

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."

1989:

Another Disastrous Year for the SATs

The SAT scores of 1989 again confirm that the academic performance of American college-bound students continues to decline. The national average verbal score fell one point to 427, while the math score remained static at 476. In 1963 the average verbal score was 478, the math score was 502.

Since 1985 the average verbal score in South Dakota has declined an astonishing 36 points! Wyoming registered a decline of 33 points in that period, Montana a decline of 23 points, Arizona down 21 points, Oklahoma down 18 points; Mississippi and Washington down 17 points, Colorado 15 points, Kentucky 14 points, North Dakota 13 points, Utah 12 points; Arkansas and Nebraska 10 points; Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan and Ohio 9 points; New York 8 points; Indiana and Minnesota 7 points; Illinois and Vermont 6 points; Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Virginia 5 points; Missouri and Texas 4 points; Alaska, District of Columbia, Indiana, New Hampshire and Tennessee 3 points; California, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey 2 points; Florida, Maine, Maryland, New Mexico, North Carolina and Oregon 1 point. Louisiana, Rhode Island and Wisconsin registered no change.

Only four states showed an improvement: South Carolina by 8 points, Hawaii 5 points, Georgia 3 points, and Alabama 1 point. Despite South Carolina's improvement, its 1989 verbal score of 399 is the second lowest among the states. Georgia, at 402, is the third lowest. North Carolina at 397 is now at the bottom.

Mixed Results in Math

In math the results were quite mixed. From 1985 to 1989, 30 states registered declines in math performance; four states have remained static; and only 16 states and the District of Columbia have shown improvement. South Dakota, which led the decline in verbal scores, was also the downhill leader in math, registering a whopping decline of 32 points in that 4-year period. Montana followed with a decline of 24 points. Next came Wyoming, down 23 points; then Washington, down 17 points; followed by West Virginia, down 16 points; Colorado 13 points; Arizona and Mississippi 12 points; Idaho and Kentucky 10 points; Oklahoma 9 points, Ohio 7 points, Vermont 8 points; Utah, Delaware and

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Nebraska 6 points; South Carolina, Kansas and Minnesota 5 points; New Hampshire and Iowa 4 points; Michigan 3 points; Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania 2 points; Virginia, North Dakota and Indiana 1 point.

Maine, Missouri, Oregon and Rhode Island showed no improvement, while Massachusetts gained 1 point; Wisconsin and Tennessee gained 2 points; Texas and Alaska 3 points; North Carolina, California and Florida 4 points; District of Columbia and Maryland 5 points; Hawaii 6 points; Alabama, Georgia, Nevada and New Jersey 7 points; Louisiana 10 points, and New Mexico 11 points.

Why did more states do better in math than in verbal skills? The answer may be that reading instruction in American schools is still dominated by look-say, whole-word teaching techniques, while in math we have seen the inroads of better textbooks by John Saxon, whose publishing company now turns out a million books a year.

The Asian Equation

Another factor may be the growing number of Asian-Americans attending U.S. high schools. In 1985, 40,044 Asian-Americans took the SAT. In 1989 that number was up to 68,254. As a group, 74 percent of them in 1989 had four or more years of math, and their average math score was the highest of any ethnic group, 525, 49 points higher than the national average of 476, and 139 points higher than the 386 scored by blacks.

In addition, Asian-Americans, 40 percent of whom originally spoke a foreign language, scored 409 on the verbal test, 63 points higher than blacks whose native language is English. Clearly, Asian-American students, who scored 34 points higher in math than white Americans and did better verbally than American Indians, blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and other hispanics, are in a

position to benefit most from the opportunities offered by our increasingly technological economy.

In all, a total of 1,088,223 students from the Class of 1989 took the SAT, a 4 percent decline from last year, reflecting a drop in the number of students graduating from American secondary schools.

Teachers Help Students Cheat On Achievement Tests

Educators, desperate to demonstrate excellence, are helping students cheat on standardized tests, contributing to scores in 48 states that are misleadingly "above average," a report charges.

At the same time, test security in virtually all states remains "totally inadequate," according to "The Lake Wobegon Report: How Public Educators Cheat on Achievement Tests."

The cheating, which includes teachers and principals coaching students on test questions, giving students more than the allotted time to take tests, and even altering answer sheets, is contributing to inflated scores.

All but two states -- Louisiana and Arizona -- are reporting "above average" or inflated scores, according to the 50-state survey. Eighty-three percent of 5,143 elementary school districts and 73 percent of 4,501 secondary school districts surveyed are reporting standardized achievement test scores above national norms.

The study was conducted by Friends of Education, an educational watchdog group headed by an Albuquerque, N.M., physician, John Jacob Cannell. It was funded by a \$25,000 grant from the Kettering Family Foundation in Dayton, Ohio.

Dr. Cannell made headlines in November 1987 with a report documenting

Average SAT® Scores by State, 1979, 1984–1989

State	1979		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988		1989		% Graduates Taking SAT*
	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	
Alabama	447	479	467	503	481	513	476	514	478	515	480	520	482	520	8
Alaska	452	478	443	471	446	477	445	479	445	479	441	475	443	480	42
Arizona	485	524	469	509	473	512	486	509	463	505	455	500	452	500	23
Arkansas	478	513	482	521	481	517	482	519	480	521	479	516	471	515	7
California	428	473	421	476	424	480	423	481	424	482	424	484	422	484	44
Colorado	469	513	468	514	473	521	466	514	466	514	460	511	458	508	29
Connecticut	435	465	436	468	440	475	440	474	439	473	436	472	435	473	75
Delaware	433	468	433	469	444	474	442	475	440	470	433	466	435	468	60
District of Columbia	381	401	397	426	410	434	413	439	407	435	405	434	407	439	67
Florida	426	464	423	467	421	463	426	469	423	470	422	468	420	467	47
Georgia	390	424	392	430	399	438	402	440	400	440	404	444	402	445	59
Hawaii	396	467	395	474	401	476	403	477	404	477	408	480	406	482	52
Idaho	480	518	480	512	472	510	475	512	473	502	467	501	465	500	17
Illinois	462	511	463	518	468	522	466	519	463	521	464	520	462	520	17
Indiana	412	455	410	454	415	460	415	459	415	459	412	458	412	459	55
Iowa	518	567	519	570	521	576	519	576	515	574	513	577	512	572	5
Kansas	498	541	502	549	504	550	498	544	498	547	494	541	495	545	10
Kentucky	472	510	479	518	491	529	483	519	479	519	475	515	477	519	10
Louisiana	460	495	472	508	473	503	474	507	473	509	476	513	473	513	9
Maine	430	468	429	463	432	466	434	466	433	466	430	466	431	466	59
Maryland	426	464	429	468	435	475	436	475	437	477	433	475	434	480	60
Massachusetts	428	463	429	467	434	472	436	473	435	474	432	474	432	473	72
Michigan	456	508	461	515	467	517	462	514	459	513	457	513	458	514	12
Minnesota	497	549	481	539	481	537	482	540	472	531	470	531	474	532	15
Mississippi	468	497	480	512	489	528	485	516	487	521	482	519	472	516	4
Missouri	461	504	469	512	475	518	476	519	474	518	471	519	471	518	13
Montana	487	541	490	544	492	547	485	541	479	530	471	529	469	523	20

*Based on number of high school graduates in 1989 as projected by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, and number of students in the Class of 1989 who took the SAT.

Average SAT® Scores by State, 1979, 1984–1989

State	1979		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988		1989		% Graduates Taking SAT*
	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	
Nebraska	487	538	493	548	497	549	493	549	488	545	487	545	487	543	10
Nevada	449	486	442	489	441	480	445	485	439	484	440	486	439	487	23
New Hampshire	444	483	448	483	450	489	450	485	450	488	446	487	447	485	66
New Jersey	419	452	418	458	425	464	424	465	425	467	424	469	423	471	67
New Mexico	486	521	487	527	484	521	489	527	484	525	478	524	483	532	11
New York	426	469	424	470	427	473	427	471	425	469	420	469	419	471	69
North Carolina	393	426	395	432	398	435	399	436	400	438	401	440	397	439	57
North Dakota	525	570	500	554	513	568	508	556	509	558	498	555	500	567	5
Ohio	457	502	460	508	460	504	460	503	455	499	452	499	451	497	23
Oklahoma	486	522	484	525	497	531	487	521	466	520	483	522	479	522	8
Oregon	434	466	435	472	444	484	444	486	444	484	441	482	443	484	49
Pennsylvania	426	464	425	462	428	465	429	465	428	463	424	462	423	463	63
Rhode Island	424	459	424	461	429	466	432	466	433	465	431	469	429	466	63
South Carolina	376	407	384	419	391	424	395	431	397	435	400	438	399	439	55
South Dakota	531	570	520	566	534	575	531	567	513	563	511	559	498	543	6
Tennessee	472	510	486	523	489	521	486	521	487	524	485	524	486	523	12
Texas	418	456	413	453	419	459	419	458	416	459	417	462	415	462	43
Utah	507	538	503	542	511	543	506	541	503	540	498	536	499	537	5
Vermont	434	472	437	470	441	478	442	474	440	474	437	472	435	470	63
Virginia	426	461	428	466	435	473	435	473	434	473	430	472	430	472	59
Washington	481	525	463	505	465	508	461	502	455	496	448	494	448	491	39
West Virginia	461	494	466	510	468	507	462	502	458	496	451	496	448	491	15
Wisconsin	476	535	475	532	477	534	478	536	475	534	473	534	477	536	12
Wyoming	488	532	489	545	495	539	484	534	483	533	474	527	462	516	14

*Based on number of high school graduates in 1989 as projected by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, and number of students in the Class of 1989 who took the SAT.

that students were scoring "above average" on standardized tests in all 50 states at that time.

That report asserted that scores on such "norm-referenced" tests -- designed so that only half those taking it should score above the 50th percentile -- were artificially high largely because the norms were not being updated often enough by test publishers.

The resulting exaggerated picture of student achievement became labeled the "Lake Wobegon Effect," after author Garrison Keillor's mythical Minnesota town where "all the children are above average."

The tests, taken by students in all 50 states, include the California Achievement Test, the Stanford Achievement Test, the Metropolitan Achievement Test, the Science Research Associates Test, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Many states have heaped on new standardized test requirements during the 1980s as part of the drive for higher school standards. Teachers, principals and school administrators have found themselves under pressure to make their schools, and themselves, look better through higher scores.

Dr. Cannell also placed an ad in Education Week inviting educators to describe cases of test cheating. He received more than 300 letters from present and former teachers and school administrators admitting that they or colleagues had tampered with tests or helped students improperly. All demanded anonymity.

One Tennessee teacher wrote that teachers in his school "spent the morning teaching the test and the afternoon giving it."

In a number of states, Dr. Cannell wrote, scores are "much higher than any other indicators which often correlate with school achievement."

Sixty-five percent of Georgia's second-graders, for example, scored above average on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and 75 percent of Kentucky's third-graders scored above national norms on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, "despite the fact that Georgia and Kentucky have among the lowest literacy rates, lowest college entrance scores and lowest Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery scores in the nation." (The Dallas Morning News, 9/9/89)

Comment:

The testing scandal is just another symptom of the corruption and dishonesty that pervade public education. The government monopoly schools cannot deliver the academic excellence the public wants, and so deception has become a way of life for the public educator. Honest educators are trapped in a system where honesty can cost you your career. Since the system is impervious to reform, the only solution is to break up the government monopoly and privatize schooling. But until we have leaders bold enough to call for privatization, it will not happen.

Jersey City Schools Taken Over by State

The state of New Jersey has seized control of Jersey City's public schools, on the grounds that "total educational failure" in the state's second largest city has deprived its 28,000 students of their constitutional right to a "thorough and efficient education."

The seizure is the culmination of a state review that began in March 1984 and led to the State Education Department charging in May 1988 that Jersey City's schools were crippled by political patronage and nepotism, weak administration and management, fiscal irregularities, indifference to school repair and tolerance of poor educational achievement of its students.

This is New Jersey's first use of a new law that permits the state to take control of a failing school district. The State Board of Education, in a 15-to-0 vote, ordered the seizure, thereby disbanding the local nine-member school board and abolishing the positions of its superintendent, deputy superintendent, and assistant superintendents in charge of curriculum, business, finance, and personnel.

The order also created the powerful post of state superintendent to operate the district with total authority for five years. Elena J. Scambio, the 42-year-old Superintendent of Schools in Essex County, was appointed to the \$100,000-a-year job as state superintendent.

Gov. Thomas H. Kean called the takeover order a "welcome, precedent-setting step."

"We could ill afford even a single day more with the children of New Jersey's second largest city subjected to educational child abuse," he said. "Now the community can put politics and patronage aside, and get on with the business of learning."

Black and Hispanic students now comprise 78 percent of Jersey City's public school enrollment, and 65 percent of the 28,000 students receive some form of compensatory or bilingual courses.

In a ruling last July that cleared the way for the takeover order, a state administrative law judge, Kenneth Springer, said the system's "learning environment is polluted with the insidious message that school officials lack confidence in the children's abilities."

To stop City Hall interference in the school system, the takeover law denies local politicians any meaningful role for 5 years. It provides for creation of a 15-member school board after 60 days. But its powers will be only advisory. And Dr. Saul Cooperman, the State Education Commissioner, will appoint 13 members to the board and local officials will appoint two members.

Ms. Scambio's four-point improvement plan includes strengthening management and leadership at the school level, drafting the next budget and preparing an aggressive plan for construction of new schools and renovation and maintenance of existing ones. (N.Y. Times, 10/5/89)

Comment:

Centralized state control is one of the strategies now being offered to cure the ills of public education. The education establishment, which has mastered the art of deception with much sophisticated practice, doesn't like to be embarrassed by the blatant and crude corruption in local school districts. It makes the whole idea of government education look bad. So the clean-up job will be started with a burst of vigor which will then decelerate to the usual bureaucratic shuffle.

What is interesting about New Jersey is that it spends more money on education per pupil than any other state in the nation, including Alaska. New Jersey spends \$7,571 per pupil as opposed to the national average of \$4,509. These are figures provided by NEA Research. Meanwhile, we shall have to wait five years to see how well the state succeeds in Jersey City.

Texas Court Rules Schools In State Are Illegally Financed

The Texas Supreme Court ruled unanimously on 10/2/89 that the state's system for financing public schools is unconstitutional because of "glaring disparities" between what rich and poor school districts spend on education.

The court's 9-to-0 decision found that this inequity violates a provision of the Texas Constitution requiring the State Legislature to support and maintain "an efficient system" for the "general diffusion of knowledge."

The court did not prescribe a specific remedy for the problem, but it

ordered the legislature to change the way the nation's second-largest public school system, after California, is financed. The court set a deadline of May 1.

Gov. Bill Clements, who had feared that the court would mandate remedies for school financing, welcomed the ruling, saying, "I am extremely pleased that this is back in the hands of the Legislature where it belongs."

Eventually, Texas may have to enact a state income tax, said public finance and education experts.

Texas schools receive most of their money from property taxes levied by each of the state's 1,034 independent school districts. The state and Federal governments supplement these funds.

The ruling is the result of a five-year-old suit brought against various state agencies by 68 school districts in property-poor areas. In the state's 100 poorest school districts, the average spending per pupil is less than \$3,000 a year, while in the 100 richest districts the average is more than \$7,000. (N.Y. Times, 10/3/89)

Comment:

There are probably as many functional illiterates coming out of the rich schools in Texas as out of the poor ones. Equity in public-school financing does not address the problem of educational malpractice. The court did not determine what "an efficient system for the general diffusion of knowledge" costs. It may indeed cost no more than \$3,000 a year per pupil. There are plenty of church schools that charge less than \$3,000 a year in tuition and provide a good education.

Affluent schools spend money on things that have nothing to do with education. Until the courts can determine what a good education is and can put a price tag on it, their rulings will be mere exercises in fantasy. But the resultant higher taxes will be no fantasy to the taxpayer.

Witches Get Tax-Exemption In Rhode Island

A coven of witches has won tax exempt status in Rhode Island as a religious group.

"With this ruling, we witches will definitely be able to come out of the closet and take our place in society," said the coven's high priestess, Joyce Siegrist, also known as Lady Genevieve.

Tax Administrator R. Gary Clark said he overturned the state's initial ruling, that the Rosegate Coven did not qualify for a sales tax exemption, because it proved on appeal that it met the guidelines for church groups as set by a 1986 Rhode Island Supreme Court ruling. (Idaho Statesman, 8/9/89)

1 in 8 U.S. Children Mentally Ill

At least 7.5 million American children -- or about one in eight -- suffer from diagnosable mental disorders, but most go untreated because their problems aren't recognized by parents, teachers or even physicians, a committee of the Institute of Medicine said Wednesday.

The panel of 19 university scientists, primarily psychiatrists, recommended that the National Institute of Mental Health mount a "national plan" to increase federal funding for child mental health research four-fold during a five-year period -- from around \$52 million a year to nearly \$200 million.

"The costs of these disorders are enormous," said Dr. James F. Leckman, a Yale University psychiatrist who chaired the committee.

Dr. Leckman and other members of the committee said the extent of adolescent and childhood mental illness is not appreciated by the people likely to encounter it first, including pediatricians.

In one study, children who were treated at a health maintenance organization were studied by psychiatrists,

who later compared their observations with those of pediatricians treating the same children. The pediatricians estimated that 5 percent of the children were mentally ill, while the psychiatrists placed the figure at 20 percent. (The Morning News Tribune, 6/8/89)

Comment:

We have long believed that the public schools are driving the children crazy. Death education, lifeboat survival games, look-say reading instruction, nuclear holocaust studies, sensitivity training, sex ed, peer pressure, situational ethics are enough to drive an adult crazy, let alone a child. Also, normal children labeled LD (learning disabled) by educator quacks and subjected to a battery of psych tests, are committed to Special Ed, where "education" often becomes a nightmare.

In addition, most psychiatrists are secular humanist witch doctors with a vested interest in finding more and more "sick" children. The larger the number, the more federal research money will be channeled their way. That more and more children in our society are being victimized by immoral parents, broken homes, pornography, and educational malpractice goes without saying. But we doubt that humanist psychiatrists know how to restore the soul in a broken child.

Driver's License: Right or Privilege?

In last month's story about the dropout in West Virginia whose driver's license was taken away we asked: "since when is a driver's license a privilege and not a right?" We got an answer from Franklin Sanders, publisher of The Moneychanger. He writes:

"Since it arrived on the scene in the 1930s. Legally, a license is a 'permission to perform an act that is

otherwise unlawful.' Get it? The state has transformed your right to travel from one place to another into a privilege if you use an automobile. Please find in any state constitution's bill of rights the 'right to a driver's license.' It's not there, because the driver's license is a statutory creation.

"Ever heard of a horse-riding license? A walking license? A low-crawling license? A wagon driver's license?

"Please understand the importance of this concept, as it is all-embracing, and has been used throughout our land to transform common law rights into state-granted privileges. You have a common law right to travel from place to place by any conveyance you please, so long as you harm no one in the process (commit no tortious act).

"Is the difference important? Well, consider the list of licenses: marriage licenses, business licenses, cosmetology licenses, physician's licenses, psychologist's licenses, teacher licenses (certification) . . .

"Likewise, the creator has a right in his creation, and a right to control it. The state creates, the state controls. . . . You dance to the tune, you pay the piper. You get the license, you submit to control. It's that simple." (The Moneychanger, Box 341753, Memphis, TN 38184)

Comment:

We sadly admit that Mr. Sanders is right. Which means that when state laws require a homeschooling parent to be certified, it means that teaching your own child at home is a privilege, not a right. We believe that it is not only a right, but an unalienable right. Which puts us on a collision course with the state. But who ever said it would be easy regaining educational freedom?