's five levels of basic schooling. The team serves as the critical link in the organization, providing the administrative and clerical support for the effective functioning of the Odyssey Project.

The Odyssey Project team members are visionaries who believe that a "New Generation of American Schools" must be viewed, not as a final destination, but as the beginning of a life-long pursuit for ever-evolving standards of excellence. Their vision is to create a prototype of a world class system of basic public schooling that prepares America's children for life-long learning in the global community of the future.

After reading that, you would expect these "visionaries" to have pointed ears and wear space-cadet uniforms and carry laser-beam guns. This whole OBE Odyssey plan is about as divorced from reality as a picnic on Mars. And this is being sold with a straight face to the American people who are expected to believe that this absurd plan is the best thing that's come down the pike since sliced bread. Even the legislators of North Carolina bought the whole shooting match without so much as asking the public what it thought of the idea. House Bill 1340 of the

1991 session reads:

The General Assembly believes that all children can learn. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the mission of the public school community is to challenge with high expectations each child to learn, to achieve, and to fulfill his or her potential. With that mission as its guide, the State Board of Education shall develop and implement an outcome-based education program. The State Board of Education shall select four sites to participate in the program for five fiscal years beginning with the 1992-93 fiscal year.

That's the same Board of Education that has mandated the teaching of whole language in the primary schools which will produce functional illiteracy on a scale hitherto unimagined. But that's all part of the dumbing down process so that the elite space cadets with their Greek letter names can brainwash the Bible believing children of North Carolina. It reminds me of a book written by a Russian revolutionary in 1870 entitled *The Catechism of the Revolutionist*. The author's plan smacks of what our psycho-educators are doing to the American people. He wrote:

Mankind must be divided into two unequal parts. One tenth receives personal liberty and unlimited rights over the other nine tenths. The latter must lose their personality and become a kind of herd.

And that's what the public schools are producing, a kind of illiterate herd that will be ruled over by a pagan-humanist universalist elite. Outcome-Based Education is just the latest phase in the long-range plan to destroy Christianity in America by taking full control of the children and the family. It is presently in various stages of adoption throughout the United States. The entire education establishment seems to have been mobilized to push this scheme through by hook or by crook. But opposition by parents is growing, and there is more than enough compelling reason to see to it that the whole idiotic scheme is derailed.

## Student Kills Self in School Cafeteria

Pandemonium erupted at Gloucester (Mass.) High School 2/26/93 as hundreds of panic-stricken students streamed out of the cafeteria after a student put a gun to his head and fatally shot himself. The 15-year-old sophomore died that night at Massachusetts General Hospital.

It was not known why the boy tried to kill himself and why he had the .22 caliber gun. Police said the boy had asked a number of friends to join him in the cafeteria because he wanted to make "an announcement."

Police said the student had been sitting at a table bantering with about eight friends during the last of the school's three lunch periods. "They were joking around the way they usually do, and he reached into his knapsack and pulled out a gun," said Charles Symonds, the school's principal.

School Superintendent William J. Leary said: "One of the students he was sitting with said he thought the gun was a toy. It was self-inflicted, but what the motivation is, I don't think anybody can say right now."

After the shooting, school administrators set up counseling sessions with distraught students while making plans to help them cope with the tragedy over the weekend, Symonds said. Area psychologists have also volunteered their services for the students. (*Boston Globe*, 2/27/93)

## Student Fatally Stabbed In New York School

A 15-year-old student fatally stabbed a classroom rival at a Manhattan junior high school 2/24/93 after a long feud between them flared into a deadly quarrel over a pair of sunglasses, authorities said. The killing

occurred between classes in a hallway crowded with students and teachers. It was the second fatal stabbing inside a public school this year.

The victim, 15-year-old Angel Jimenez, and his attacker were both emotionally handicapped special education students at Junior High School 25, on Stanton Street, and school officials and students said there had been a series of altercations between the youths.

The superintendent of the school district said the killing was a symptom of the shortcomings of the city's special education system. He noted that the school's 30 special education students were supervised by at least 12 staff professionals, a staff-to-student ratio that, in a well-coordinated system, ought to have been sufficient to prevent a murder.

The police arrested John Rodriguez, a student at the school, and charged him with second-degree murder and criminal possession of a weapon. The stabbing occurred in a second-floor hallway. According to witnesses, John Rodriguez, a slender youth, drew the 4-inch blade from his pants pocket after Jimenez, a stockier teen-ager, cornered him against a wall and began to punch him in a dispute over the ownership of a pair of sunglasses. Rodriguez hid the knife behind his leg, then thrust it forward into the victim's chest.

Junior High School 25 ranked near the bottom on last year's reading tests, with only 24 percent of its students reading at or near grade level.

"One kid is dead, and another will spend his life on Riker's Island. This is how our system isn't working," said the superintendent. "We have to ask ourselves, 'Do we have the right structure?'" (*New York Times*, 2/25/93)

**Comment:** Why not try Outcome-Based Education?