

Why Homeschooling Is Important Today

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

First, I would like to ask how many of you are new homeschoolers? How many have been homeschooling for over a year? How many of you have gone into homeschooling primarily for religious reasons? How many for academic reasons? How many for other reasons, such as, improving family life, family convenience, etc.?

Regardless of your reasons, you are all revolutionaries, for you have all done one thing that is truly anathema to the establishment. You've told them that you don't need them, that you can educate your children without their help.

Back in the 1970's, when it became obvious to me that the schools were not teaching children to read properly and were indeed causing reading disability and dyslexia, I decided to produce a reading program that would make it possible for any parent to teach their children to read properly at home. I made the program as easy as possible to use, because parents had been so intimidated by the educators, that most parents considered themselves totally incompetent in matters of formal teaching.

But with my Alpha-Phonics program, thousands of parents found that they could do a much better job than the professional educators, even though they hadn't been to a teachers college or taken a course in reading instruction. In fact, if they had taken such a course, they would not know how to teach a child to read. They would only know how to make a child dyslexic.

The importance of the homeschool movement is that you homeschoolers have proven that we really don't need that multi-billion-dollar government school system in order to produce a literate population.

Now you might ask, if Alpha-Phonics works so well with homeschoolers, why don't the public schools adopt it? They won't adopt it because it does not fit into their agenda for education. The present agenda being promoted by the government schools today is an agenda that was formulated early in the last century. Its purpose is to prepare Americans for a socialist system. Now, with the rise of our free-market economy and the information age, you might assume that that agenda has been changed? Unfortunately it hasn't. In fact it has been intensified and speeded up. The educators are still hell bent on creating a controlled society in which collectivist values will replace the values of individualism.

Here's what a reporter wrote back in 1932 after attending a meeting of the National Education Association's school superintendents department in Washington, D.C.:

Here in the very citadel of capitalism this group of outstanding spokesmen of American education talked a remarkably strong brand of socialism.

And in 1934, the American Historical Association's Commission on the Social Studies reported:

The report makes it clear that two social philosophies are now struggling for supremacy: individualism, with its attending capitalism and classism, and collectivism, with planned economy and mass rights. Believing that present trends indicate the victory of the latter the Commission on the Social Studies offers a comprehensive blueprint by which education may prepare to meet the demands of a collectivist social order without submerging the individual as a helpless victim of bureaucratic control.

Part of the planned revision of the school curriculum required a shift in emphasis away from high literacy to an emphasis on socialization. And it was John Dewey who led the way. In a key essay he wrote in 1898, *The Primary School Fetish*, he said:

There is ... a false educational god whose idolators 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

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 proposed a radical change in the way reading was to be taught that would facilitate the shift away from high literacy to social activities. But he issued a warning:

Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction. What is needed is the first place, is that there should be a full and frank statement of conviction with regard to the matter from physiologists and psychologists and from those school administrators who are conscious of the evils of the present regime ... After such schools have worked out carefully and definitely the subject matter of a new curriculum—finding the right place for language-studies and placing them in their right perspective—the problem of the more general educational reform will be immensely simplified and facilitated.

And so American educators embarked on a long-range program of dumbing down America by the use of new methods of teaching reading based on whole-word instruction. The result was the replacement of intensive phonics instruction with Dick and Jane and other similar programs, requiring children to memorize sight vocabularies before being taught any letter sounds.

Now, the memorization of a sight vocabulary causes dyslexia. This is how it works.

When a child memorizes a sight vocabulary he develops a holistic reflex, that is, the automatic habit of looking at our printed English words as whole configurations, like Chinese characters. And because he has acquired this holistic habit, he cannot see the phonetic structure of the word. Why? Because he has not been drilled in the letter sounds and the vowel-consonant combinations. Such drill is needed in order to create a phonetic reflex. And it is only when you have a phonetic reflex that you can automatically see the phonetic structure of the printed word. And what is dyslexia? The inability to see the phonetic structure of the printed word.

Thus, reading programs that force children to memorize sight vocabularies cause dyslexia. Of course, every teacher of reading will claim that he or she also teaches phonics. But they do not teach intensive systematic phonics. What they give the child is phonetic information which is parked somewhere in the brain to be used by the child if he or she is willing to make the effort. In other words, that information is not recalled automatically. It must be dredged up with considerable work, and therefore it is rarely used. A child would prefer to guess or simply skip a word than try to figure it out using phonetic clues. Besides, educators praise kids who substitute words, such as dad for father, pony for horse, etc. That's okay they say, because the child is getting the meaning.

The other day, I hosted a radio talk show and spoke about the reflexes involved in learning to read. A mother called in and told me about her son who was having trouble learning to read in school. She told me that they were using both a phonics program and a sight program at the same time. I explained to her why her child was having a problem. The school was trying to instill two mutually exclusive reflexes at the same time, which his brain could not deal with. Ivan Pavlov, the great Russian psychologist, had proven, through his famous experiments on dogs in the 1920s, that when you impose two conflicting, or mutually exclusive, reflexes on the animal, you get a nervous breakdown, or behavioral disorganization. And that's what happens when you do the same thing to a human being.

Let me demonstrate how that works. First, what is a reflex? It is an automatic response to outside stimuli. For example, because we drive on the right side of the road, Americans acquire a right-drive reflex. But when Americans drive in England, they must suppress their right-drive reflex and concentrate on driving on the left side of the road. Suppressing the right-side habit is not easy. But one must do it if one is to survive.

A more fitting case of a reflex collision is if you were taught to do two opposite things at the same time. As you know, you've been trained to slow down when you see a red light ahead. However, supposing you were then trained to speed up when seeing a red light. What would you do when you saw a red light? Would you speed up or slow down? You would have a collision of reflexes, which would render you paralyzed.

In fact, in a book written by Soviet psychologist Alexander Luria, entitled *The Nature of Human Conflicts*, published in 1932, we read:

Pavlov obtained very definite affective “breaks,” an acute disorganization of behaviour, each time that the conditioned reflexes collided, when the animal was unable to react to two mutually exclusive tendencies, or was incapable of adequately responding to any imperative problem.

And that is why so many American children become dyslexic. They are deliberately confronted with two mutually exclusive tendencies, two colliding reflexes, and as a result wind up reading disabled. And most children, when they finally leave school must live with that disability for the rest of their lives.

So, why is homeschooling so important to the future of America? Because through homeschooling, parents have the freedom and ability to save their children from being permanently handicapped and disabled by a government school system that is deliberately using psychological techniques to dumb them down.

American government education is completely controlled by behavioral psychologists who believe that children are little animals and can be trained as animals. But there’s a big difference between animals and human beings. Animals can be trained but they can’t be educated. Only human beings can be both. But our educators have rejected education in favor of training.

However, home schoolers have a visceral understanding of what education is. And it starts with teaching a child to read. And it must be done by intensive, systematic phonics. Because when children learn to read well so that they enjoy reading, the rest of their education becomes a matter of building on a solid foundation.

Children learn to master language very early in life. Their minds expand at a rate that is so fast and efficient that they pick up vocabulary and grammar on their own with virtually little or no effort. In human beings, language acquisition is an innate ability. Animals don’t have it. We do. And children teach themselves in ways that we can marvel at. But then there comes a time when they need formal instruction if they are to acquire the knowledge and skills that move civilization forward.

With the dumbing down curriculum, our educators are moving civilization backward. That’s why, despite all of our high-tech advances, today’s young people have the mentality of pre-civilization primitives. Most have no intellect. Most would rather play video games than read a book. Most look like they’ve been lobotomized.

Collectivism is being advanced in our schools through group learning. I’m sure you’ve heard of group learning in which students are assigned to groups and get group grades. In other words the smartest kid in the group gets the same grade as the dumbest.

Then there is the data collection system which feeds a mammoth computer in Washington, in which all personal and academic data on every student is stored. That’s why the federal government wants every child to be tested, so that the test data can be permanently stored in the federal computer.

If you want to have a look at the government's future plans for total social control of the American people, get hold of the *Student Data Handbook for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education*. Its code number is NCES 94-303. There is a whole section on the kinds of Assessment tests which will be used to find out just about everything there is to know about a person. There is an Achievement Test, Advanced Placement Test, Aptitude Test, Attitudinal Test—yes, you heard me correctly, an Attitudinal Test which is described as “An assessment to measure the mental and emotional set or patterns of likes and dislikes or opinions held by a student or a group of students. This is often used in relation to considerations such as controversial issues or personal adjustments.”

How many in this audience believe that the government ought to be testing your children to find out about their attitudes, likes and dislikes, and opinions? Why do they want to know all of this, and what are they going to do with this information? What kind of personal adjustments are they planning? Should the government of a free people be doing this? Or are we witnessing the construction of a totalitarian system of social control at taxpayers' expense?

There are other assessments as well. Cognitive and Perceptual Skills Test, Developmental Observation, Interest Inventory—described as “An assessment used to measure the extent to which a student's patterns of likes and dislikes correspond to those of individuals who are known to be successfully engaged in a given vocation, subject area, program of studies, or other activity.” Ask yourself, why does the government want to know all of this.

There are more tests: Language Proficiency Test, Manual Dexterity Test, Mental Ability Test (Intelligence), Performance Assessment, Personality Test—described as “An assessment to measure a student's affective or nonintellectual aspects of behavior such as emotional adjustment, interpersonal relations, motivation, interests, and attitudes.”

Then there is the Psychomotor Test, Reading Readiness Test, Portfolio Assessment, and Psychological Test—described as “An assessment to measure a sample of behavior in an objective and standardized way.”

If there was ever a more important reason to homeschool, this is it, to avoid subjecting your child to a psychological straitjacket calculated to control every aspect of your child's life.

And if you still doubt what your government has in store for you, let me quote from a letter written by one of the major architects of this totalitarian system, Mark Tucker, president of the National Council on Education and the Economy. The letter was addressed to Hillary Clinton after her husband's election to the presidency in November 1992. It said:

Dear Hillary,

I still can't believe you won. But utter delight that you did pervades all the circles in which I move. I met last Wednesday in David Rockefeller's office with him, John Scully, Dave Barram and David Haselkorn. It was a great celebration. Both John and David R. were more expansive than I have ever seen them—literally radiating happiness....The subject we were discussing was what you and Bill should do now about education, training, and labor market policy. ...

Now this is an 18-page letter, so let me quote the most important lines. Tucker writes:

What is essential is that we create a seamless web of opportunities to develop one's skills that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone—young and old, poor and rich, worker and full-time student....

Radical changes in attitudes, values and beliefs are required to move any combination of these agendas.... Bill's roll at the Charlottesville summit leads naturally to a reconvening of that group, perhaps with the addition of key members of Congress and others.

How much of the agenda was enacted? Goals 2000 was enacted on March 31, 1994. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act was passed on May 4, 1994. Improving America's Schools Act was passed on October 20, 1994. The Careers Act, also known as the Consolidated and Reformed Education, Employment, and Rehabilitation Act, was passed in September 1995. Has education improved since then? Of course not. Yes, the educators have become richer, but the kids have become dumber. Why? Because the same progressive agenda is in place, and the new money is used to enhance it, not get rid of it.

Homeschooling is your legal means of protecting your children from the depredations of your government. It is also a means of creating a larger and larger constituency to fight the trend toward totalitarian government in America. And that is why homeschooling is so important to this country. Conservative politicians seem to be impotent when it comes to opposing government growth. This year, the Bush administration has allocated more money for education than ever before. Do you think it is going to improve education?

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was signed into law by President Johnson with the hope of improving education. Since then Title One, a compensatory program to help inner-city kids learn to read, has been provided with about 100 billion dollars. What has been the result? We have more illiteracy than we had in 1965. What happened to the 100 billion dollars? It was spent by the educators for the educators.

So, why is homeschooling so important to America? Because it represents American parents refusing to hand over their children to those who would harm them in the name of education. Because it represents American parents anxious to pass on to their children the knowledge, wisdom, and values that were passed on to them.

Fortunately, the home school movement has reached critical mass. The establishment can't destroy it without causing a civil war. The traditionalists among us will go as far as they can go without opposition. And so they tread very carefully, keeping in mind John Dewey's advice, "Change must come slowly, or else it will provoke a violent reaction."

So far, the reaction has not been violent. That's because parents still have the legal power to educate their own children at home. The Home School Legal Defense Association has done much to make this possible.

Meanwhile, Congress goes on its merry way creating bigger and more intrusive government. But some day in the not too distant future, intelligent, literate homeschooled young adults may go into politics and make the changes that must be made. That's also a good reason to homeschool your kids. Some day a homeschooleder may also become President.