

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 those risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

The SAT Disaster of 1987

Very little has been written in the press about the 1987 SAT scores since their release in September. And for good reason: the average verbal score dropped 18 points in South Dakota; 10 points in Minnesota; 6 points in Montana, Nevada, Washington; 5 points in Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio; 4 points in Iowa, Kentucky, West Virginia; 3 points in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin; 2 points in Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Missouri, New York, Vermont; and 1 point in Connecticut, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wyoming. Six states showed no improvement over last year: Alaska, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, New Hampshire, Oregon. Eight states -- California, Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Rhode Island and Tennessee -- showed a 1-point improvement; and Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina showed a 2-point improvement.

Not much to show for four years of expensive, highly publicized education reform. Obviously, the education establishment is not anxious to draw public attention to their continued failure to deliver academic excellence. The average verbal score for the entire country dropped one point from last year's 431.

At 430 it is 48 points lower than the 1963 high of 478. The national math score improved by one point over last year, bringing it to 474 -- 26 points lower than its 1963 high of 502.

In math, 17 states did better than last year, 24 did poorer, 8 remained the same. Montana declined 11 points; Idaho declined 10 points; Minnesota 9 points; Washington and West Virginia 6 points; Delaware 5 points; Arizona, Nebraska, Ohio and South Dakota 4 points; Iowa, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin 2 points; Connecticut, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wyoming 1 point. Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Vermont and Virginia showed no improvement. Alabama, California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Texas showed a 1-point improvement; Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, and North Dakota improved by 2 points; Kansas, New Hampshire, Tennessee by 3 points; South Carolina by 4 points; Mississippi by 5 points.

The states that showed the most improvement in both verbal and math scores were Mississippi, South Carolina and Alabama, states where most of the

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students who take the SATs attend private schools. The states with the greatest declines were Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Utah, West Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

Minorities Improve

The low point in the SAT scores was reached in 1980 when the national verbal average was 424 and the national math average was 466. The 1987 scores of 430 (verbal) and 476 (math) represent some improvement. What accounts for the improvement is probably the increased number of students attending private schools who take the tests, more test preparation courses being given, and more minority students taking more academic courses. Minorities in general did better on the SATs this year than in 1985. Blacks in 1987 scored 351 (verbal) and 377 (math), a 5-point verbal improvement over 1985 and a 1-point math improvement.

In 1987 white students scored 447 (verbal) and 489 (math) against the national averages of 430 (verbal) and 476 (math). In other words, in 1987 white students did better than black students verbally by 96 points and in math by 112 points.

It should be noted that over the years the reading passages in the verbal test have been revised to eliminate cultural bias. Has this made the tests easier for minorities? The testers say no. While the Education Testing Service has developed an expanded questionnaire to elicit information from minority students, it does not provide information on the contrasting scores of private and public school students. Such information would allow us to know to what extent the higher scores of private schoolers are lifting the overall state averages.

SAT Disaster in Texas

According to the Dallas Times Herald of 9/23/87: "Dallas high school

students scored worse than ever on the Scholastic Aptitude Test this year. . . . Dallas Supt. Linus Wright attributed the drop to more students taking the test. But Education Commissioner William Kirby, concerned that Texas students did poorly despite sweeping education reforms enacted in 1984, called for increases in high school academic standards." In Dallas, the average verbal score was 380, down seven points from last year, and 50 points lower than the national average of 430. The average math score was 417, down 5 points, and 59 points below the national average.

Black students in Texas posted an average verbal score of 341, ten points lower than the national average for blacks, and an average math score of 369, eight points lower than the national average for blacks. Mexican-American students scored an average 371 on verbal and 416 on math, giving clear indication of the extent to which American blacks are being miseducated in Texas schools. When Mexican-Americans can outscore blacks by 30 points verbally and 47 points in math, one can only assume that the education being given black children in Texas schools is so inferior as to be worthless.

Back in 1984 Ross Perot twisted arms to get the Texas legislature to enact the most expensive education reform bill ever passed in Texas. But like all of the reform bills passed in the various state legislatures, the one in Texas failed to tackle the one problem that has caused the academic disaster we have: the way reading is taught in the primary grades. As long as the vast majority of public schools insist on using look-say, sight-vocabulary basal reading programs no academic improvement will be possible.

Houston schools aren't doing much better than those in Dallas. According to the Houston Chronicle of 6/6/87: "Houston schoolchildren fell below the national norms at every grade level in reading on a districtwide achievement test given this spring. . . .

"Ninth-grade students scored lowest on the reading portion of the test, falling one year and seven months below the national norms. Middle school students also scored low, with seventh-graders falling more than one grade level behind the national norms; sixth-grade students were nine months below the norms; and eighth-grade students fell eight months below the norms.

"First- and second-grade students did best, falling only one month below the national norms in reading. . . .

"Superintendent Joan Raymond said she is not concerned about the low scores. She said she is confident that students will show improvement next year. . . . Board President Cathy Minberg also said she is not concerned about the district's poor showing. Minberg said this year's test has established a baseline from which to work." (Dallas Times Herald, 9/23/87; Houston Chronicle, 6/6/87; New York Times, 9/23/87)

Parents Responsible for Education Says Texas Education Commissioner

Texas parents looking for a quick way to increase college entrance exam scores must spend time as well as money to boost their children's chances, Texas Commissioner of Education W.N. Kirby said recently. Billions of dollars for school reform have yet to do the job, said the Commissioner who believes that it is too soon to expect significantly higher test scores.

"Not only in high school, but in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, the thing we can do the fastest is the thing we can do cheapest -- get parents to accept responsibility for the education of their children," Kirby said.

"The most dramatic way we can turn around scores right now is for every parent to say every day to their child how important a good education is," he added. (Amarillo Sunday News-Globe, 9/27/87)

Comment: When the educators fail as miserably as they have in Texas, they throw the onus back on the parents. And when the parents take their educational responsibilities seriously and start home-schooling, the educators harass the parents and press for state regulation of home schools.

Fortunately, in Texas the state education agency suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of District Court Judge Charles Murray, who ruled on 9/4/87 that under Texas law home schools are private schools and are therefore exempt from the compulsory attendance statute. According to the judgment:

"A school-age child residing in the State of Texas who is pursuing under the direction of a parent or parents or one standing in parental authority in or through the child's home in a bona fide (good faith, not a sham or subterfuge) manner a curriculum consisting of books, workbooks, other written materials, including that which appears

Average SAT scores by state for the Class of 1987

Shown are each state's average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for 1987 in verbal and math; the 1986 scores.

State	1987		1986	
	Verbal	Math	Verbal	Math
Alabama	478	515	476	514
Alaska	445	479	445	479
Arizona	463	505	466	509
Arkansas	480	521	482	519
California	424	482	423	481
Colorado	466	514	466	514
Conn.	439	473	440	474
Delaware	440	470	442	475
Florida	423	470	426	469
Georgia	400	440	402	440
Hawaii	404	477	403	477
Idaho	473	502	475	512
Illinois	463	521	466	519
Indiana	415	459	415	459
Iowa	515	574	519	576
Kansas	498	547	498	544
Kentucky	479	519	483	519
Louisiana	473	509	474	507
Maine	433	466	434	466
Maryland	437	477	436	475
Mass.	435	474	436	473
Michigan	459	513	462	514
Minnesota	472	531	482	540
Mississippi	487	521	485	516
Missouri	474	518	476	519
Montana	479	530	485	541
Nebraska	488	545	493	549
Nevada	439	484	445	485
N.H.	450	488	450	485
N. Jersey	425	467	424	465
N. Mexico	484	525	489	527
New York	425	469	427	471
N. Carolina	400	438	399	436
N. Dakota	509	558	508	556
Ohio	455	499	460	503
Oklahoma	486	520	487	521
Oregon	444	484	444	486
Pa.	428	463	429	465
R. Island	433	465	432	466
S. Carolina	397	435	395	431
S. Dakota	513	563	531	567
Tennessee	487	524	486	521
Texas	416	459	419	458
Utah	503	540	506	541
Vermont	440	474	442	474
Virginia	434	473	435	473
Wash.	455	496	461	502
W. Virginia	458	496	462	502
Wisconsin	475	534	478	536
Wyoming	483	533	484	534

Dallas Times Herald

on an electronic screen of either a computer or video tape monitor, or any combination of the preceding, from either (1) of a private or parochial school which exists apart from the child's home or (2) which has been developed or obtained from any source, said curriculum designed to meet basic education goals of reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics and a study of good citizenship, is in attendance upon a private or parochial school within the meaning of Section 21.033(a)(1) of the Texas Education Code and exempt from the requirements of compulsory attendance at a public school."

This judgment has made Texas, for the time being, the freest state for home schoolers in the Union.

Dumbing Down America

Perhaps there is no better evidence to be found documenting the dumbing down process that has been taking place in American education than the SAT Score Distributions chart released by the Education Testing Service.

The chart tells us, for example, that in 1972, 2,817 students achieved a verbal score of 750 to 800, the highest possible score. In 1987 only 1,363 students achieved that score.

In 1972 a total of 116,630 students achieved verbal scores between 600 and 800. In 1987 only 88,000 achieved that score.

In 1972 a total of 71,084 scored between 200 and 249 in the verbal test, the lowest possible score. In 1987 the number of students scoring in that lowest category were 123,470.

And so the smart have become fewer, and the dumb have become dumber.

It should be noted that the total number of students who took the test in 1972 was 1,022,680; in 1987, 1,080,426.

Suicides Plague Virginia High School

Three Annandale High School seniors have committed suicide since classes began in September. Annandale is a suburb of Washington, D.C., in North Virginia's Fairfax County, one of the most affluent counties in the U.S. The three suicides of male seniors, the last of whom died early 10/26/87 of a gunshot wound, are the only ones so far this school year in the county schools, according to spokeswoman Dolores Bohlen.

The Fairfax County school system, with 131,000 students, generally has no more than half a dozen suicides a year. (Sic!)

In addition to the suicides of Eric Ragland on Sept. 17, Shane Benson on Sept. 30 and William Wakefield on Oct. 26, officials said the death of another senior in an automobile accident this summer and the accidental carbon monoxide death of a former student early in September left students shaken.

School officials said that the three youths who died recently did not know each other well, and their suicides apparently were not related. No reasons were given for the students' deaths. Experts caution about trying to attribute suicide to a particular motive.

Friends of the third teen-ager who committed suicide said they were particularly surprised at Billy Wakefield's death. After Ragland committed suicide, Wakefield told friends he would be devastated if any of them committed suicide, according to friends who have known him since kindergarten.

"He was really against suicide," said Jason Reagan. "A week ago, he said he would never commit suicide. Never."

All three seniors were 17 years old.

According to Myra Herbert, coordinator of the school system's suicide prevention program, the students at the

2,300-pupil high school are "a very ordinary bunch of American kids."

Last year, two students from the school drove to Pennsylvania and committed suicide together. Another student killed himself a week later.

Though health workers believe acute depression, stress and an impulsive approach may contribute to suicide, nobody really knows what specific troubles the Annandale youths may have had. (Washington Post, 10/28/87; Fairfax Journal, 10/29/87; AP, 10/29/87)

Comment: In case you missed our views on teen suicide, we refer you to our Feb. 1987 issue, Letter # 6, in which we wrote at length on the subject.

Chicago Teen Shot in School

A 15-year-old student at DuSable High School in Chicago's South Side, was fatally shot in school in what was described as a "street gang" conflict. The incident occurred on or about 10/15/87.

The student, Dartagnan Young, who was shot in the chest in a hallway as he walked between morning classes, died soon after being taken to the hospital. A 16-year-old boy, said to be responsible for the shooting, was taken into custody by the police.

According to Robert Saigh, a school-board spokesman, DuSable High School is in a "poverty-stricken and high-crime area," but the school has "adequate security." As a result of the shooting security will be increased.

Since DuSable High School is one of four Chicago city schools to have a health clinic on the premises, students affected by the shooting have had the opportunity to seek counseling at the clinic, Mr. Saigh said. (Educ. Wk. 10/21/87)

Teen Violence Worse Than Ever

Police in Tucson, Arizona, report that 54 juveniles were arrested for sex crimes in year ending July 1, up from 26 in the previous year. Adults arrested for similar crimes also rose 20% to 150. Police blame changing values, "where it's almost okay to hurt other people."

In Washington, D.C., Wendell Heard, 17, was stabbed to death outside a go-go club. The stabbing renewed calls for greater controls on clubs frequented by teenagers. The murder was the latest in a series of violent acts.

In Baltimore, Maryland, a grand jury reported that half of the city's male high school students surveyed have carried handguns. 160% of the students know someone who had been shot, threatened, or robbed in school in the last 6 months.

In Jackson, Mississippi, police have revamped their special 6-officer unit set up to deal with gang violence. Apparently, the unit was spending too much time reacting to gang violence rather than seeking ways to stop it. It is estimated that there are about 760 gang members in Jackson. (Above items from USA Today, 11/3/87)

In Memphis, Tennessee, Nia Malika Davis, a 13-year-old student, stabbed a classmate for picking on her. The incident occurred on a school bus at 7:50 a.m. The victim, 13-year-old Classic Williams, was stabbed twice in the shoulder with a 6½-inch steak knife. Both girls are students at Spring Hill Elementary School in Memphis.

In September, a similar incident occurred at Hamilton Junior High where a 9th grade girl was stabbed by another girl following a longstanding argument.

In late October, a 14-year-old student at Treadwell Junior High School was charged with aggravated assault after putting a pistol to the head of another student during a fight.

In the 1986-87 school year, officials confiscated nearly 400 guns, knives and other weapons from students, said Charles Irvine, director of the pupil services center. Irvine said a new school policy calls for a one-year suspension of any student caught with a weapon. (Memphis Commercial Appeal, 11/4/87)

Inside the Underclass in Baltimore

A graphic picture of what it's like to live in the Baltimore underclass was given by reporter Barry Cooper in the May 1986 issue of Spin magazine. It should be remembered that all of these people have had the benefit of a public education. Mr. Cooper writes:

"In Baltimore, 14- and 15-year-old boys are killing each other on rundown basketball courts, in high school gyms, in poolrooms, on row-house porches, in garbage-strewn back alleys. In the last 14 months there have been almost 20 murders of young kids by other kids. . . .

"The situation here reminds me of the Harlem I grew up in during the early '70s. King Heroin reigned then. You had to worry about junkies walking up behind you and sticking a gun in your back. . . . You felt the fear in Harlem, but you knew the knuckleheads would examine all options before pulling the trigger.

"Baltimore is different. There are no options to weigh. I want mine, I want it now, and I'll get it any way possible. The boys here live from a whisper to a scream, no middle ground, no gray. Just pull the trigger. . . .

"Tommy says it's easy to get a gun, as simple as going to any corner and asking for it. . . . 'A .22 will run you no more than \$30. A .357 or a .38 automatic, no more than \$75. Nine-millimeters and Uzis go for about \$130. . . .'

"Some of the killings, the boys say, are drug related. Usually, when a kid is trying to sell on another kid's corner, he will die. Or if a kid is abusing the supply of heroin or cocaine

he is selling, the older supplier will hire another boy, preferably 15 or younger, to kill him. . . . Also, if a kid is selling bad drugs, substituting Isotol or Midol -- used to relieve menstrual cramps -- for real cocaine, or rat poison for heroin, he is asking for a funeral.

"The other murders are status killings; murder brings you big respect on the street.

"You're the man when you kill somebody.' . . .

"On the streets in Baltimore, manhood is realized much by knocking out a human life as it is by knocking up a 14-year-old girl, which is another part of the problem: babies making babies, babies raising babies.

"In 1985, Baltimore led the nation in teenage pregnancies, with a whopping 3,000. Most of the teens committing the murders have parents barely 14 or 15 years older than they are. Many of their parents lack employment, direction, and guidance themselves. They are links in an unbroken, two-and-three generation chain of welfare dependency. . . .

"Rap music owns the kids in Baltimore; the thump of the drum computer has them locked in a psychological vise. All of the major radio stations are forced to play rap, even though it conflicts with their mainstream formats. Rap pours out of the boom boxes, out of the cars, out of the mouths of kids and into the streets like a flood, a tidal wave of power. The big beat makes you weak, making the city topsy-turvy.

"Rap is so immediate in Baltimore because it's the voice of the kids. . . . When Schoolly-D says, 'Put my pistol up against his head, I said you sucker-ass nigga, I should shoot you dead,' he validates the actions of the trigger-happy teen.

"The cold, damp dance floor -- which thickens its numbers from 50 to 100 kids in less than 20 minutes looks like a kiddie-porn parade. The 'Needle' segues to 'Rock the Bells' -- part of

rap's adhesive is the seamless transition, the sense of continuum, living with the beat forever."

Comment: While middle-class youths in the suburbs are killing themselves, the underclass youths in the inner cities are killing each other. All have attended public schools, and all, to some degree, have been academically, spiritually, and morally crippled by the system. Of course, the educators refuse to take responsibility for the products of their education. The blame is forever placed on "society" or parents or heredity, and unfortunately too many parents accept the blame, for they themselves are the victims of public education, but hardly know it.

Functional illiteracy is rife among the underclass. These are young adults who have spent from eight to twelve years in public school and have emerged at the end of the process knowing nothing. Any private enterprise that produced such staggering failure would have gone under a long time ago. But a government monopoly, unless dismantled by the taxpayer, can last forever.

Satanism Sweeping Teen Subculture

The popularity of "speed metal" music among teenagers is sweeping many of them into a nihilist subculture where the music evokes satanic imagery, diabolical methods of torture and disembowelment. The lyrics of a song entitled "Necrophobic" include such lines as, "Ripping apart, severing flesh, gouging eyes, tearing limb from limb."

According to U.S. News and World Report of 9/7/87, speed metal "is a deliberately cacophonous, turbocharged merger of feedback-laden electric-guitar riffs and the speed-freak drum-beat of classic Sex Pistols punk." Such music may be unlistenable to parents, but teenagers are buying these albums by the millions.

The primary themes of speed metal music are teenage nihilism, violent sex, and suicide. One of the most popular of the speed metal groups is Motley Crue, whose album "Girls, Girls, Girls"

has sold 2 million copies. Its lyrics include: "Friday night and I need a fight. My motorcycle and a switchblade knife, but what I need to make me tight are girls, girls, girls." Another popular group is Bon Jovi, whose album "Slippery When Wet" has sold 12.5 million copies.

Violence is there everytime a speed-metal band plays in front of an audience. At Medusa's, a Chicago club, the young audience grows wilder, often holding hands in the devil's horn salute, as the music plays on. On the floor beside the stage, the boys begin to "mosh," slamming shoulder to shoulder with abandon. And some engage in a bizarre ritual called "stage diving," climbing up on top of each other to get on stage, then hurling themselves into the mass of heads below.

Where is all of this going to lead? We hope it leads to more and more parents putting their children in Christian schools or home schools -- to keep them out of America's increasingly corrupted, violent and depraved teenage culture.

N.Y. State Wants Private Industry to Solve Illiteracy Problem

A state legislative panel has called on private industry to mount a campaign to fight the growing problem of adult illiteracy in New York state or accept an increasingly illiterate workforce.

The state Legislative Commission on Public-Private Cooperation said recent efforts by the state Education Department to reduce adult illiteracy have failed and that the problem is larger than state officials are estimating.

The commission placed the number of functionally illiterate adults in New York at 2.8 million and said that number will increase by 15 percent to about 3.3 million by 1992 if nothing is done.

As things now stand, the commission said, one out of five adults in New York state is functionally illiterate.

"A large population of unskilled workers is a tremendous roadblock to any state's plans for effective economic development," the commission said in its report.

It added, "the private sector must step up its efforts and take the leading role in addressing the problems of adult illiteracy."

The commission said private companies can help people read better in a number of ways, from donating money, meeting rooms and instructors for literacy training classes to participating in regional education programs.

Several private companies and the state's most influential business lobby, the Business Council, have said they want to become more involved in the state's public education system with an eye toward influencing the schooling the workforce in the 1990s and beyond is now receiving. (Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, 10/21/87)

Comment: What prevents the legislators and businessmen from knowing the true cause of functional illiteracy -- the rotten look-say method of teaching reading in the public schools -- is the smokescreen put up by the educators, a smokescreen of lies, misinformation, and hypocrisy, that prevents the truth from getting through or being believed when it does get through. Neither the legislators nor the businessmen want to believe that the educators are deliberately miseducating American children. But until they do, the situation will only grow worse.

Illiteracy Grows in California

Almost one in six adults in California is "functionally illiterate," and most of those who can't read are native English-speakers who went to school in the U.S., according to a new study by the state Department of Education.

The report says 3.1 million Californians can't read well enough to understand advertising in newspapers, simple recipes or job applications.

Nationally, 15 percent of young adults are "semi-literate," defined as reading below an eighth-grade level, according to a 1986 U.S. Dept. of Education study. The California report calls its estimate of the number of adults who have trouble reading "extremely conservative," and says the problem is "an enormous challenge to the educational system."

The research was conducted by SRA Associates, a Sacramento consulting firm. Among the findings:

The largest group of illiterates is white. More than 43 percent of the group are white, and 56 percent were U.S.-born.

The highest illiteracy rates are among minorities: 28.2 percent of Asians, 26.5 percent of blacks, 23.9 percent of Latinos.

Forty-one percent of adult illiterates live in metropolitan areas; 35 percent are in their 20s and 30s.

"Is the report an indictment of the school system?" says Lynda Smith, a consultant on adult literacy. "Yes, inasmuch as schools are part of the community. But part of the problem is also an indictment of the culture."

There are complicated social and economic reasons why some students "slip through the cracks," she says. Many adults who can't read left school to work. Truancy laws were not enforced seriously, and children with learning disabilities frequently left school because of a lack of special programs. (Quincy Patriot Ledger, 11/18/87)

Comment: Despite overwhelming evidence that the road to functional illiteracy starts in the first-grade when children are taught to read by the discredited and much-criticized look-say method, literacy "consultants" still insist on putting the blame on society or the victims. Until enough people are willing to face the reality of widespread educational malpractice in our public schools, American literacy will continue to decline and millions of children will be denied the reading skills they expected to learn when they entered school.