

Pre-K Research Paper
By Steven Thayn
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Pre-K supporters want to establish a state funded program for all 3 and 4 year-olds in the State of Idaho and throughout the nation. This paper will examine the claims, assumptions, and predictions of these programs in order for policy makers to make an informed decision.

Pre-K supporters claim that if the state creates a universal pre-school program for all the children in the state:

- crime rates will fall thus reducing the money needed for prisons,
- there will be fewer unwed mothers reducing future social costs,
- and incomes will rise because of a more educated population.

The irony is that their claims are probably true and false at the same time. A small target group of children will be helped, at least in the short term. This is the group that proponents focus upon; however, what are the long term consequences and the consequences to the non-target group. The first condition of any proposed law should be to “do no harm.” If harm is being done, then another option should be considered to accomplish the good desired without causing the harm. Hopefully, you will wonder if a state-run universal Pre-K program has the potential to cause harm to good families with a strong structure while doing minimal good for the children coming from weak families.

What are the assumptions of Pre-K proponents?

A cursory reading of the literature promoting universal pre-K programs quickly uncovers a few basic assumptions one must accept in order to justify the removal of children from the home at such an early age. The main assumptions are listed below.

- State trained instructors are better able to prepare children for school (and by extension life) than are most parents in a home setting.
- State expenditures on Pre-K programs will actually reduce later social spending costs by reducing the level of unwed mothers, the reduction in crime, and less need for welfare payments to semi or poorly trained adults.
- Young children need academic exposure more than they need to be with their mothers in the home.
- Academics are more important than family time.

- Students will be more successful in life if they go to school at age 3 than at a later age.

Assumption 1. State trained instructors are better able to prepare children for school (and by extension life) than are most parents in a home setting.

The Idaho Statesman of November 6, 2005 quotes Carrie Mori, assistant professor at Boise State saying: “First grade is now kindergarten. If you child isn’t in quality preschool program they are missing out on some of those basics.” The inference is plain, parents you are cheating your children unless you send your children to a good pre-school program. Why? It must be because parents are less capable than a professionally trained teacher. But is this the truth?

Counterpoint: “In Finland, whose education system has been ranked the world’s best, most children do not begin school until age seven but have often learned to read on their own by watching American television with Finnish subtitles.” (Freakonomics by Steven D. Levitt: pg. 172) How is it that one of the world’s best education systems does not start school until age 7? The duty of proof is upon the supporters of Pre-K programs to answer these questions. Pre-K supporters are asking the taxpayers of Idaho to spend millions of dollars on a new social program and compete with the natural order of the family. Why should the taxpayers of Idaho be asked to support this program if it is full of questionable research? My contention is that Pre-K supporters have confusion between correlation and causality. Students now going to Pre-K program may be doing better in school but is it because they go to Pre-K programs or is it because of other factors? How do Pre-K supporters explain the success of Finnish students even though they don’t start school until age 7 and end normal public school in the 9th grade.

Another question that needs to be answered, Pre-K programs in Idaho are now privately funded. Therefore, only those parents with higher incomes can afford them. There is a correlation between high income parents and high performance of students in school. But, is it because of the parents’ income not attendance at pre-school. Consider low income Pre-K programs like Head Start, is Head Start causing its students to outperform non-Head Start students? Once again Steven Levitt weights in on the issue:

But according to the ECLS data (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study by the U.S Dept. of Ed), Head Start does nothing for a child’s future test scores....Here’s a likely reason: instead of spending the day with his own undereducated, overworked mother, the typical Head Start child spends the day with someone else’s undereducated, overworked mother....And the job pays so poorly—about \$21,000 for a Head Start

teacher versus \$40,000 for the average public-school kindergarten teacher—that it is unlikely to attract better teachers any time soon. (pg. 170)

The question must be asked, where are we going to get a few thousand more highly trained Pre-K teachers to take care of the needs of these children? There are about 36,000 children in Idaho that are 3 and 4 years of age. If we have one teacher for every 20 children, we would need 1800 new teachers. The cost would be about \$54,000,000 plus benefits. (1800 teachers x \$30,000 = \$54,000,000) The real cost would probably be twice that amount after teacher aids, added bus route, benefits, and new buildings were added in. So we are looking at least \$108 million.

The cost may be worth it if the results were forthcoming, however how do you explain the home school movement and the results that it is getting when these students do not go to pre-school?

Dr. Brian Ray, in the most in-depth nationwide study on home education across the United States, collected data on 5,402 students from 1,657 families. Homeschool students' academic achievement, on average, was significantly above that of public-school students. In addition, the home educated did well even if their parents were not certified teachers and if the state did not highly regulate homeschooling.³

- Home educators are able to be flexible and tailor or customize the curriculum to the needs of each child.
- In study after study, the home educated score better, on average, than those in conventional state-run schools (see table).²

	Reading	Language	Math
Public Schools	50	50	50
Home Education	65-80	65-80	65-80

Home educated children typically don't go to Pre-K programs. How is this superior performance to be explained? Furthermore, home educated students save the taxpayers money. Home education families are not dependent on public, tax-funded resources - they likely save American taxpayers over \$10 billion per year. **National Home Education Research Institute**

Why are supporters of universal state run Pre-K programs not pursuing a non-state run system that costs the taxpayer less, is more beneficial to the child, and strengthens the family? Could it be that they have a quasi-religious view of the world as described by Senator Rick Santorum in his book It Takes a Family?

Liberal social policy has never put an emphasis on the family because the village elders (elitists), frankly, don't believe in the importance of strong, traditional families. For a raft of reasons, the village elders view the strong, traditional, married-mother-and-father family as contrary to their social agenda... Aside from seeing families as a

barrier...the village elders dislike the traditional family because of what it instills in children and society—traditional values. (pg.16-17)

· A study of adults who were home educated found that none were unemployed and none were on welfare, 94% said home education prepared them to be independent persons, 79% said it helped them interact with individuals from different levels of society, and they strongly supported the home education method.* **Brian D. Ray, Ph.D., is a researcher, writer, and speaker, a former professor of education and science (at the undergraduate and graduate levels), a former middle school and high school classroom teacher, and is the president of the National Home Education Research Institute. Dr. Ray holds his Ph.D. in science education from Oregon State University.**

Why are we discussing a state-run program when there are other options that are better for the child, the family, and the taxpayer? Idaho now has a state-run public school system that is full of failures, why should the taxpayers reward a system full of deficiencies with more responsibility before they get their K-12 house in order?

Assumption #2: State expenditures on Pre-K programs will actually reduce later social spending costs by reducing the level of unwed mothers, a reduction in crime, and less need for welfare payments to semi or poorly trained adults. The Idaho Statesman’s article makes the following claims under “How experts say Pre-K helps kids.”

- Lower teenage pregnancy rates
- Less involvement in crime
- Higher employment and earnings

Counterpoint: Let’s look at these claims. The most important single factor to determine future criminality of a young man is the mother. An unmarried teenage mother living in poverty with a poor education “roughly doubles a child’s propensity to commit crime¹.” “Another study has shown that low maternal education is the single most powerful factor in leading to criminality².” “In one study of more than 6,000 young men ages 14-22, it was found that boys who grew up without a married mother and father were more than twice as likely to end up in jail as boys who did...Other studies have shown that broken homes can increase the delinquency in a community

¹ Freakonomics pg. 136-137

² Ibid

by 10 to 15 percent, and the proportion of single-parent households in a community predicts the rate of violent crime and burglary much better than a community's level of poverty.”³

How does one explain the excellent educational results of Finland that does not have children begin school until age 7 and home schooled children that never go to day care resulting in superior results? Could it be that it is not the time spent in school but rather the quality of home life and other factors? What proof is there that Pre-K will help? The proof being offered is by those who stand to benefit from increased Pre-K spending.

Crime rates have increased significantly since the 1960's. Child abuse is up 2,300%, illegal drug usage up 6,000%, Divorce rates up 350%, births to unmarried girls up 500% and so forth.⁴ Dr. Steven Levitt attributes the increase of crime to more lenient courts. Others attribute the decline in American social fabric to the abandonment of traditional values, specifically the removal of Biblical teachings from America's public schools⁵. Crime rates and incarceration rates were steady until the 1960's in America when the liberal message of no-fault freedom and the notion of traditional right and wrong began to be abandoned. The social cost to the American taxpayer has been great. We now have more than 2 million prisoners incarcerated.⁶ The emotional cost is even greater to those involved in crime, abuse, and drugs.

The supporters of Pre-K programs are following the liberal pattern that the family is corrupt, the state can do a better job of raising children than the family, that traditional morality is outdated, that education is the key to solving all problems, and that there is no enduring right and wrong. However, what has listening to this philosophy given us during the last 50 years? Have they ever been able to deliver? Remember the war on poverty? Has poverty been eliminated through state programs? The Pre-K proposal fits the same template as other government run programs that depend upon the wisdom of social planners. The social planners have great intentions but their accomplishments are very negative. To give you an example of what I mean let me share with you an exchange that I had with a prominent Idaho politician concerning increasing social spending on Planned Parenthood.

³ It Takes a Family pg. 21

⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, and Statistical Abstract of the United States

⁵ Wallbuilders DVD on the Foundation of America

⁶ Freakonomics pg. 123

The first letter (part A) was the questions that I had regarding his support of Planned Parenthood. Next (part B) is his response. Finally, my response (part C) to his response. He has not responded to the last letter.

Part A: Regarding: SB1140 Planned Parenthood funding bill

From: Steven Thayn
May 15, 2005

Dear *****:

I would like to have you clarify a few questions I have about SB1140 that was defeated in the last legislative session.

1. According to my sources this would have supplied Planned Parenthood with \$15 million. Is this the case or not?
2. Do you agree or disagree that Planned Parenthood does not actively support abstinence prior to marriage and fidelity during marriage? I went to their website and it clearly explains how to have sex without pregnancy without much regard for the marriage bond. If this is the case, how can giving money to Planned Parenthood fulfill the legislative duty to promote public morality and temperance?
3. Nationwide Planned Parenthood performs many abortions and makes a nice profit from abortions. How can public funds be given to an organization that performs abortions unless you too support abortion? Could you clarify this point? Do you think taxpayer money should be given to perform abortions?
4. . Planned Parenthood does not want the parents involved in the decision to have an abortion. How can Planned Parenthood encourage a teenager to obtain an abortion without parental consent? Students need parental consent to go on a field trip. Isn't this undermining the family? This seems to be an unexplainable contradiction in standards and values that I simply do not understand at all. **Do you agree with Planned Parenthood opposition to parental consent and notification?**
5. Planned Parenthood says hateful, shrill things about President Bush and all those who oppose Planned Parenthood's views on abortion, sex, women's rights, and AID's. Words like: **Bush's War Against Women, religious political extremists, and retrograde anti-choice policies.** This type of language is hate speech. **Are you intending to ally yourself with this side of the political spectrum?**

I would appreciate a response to these questions so that I can understand if my information is correct and to understand what your opinions are on these matters.

Sincerely,

Steven Thayn

Part B Senator ***** response:

Steve, Thanks for the note. My vote on SB1140 was based on my pledge to “rein in” runaway Medicaid costs. The fiscal note states that a savings to our general fund will be over four million dollars. No funds would be available for abortion in anyway.

I am not a huge fan of planned parenthood. These savings are for all family planning services. As you are aware. I have always supported parental consent.

Sincerely,

Part C:

From Steven Thayn

May 26, 2005

In response to a response to a letter I sent to *****.

Dear *****,

I thank you for your letter. I know it takes time to write them while running a business. Unfortunately, my reaction to your letter was mixed. It seems as if we have the same goals but have chosen opposite paths to reach our shared destination. It is as if we both leave Emmett at the same time with only enough gas to get to McCall and one of us heads south and one of us heads north. Who will reach the desired destination? We both can't end up in the same place.

These are our shared goals.

- ❖ Limit, reduce, and control Medicaid spending
- ❖ Don't support Planned Parenthood
- ❖ Don't use public funds for abortion
- ❖ Support Parental Consent laws

Point #1 You have decided that the best way to control Medicaid spending is to increase the amount of money spent. You claim that the state will save \$4 million. But, who is making this claim? Is it the same bureaucrats that are overseeing the current Medicaid program that is exploding in growth? Albert Einstein said: “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” How can we expect the current bureaucrats to solve the problem with the same thinking they used to create the problem we now need to solve? How is spending \$15 million going to save us \$4 million. It seems like we are losing \$11 million in the process. Would please explain this in detail?

Point #2 You say that you don't support Planned Parenthood, yet you are wanting to give them \$15 million. Why are you willing to fund an organization that you don't agree with? In fact, Senate Bill 1140 was written by Planned Parenthood. Supporting a bill written by an organization with which you do not agree—very strange indeed. Planned Parenthood uses the money it gets to promote sexual activity. Isn't this use of taxpayer money going to increase sexual activity? As sexual activity increases the number of low-income pregnancies will increase, so that later, more money will be needed to solve an even bigger problem. I fail to see the logic of this course of action. Maybe this is why the Medicaid budget is growing.

Point #3 You claim that no public money is used to fund abortions. This seems to be a hollow argument. If you are giving an organization that you don't agree with money and they are using the money to promote a lifestyle that you don't agree with then technically you may be able to claim that no public funds are being used to fund abortions. However, public money is indirectly being used to support a lifestyle that requires abortions. Can you really prove that no public money is used for abortions?

Point #4 I am glad that you support Parental Consent laws, but why do you want to give money to an organization that lobbies against Parental Consent laws? This doesn't seem to make sense.

Reading your letter made me think of "The Prince" by Machiavelli. Machiavelli said to tell the people what they want to hear and then do what ever you want. This is what it feels like. You are telling me what I want to hear and then doing something different. I fail to see the logic of your position. I hope you will explain this to me.

Sincerely,
Steven Thayn

We learn from the exchange above concerning the increase of government spending on social programs that claims may be made without concrete proof. It is illogical to increase spending that weakens the family and expect social costs to decrease. Yet, this is exactly the claim being made by Pre-K supporters. Their policies compete with family time, weakening the family, and yet, they are claiming their policies will help the children. How can this be?

If the family breakdown over the last 50 years has been the main cause of increased social spending, increased cost of incarceration, and dependency of the poor upon government programs, then it seems the state should work toward strengthening the family. **How does taking children out of the home and sending them to Pre-K strengthen the family?** This is the questions Pre-K supporters have to answer. If Pre-K weakens the family, then social costs will rise, taxes will rise, and education levels will fall.

If family breakdown is causing social problems, creating a program like a universal Pre-K will only speed the family breakdown and lead to an increase in social spending in the years to come.

Furthermore, literacy rates have fallen over the last 70 years from near 100 percent to around 70 percent under the watch of government bureaucrats and social planners.(See endnotes) One of the reasons is the abandonment of phonics. Teaching reading is such an easy thing, yet our modern education system has not even mastered this simple task. Why would we let the education establishment assume more of our children's precious time? The Idaho State Board of Education admits that Idaho high school students are not prepared to compete in a world economy. They have been in charge of public education for well over 50 years. Now, they say they are failing our children and the solution is to spend more money and take our children for more time? Is this reasonable? Do we really want to give the State Board of Education our most precious resource, our children, and let them experiment on them?

Assumption #3: Young children need academic exposure more than they need to be with their mothers in the home.

The Statesman article said: "Kids are born learning and it's up to us what they learn...60 percent of mothers in Idaho work, and with more and more kids in child care or early-education programs it's critical that we worry about that environment."

Counterpoint: Why are so many mothers working? Have past state programs and high taxes forced mothers out of the home? Do children really do better in a day care than at home with

their own mothers? How can anyone who supports the traditional family make this claim? Senator Rick Santorum said:

“I would contend that while our founders fully recognized the importance of education, they nonetheless agreed that the education of children is best accomplished by the family and voluntary associations, not by the state. The system we have today, therefore, is something of an anomaly.⁷”

I am a school teacher and have taught in public schools. I have found that children that spend more time with their parents are better behaved, more able to learn, and are happier than children whose parents that spend less time with their children.

Liberals and most Pre-K supporters probably decry the materialistic nature of our society, yet, how does taking children from the family where spiritual values, love and compassion can be shown and teaching them how to read and count lead to less materialism? Spirituality cannot be taught in public institutions of learning, spirituality is an antidote to materialism. Spirituality can legally only be taught at home or in the church, but not at a public institution.

The real debate is: Who are the best teachers for young children-- state trained educators or parents?

Assumption #4: Academics are more important than family time.

The Statesman article: “But local and national experts say that producing to-notch students can’t wait until grade or middle school: kids need to be ready to learn by the time they get to kindergarten.” According to the experts, children should be able to do the following by the time they get to school:

- Be able to engage and relate to other children, stay on task, and take turns.
- Should be aware of text. They don’t need to be able to read, but should be able to understand the letters mean something.
- Should be able to understand writing tied to language.

I am mystified! Why do we need to spend over \$100 million to teach this to the children of Idaho? Is the family really that bad? Maybe we have tried to do education on the cheap for too long. Maybe the parents of today are so bad because they were educated in public schools! If this be the case, why would we want to send the next generation to public schools for even more time? Why are we trying to embark upon such a risky venture of social planning when there are more family friendly options that cost the state much less money? This debate really centers upon your view of the family. If the family is corrupt, then it makes sense to have the state take over the education of the children. If, however, the family is the central unit of American society, then we need to promote policies that strengthen the family. Pre-K cannot support the family. How can taking children out of the home at age 3 support the family? In fact, the Idaho constitution requires all legislators to promote policies that strengthen the family. I personally believe that promoting a state funded Pre-K weakens that family and is therefore unconstitutional.

Final Points

Supporters of Pre-K programs claim that private Pre-K programs are expensive costing \$500 per child per month or more. Yet, if the state took over this program, how could the state do it

⁷ It Takes a Family, pg. 353.

for less than \$500 per month? The cost must be closer to a \$1000 per child per month. How can the supports of Pre-K claim the state can provide pre-school cheaper than the private sector? And what about the cost to family unity? If taxes go up, how many more mothers will have to leave the home in order to pay for the mortgage? Right now 60 percent of Idaho mothers work outside the home. Is this really what we want to encourage? How many of those mothers would prefer to stay at home with their children? Don't we want the mothers of young children to be able to stay home with the children? Can you really think that state employees will love and care for the children more than their own mothers? How many of these state employees will be just putting in time for the money with little regard for the children?

Karen Mason, executive director of the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children says that child-care programs need to be accountable for providing basic standards such as health inspections and back ground checks for workers as a basis for a quality learning environment. Notice that one of the main supporters of pre-school recognizes the real chance of abusive adults gaining a responsible position with direct contact with young children. How many cases of child abuse and sexual assault and abuse will happen as a direct result of placing non-parent adults in direct contact with young children?

What values will be taught in these Pre-K schools? Will the students be taught values contrary to parental values? How will sex education and homosexuality be handled?

Will Pre-K schools backfire and disappoint parents? What will happen then? Frederick Bastiat explains in his book The Law (1850) that violence and revolution are the end result of a society where the government assumes powers that it should not have. He says:

Frenchmen have led all other Europeans in obtaining their rights—or, more accurately their political demands. Yet this fact has in no respect prevented us from becoming the most governed, the most regulated, the most imposed upon, the most harnessed, and the most exploited people in Europe. France also leads all other nations as the one where revolutions are constantly to be anticipated....In creating a monopoly of education, the government must answer to the hopes of the fathers of families who have thus been deprived of their liberty; and if these hopes are shattered, whose fault is it?...(pg. 65-66)

The answer is simple, if government takes responsibility from the citizens, and then, is unable to fulfill the expectations of the citizens; refuses to relinquish the power back to its rightful owners (the citizens), the only recourse is revolt. This has happened many times in France. Can it happen here? How often will we be abused by the experts that continually fail us? Will the experts ever admit their past failure or will they continually ask for more and more power and more and more money? The following paper explains why public schools actually thrive on failure.

Public Schools: key to modern America

By

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Public Education is the key to understanding modern America and your role in it. Economist Steven D. Levitt in his book Freakonomics explains “that economics is, at root, the study of incentives...” Morality is what should be and economics explains what is. Everyone has heard the phrase “follow the

money.” Why? Because the “money trail” is closely related to the “incentive trail.” Do government businesses and private businesses have a different set of incentives? Yes they do! Does this make a difference? Yes, it does. For example: Let’s compare the set of incentives that motivate private business and compare them with the set of incentives that motivate government businesses.

A private business grows by providing a service to the customer. Cheaper costs, higher quality products, and superior service all work together to attract paying customers. If a business offered poor service, charged high prices, and delivered shoddy merchandise, it would go out of business quickly. In a free market system, incentives are structured so that the business owner and the customers both benefit. This alignment of the incentives is called “correct incentives.” In short, private businesses thrive on the success of their customers.

Do the same dynamics hold true for government businesses? Let’s look at three examples: **poverty, drug abuse prevention, and education.** A drug enforcement officer actually is rewarded when the drug problem increases because he can ask for a larger budget to hire more officers, buy more equipment, provide more education, and ask for more treatment. Likewise, with the war on poverty; if all poverty were to be eliminated, the officials in charge of the poverty programs would be out of work. They cannot let this happen. But, if the number of homeless or those in poverty is exaggerated, those same officials can ask for bigger budgets, more employees, and more programs.

Is government education similarly rewarded for its failures? One example will suffice to show that this is the case. As more students have trouble reading, this failure is used as justification for hiring more reading teachers. The Idaho State Board of Education has recently reported that high schools in Idaho are failing to produce students ready for the workforce or for higher education. I quote from their literature:

- ❖ “Unfortunately, compared to other countries, the U.S. is not graduating enough students from high school or college.”
- ❖ “By the 12th grade, U.S. students outperform only students from Cyprus and South Africa.”
- ❖ “When I compare our high schools to what I see when I’m traveling abroad, I am terrified for our workforce of tomorrow.” Bill Gates
- ❖ “Too few students are ready for either college or work.” American College Testing (ACT)

I could go on and on citing their admitted failures. The Idaho State Board of Education hosted a Summit to Redesign High Schools where they spent 6 hours telling of the failures of their public schools. And, what did they want? **They wanted more money**; because government businesses feel they should be rewarded for failure. Do they see this dynamic? NO, probably not.

It may sound like there is a conspiracy among educators to increase failure. This is absolutely not the case. Most of what goes on in a school is not based upon economic decisions. There is much compassion, love, caring, and a real desire to see students succeed and be happy. It is precisely these non-tangible human emotions that blind administrators, teachers, and parents to the reverse incentives inherent in a government business like schools. The good intentions are justification to spend more money even though there is neither understanding of the original problem nor logical reasoning explaining why more money will solve the problem.

One of the keys to solving America’s problems is to see the problems clearly. The majority of Americans have gone through the public school system and have been indoctrinated in an intricate interlocking system of logic that protects public schools from criticism and therefore we are unable to see clearly through the fog of twisted logic and emotion. Let’s analyze this interlocking system to understand it.

First, **“it’s for the kids.”** The noble intentions of public schools eliminate most criticism. How could anyone question public schools, after all “it’s for the kids.” However the phrase “it’s for the kids” has no real meaning. Is it really for the kids? Or, is this just a non-logical, empty phrase that limits understanding rather than increases it. If we were really interested in the kids, wouldn’t we let them stay home until age 8 or older so they could bond with their parents and develop a sense of family? Isn’t it the family structure that really strengthens the child? Is school really about the kids or is it about increasing

budgets and the need for more teachers? Have you ever wondered why schools never have enough money for textbooks?

Second, **education is too important to turn over to the free market system that is driven by greed, lowest cost, and profit.** Whatever the shortcomings of the free market system are, the free market thrives on delivering a quality product while a government-controlled market thrives on delivering a poor product. Furthermore, we do not have any true free market schools in existence in the world today. We have no idea what free market education would look like. But you say, “We have private schools.” Yes we have private schools that are controlled by government through a multitude of regulations. They are told how many days of school, what the basic curriculum must be, and who can teach. A privately owned school that is regulated by the government is a fascist school system. Public schools that are owned and operated by the government is a socialists school system. (Look up the definitions in the dictionary.) What the critics of private schools are doing is comparing two government controlled systems against each other and saying that the free market doesn’t work. Free market education is not in existence.

Third, **parents are not capable of providing an education for their children.** The unspoken assumption is that the state and the experts are capable of providing the education for the children. This concept sounds good except for two small problems. (A) There is no proof. In fact, the proof is just the opposite. The Idaho State Board of Education, the Federal Department of Education, Bill Gates, and thousands of others are all telling us that public education is failing. The experts are admitting their failures. (Literacy rates have fallen from the high 95% to around 70% in the last 100 years⁸.) (B) More importantly, to say that parents are not capable of providing an education for their children is an arrogant position. It is a position that disrespects parents and sets the stage for the supremacy of the state over the family. It is a position that is not defensible except by the most ardent elitists. *The State Board further fails to recognize that they are the ones that trained the parents and their parents before them that are now unable to teach their own children!*

Fourth, **only the rich could afford a private education.** In the current system of socialist schools and fascist schools this assumption is correct. However, in a free market system the cost of education would fall to as little as \$100 per year per child. Almost every child could receive an excellent private education. (There is currently available a complete 12 year curriculum for \$1200.)

Summary

As you can see, failure is rewarded in government businesses and is the best reason to limit the role of government in any industry. Likewise, the rationale for public schools becomes very tenuous when logic is applied to it. The reason that we continue to have public schools is because we have had public schools for four generations and know nothing else. Once we start to question the logic behind the public school position, it crumbles quickly. Fear of the unknown then becomes the reason for not changing the system. However, a logical, calm discussion of the issues and what should be done will lead to the strengthening of the family, the community, and of education in general. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. For more information see: www.reclaimidaho.com

Baby Sitting

It is my belief that many parents will welcome a state-run program for 3 and 4 year-olds because they have need of a baby-sitter. Both parents need to work to pay for the expenses of a home and family. Should the main thrust of state legislators be to create a costly baby-sitting service? Or, would the time of the state legislators be better spent in figuring out ways to help all the mothers that want to remain in the home be able to do so? If the second option were chosen, then the subsequent discussion would help strengthen the family and be focused upon the

⁸ See www.reclaimidaho.com click on **Issues** then on **Education: Literacy Rates**.

reduction of the tax burden. This is where the discussion needs to be centered. How to improve education and reduce costs?

The fact of the matter is that mother and fathers have brought babies into their lives. These same parents are responsible to feed and educate them. It is not the role of the state to seduce these parents into giving up this responsibility by providing a government funded system that completes with family time and weakens the family structure. If you want to know why the family is in crisis, look no farther than this proposal for a universal Pre-K program promoted by Governor Kempthorne and the education establishment.

I must ask myself, does Governor Kempthorne really think he is wiser than the parents of Idaho. I seem to detect a certain arrogance hidden behind his good intentions. I call this characteristic coercive altruism.

Coercive Altruism Defined

Coercive Altruism:

Altruism is the unselfish regard for the welfare of others. Generally altruism by itself is similar to kindness, compassion, sympathy, or consideration. Mothers, nurses, and teachers tend to be altruistic.

Coercion is force or intimidation. Coercion is generally as negative. Oppression and cruelty often are the companions with coercion.

Coercive Altruism is the union of these two seemingly opposite human characteristics. In reality, they often walk side by side. An altruistic person who is willing to use force to impose their views upon others, however, becomes extremely dangerous. We maintain that more damage is done in the name of altruism coupled with the use of force than any other form of violence the world has ever known. A common criminal is easy to spot and the damage done is minor. The damage done by an altruistic person using coercion is difficult to see because they can hide behind their good intentions. In fact, they are blinded by their own good intentions. And, they refuse to see the universal damage done because of their altruism. It is called the **two lie illusion**.

Lie number 1. The state knows best. Lie number 2. The state should force us to be good. However, when these two lies are placed side by side and covered with the blanket of good intentions, they both disappear from view. Yet, hidden under the blanket of good intentions lay state power and force: two attributes generally seen as dangerous by most Americans.

Characteristics of a Person Infected with Coercive Altruism

1. A person infected with coercive altruism believes he is wiser than the common person. They are usually found concentrated in the media, education, politics, and the liberal end of the political spectrum. However, they are found everywhere including religious organizations and in any positions of power. Lord Action said that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.
2. A coercive altruist accepts as normal his right to impose upon others his views. (You see his views are better and it is for their good anyway.)
3. Those holding other views than his own are dismissed as inferior leading to a culture of arrogance.
4. An infected person does not entertain the possibility that there exist other valid options or other options that are better. (You see he is wiser. How could there be a better idea especially if it comes from those less educated than he.) They tend to call themselves open-minded; in reality, they are close-minded and shrill.
5. They ignore the negative effects of coercion justifying them by their good intentions. Furthermore, the government, acting as the agent of force, allows the coercive altruist to

be insulated from the collateral damage caused by his misguided policies based in good intentions. Typically, a coercive altruist tries to manipulate the natural order of things to fit how he thinks the world should work. A deadly cocktail of intentions, force, and separation from reality.

Summary

Coercive altruism is a self-blinding disease common to all men, in all ages, and in all cultures. It allows good people to harm others by promoting good things by implementing incorrect methods. Almost every law currently debated by every nation on earth is based upon the dangerous idea of coercive altruism. They include all government programs dealing with charity and education.

Newspaper Article

Thursday, November 10, 2005

Study: Preschool harms children's development

Homeschool group uses Berkeley research to encourage parents to keep kids at home

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By Ron Strom

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A new study on the effects of preschool on children, which finds attendance harms kids' emotional and social development, is being used by a homeschool organization to help encourage parents to educate their children at home.

The study, conducted at UC Berkeley and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, found that while youngsters gained cognitive abilities via the preschool experience, behavioral problems also increased – especially among kids from wealthy families.

"The biggest eye-opener is that the suppression of social and emotional development, stemming from long hours in preschool, is felt most strongly by children from better-off families," said UC Berkeley sociologist and study co-author Bruce Fuller.

On average, the report finds that the earlier a child enters a preschool center, the slower his or her pace of social development, while cognitive skills in pre-reading and math are stronger when children first enter a preschool program between the ages of 2 and 3.

"Our results for the intensity of attending a center program – measured in hours per week and months per year – are worrisome, while varying across different types of families and children," the report says.

The study found that children who attended preschool at least 15 hours a week displayed more negative social behaviors when compared with their stay-at-home peers.

According to a statement from Berkeley, the research team found that more than 1.4 million children, ages 3 or 4, across the nation are enrolled in preschool programs and attend six hours or more daily. About 5.2 million children – including children under age 5 – attend preschool overall, although Hispanic children are less likely to enter a preschool than white and black youngsters. Nearly two-thirds of all 4-year-olds nationwide attend preschool in the year before starting kindergarten.

Fuller says those elected officials pushing for compulsory preschool should rethink the idea.

"The report's a bit sobering for governors and mayors – including those in California, Florida, Georgia, New York, North Carolina and Oklahoma – who are getting behind universal preschool," Fuller said.

The report, entitled "The Influence of Preschool Centers on Children's Development Nationwide: How Much Is Too Much?" looked at 14,000 kindergartners across the nation.

The Morningstar Education Network is using the results of the survey to point parents in the direction of homeschooling. The organization sponsors a website, ConsideringHomeschooling.org, to encourage Christian parents with preschoolers and those with kids in secular schools to educate their kids at home.

"These negative social behaviors children are displaying are getting worse," said Denise Kanter, Morningstar's research adviser, in a statement. "A child's success in life and academic performance hinges on their healthy social and emotional development. Young children need to be at home bonding with their mothers and fathers."

Endnotes

Education / Literacy Rates

I have been asked many times where I get my documentation for the literacy rate decline from between 93% and 100% in the last century before the advent of public education down to 70% in our day. Think about it, if literacy rates have actually declined in this manner while public

education has been controlling education in the United States; there is no other indictment that need be made to call for its abandonment. However, most of us labor under the assumption that we are more literate than our ancestors of 100 years ago. And, why not make this assumption? Society has technologically improved with science and medicine making marvelous advancements. But, does the general advancement of society necessarily mean that the majority of its citizens have also made similar personal advancements in literacy?

I ask you to consider the following information taken from John Taylor Gatto's book The Underground History of American Education. If what he says is true, you will be better positioned to make wise educational decisions for yourself, your family, and allow you to recognize and form wise public education policy. In short, the truth will set you free.

Intellectual Espionage

At the start of WWII millions of men showed up at registration offices to take low-level academic tests before being inducted.¹ The years of maximum mobilization were 1942 to 1944; the fighting force had been mostly schooled in the 1930s, both those inducted and those turned away. Of the 18 million men were tested, 17,280,000 of them were judged to have the minimum competence in reading required to be a soldier, a 96 percent literacy rate. Although this was a 2 percent fall-off from the 98 percent rate among *voluntary* military applicants ten years earlier, the dip was so small it didn't worry anybody.

WWII was over in 1945. Six years later another war began in Korea. Several million men were tested for military service but this time 600,000 were rejected. Literacy in the draft pool had dropped to 81 percent, even though all that was needed to classify a soldier as literate was fourth-grade reading proficiency. In the few short years from the beginning of WWII to Korea, a terrifying problem of adult illiteracy had appeared. The Korean War group received most of its schooling in the 1940s, and it had more years in school with more professionally trained personnel and more scientifically selected textbooks than the WWII men, yet it could not read, write, count, speak, or think as well as the earlier, less-schooled contingent.

A third American war began in the mid-1960s. By its end in 1973 the number of men found noninductible by reason of inability to read safety instructions, interpret road signs, decipher orders, and so on—in other words, the number found illiterate—had reached 27 percent of the total pool. Vietnam-era young men had been schooled in the 1950s and the 1960s—much better schooled than either of the two earlier groups—but the 4 percent illiteracy of 1941 which had transmuted into the 19 percent illiteracy of 1952 had now had grown into the 27 percent illiteracy of 1970. Not only had the fraction of competent readers dropped to 73 percent but a substantial chunk of even those were only barely adequate; they could not keep abreast of developments by reading a newspaper, they could not read for pleasure, they could not sustain a thought or an argument, they could not write well enough to manage their own affairs without assistance.

Consider how much more compelling this steady progression of intellectual blindness is when we track it through army admissions tests rather than college admissions scores and standardized reading tests, which inflate apparent proficiency by frequently changing the way the tests are scored.

Looking back, abundant data exist from states like Connecticut and Massachusetts to show that by 1840 the incidence of complex literacy in the United States was between 93 and 100 percent wherever such a thing mattered. According to the Connecticut census of 1840, only one citizen out of every 579 was illiterate and you probably don't want to know, not really, what people in those days considered literate; it's too embarrassing. Popular novels of the period give a clue: *Last of the Mohicans*, published in 1826, sold so well that a contemporary equivalent would have to move 10 million copies to match it. If you pick up an uncut version you find yourself in a dense thicket of philosophy, history, culture, manners, politics, geography, analysis of human motives and actions, all conveyed in data-rich periodic sentences so formidable only a determined and well-educated reader can handle it nowadays. Yet in 1818 we were a small-farm nation without colleges or universities to speak of. Could those simple folk have had more complex minds than our own?

By 1940, the literacy figure for all states stood at 96 percent for whites, 80 percent for blacks. Notice that for all the disadvantages blacks labored under, four of five were nevertheless literate. Six decades later, at the end of the twentieth century, the National Adult Literacy Survey and the National Assessment of Educational Progress say 40 percent of blacks and 17 percent of whites can't read at all. Put another way, black illiteracy doubled, white illiteracy quadrupled. Before you think of anything else in regard to these numbers, think of this: we spend three to four times as much real money on schooling as we did sixty years ago, but sixty years ago virtually everyone, black or white, could read.... (Pg. 52-53)

Well, one change is indisputable, well-documented and easy to track. During WWII, American public schools massively converted to non-phonetic ways of teaching reading... (pg. 53)

In 1882, fifth graders read these authors in their *Appleton School Reader*: William Shakespeare, Henry Thoreau, George Washington, Sir Walter Scott, Mark Twain, Benjamin Franklin, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Bunyan, Daniel Webster, Samuel Johnson, Lewis Carroll, Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others like them. In 1995, a student teacher of fifth graders in Minneapolis wrote to the local newspaper, "I was told children are not to be expected to spell the following words correctly: back, big, call, came, can, day, did, dog, down, get, good, have, he, home, if, in, is, it, like, little, man, morning, mother, my, night, off, out, over, people, play, ran, said, saw, she, some, soon, their, them, there, time, two, too, up, us, very, water, we, went, where, when, will, would, etc. Is this nuts?"... (pg. 54)

The National Adult Literacy Survey represents 190 million U.S. adults over age sixteen with an average school attendance of 12.4 years. The survey is conducted by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey. It ranks adult Americans into five levels. Here is its 1993 analysis:

1. Forty-two million Americans over the age of sixteen can't read. Some of this group can write their names on Social Security cards and fill in height, weight, and birth spaces on application forms.
2. Fifty million can recognize printed words on a fourth- and fifth-grade level. They cannot write simple messages or letters.

3. Fifty-five to sixty million are limited to sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade reading. A majority of this group could not figure out the price per ounce of peanut butter in a 20-ounce jar costing \$1.99 when told they could round the answer off to a whole number.
4. Thirty million have ninth- and tenth-grade reading proficiency. This group (and all preceding) cannot understand a simplified written explanation of the procedures used by attorneys and judges in selecting juries.
5. About 3.5 percent of the 26,000-member sample demonstrated literacy skills adequate to do traditional college study, a level 30 percent of all U.S. high school students reached in 1940, and which 30 percent of secondary students in other developed countries can reach today. This last fact alone should warn you how misleading comparisons drawn from international student competitions really are, since the samples each country sends are small elite ones, unrepresentative of the entire student population. But behind the bogus superiority a real one is concealed.
6. Ninety-six and a half percent of the American population is mediocre to illiterate where deciphering print is concerned. This is no commentary on their intelligence, but without ability to take in primary information from print and to interpret it they are at the mercy of commentators who tell them what things mean. A working definition of immaturity might include an excessive need for other people to interpret information for us. (Pg. 61-62)

I have a hunch based on a decade of ruminating. Since no one has yet bothered to assemble a large group of self-taught good readers to ask them how it happened, let my hunch serve as a working hypothesis for you to chew upon at your leisure. Consider first the matter of *time*. The average five-year-old can master all of the seventy phonograms in six weeks. At that point he can read just about anything fluently. Can he *understand* everything? No, of course not. But also, no synthetic barrier to understanding is being interposed by weird-looking words to be memorized whole, either. Paulo Freire taught ignorant *campesinos* with no tradition of literacy at all to read in thirty hours. They were adults, with different motivations than children, but when he showed them a sentence and they realized it said "The land belongs to the tiller," they were hooked. That's Jesuit savvy for you.

Back to this matter of time. By the end of the fourth grade, phonics-trained students are at ease with an estimated 24,000 words. Whole-word trained students have memorized about 1,600 words and can successfully guess at some thousands more, but also *unsuccessfully* guess at thousands, too. One reigning whole-word expert has called reading "a psycholinguistic guessing game" in which the reader is not extracting the writer's meaning but constructing a meaning of his own.... (Pg. 65)

The legendary children's book author, Dr. Seuss, creator of a string of best-sellers using a controlled "scientific" vocabulary supplied by the publisher, demonstrated his own awareness of the mindlessness of all this in an interview he gave in 1981:

I did it for a textbook house and they sent me a word list. That was due to the Dewey revolt in the twenties, in which they threw out phonics reading and went to a word recognition as if you're

reading a Chinese pictograph instead of blending sounds or different letters. I think killing phonics was one of the greatest causes of illiteracy in the country.

Anyway they had it all worked out that a healthy child at the age of four can only learn so many words in a week. So there were two hundred and twenty-three words to use in this book. I read the list three times and I almost went out of my head. I said, " I'll read it once more and if I can find two words that rhyme, that'll be the title of my book." I found "cat" and "hat" and said, the title of my book will be *The Cat in the Hat*.

For the forty-one months beginning in January of 1929 and concluding in June of 1932, there were eighty-eight articles written in various pedagogical journals on the subject of reading difficulties and remedial teaching; in the forty-one months beginning in July of 1935 and concluding in December of 1938, the number rose almost 200 percent to 239. The first effects of the total victory of whole-word reading philosophy were being reflected in academic journals as the once mighty reading Samson of America was led eyeless to Gaza with the rest of the slaves. (Pg. 72-73)

As you can see, I omitted many parts of Mr. Gatto's argument. If you are interested understanding more about the literacy problem in the United States, this should wet your appetite. You can go to <http://www.johntaylorgatto.com> and read or order the whole book for yourself. Steven Thayn

What Are We Thinking
By Carolyn Thayn
October 05

I wept under my burden of grief as we left the well kept cemetery. My husband and I were enjoying our road trip in the Pacific Northwest until I had had an urge to visit the gravesite of my nephew who had taken his own life six years ago this month. We'd never been back until now. Now we read of the less than twenty-two years recorded on the tombstone. The cold stone inscription did not tell of the laughing, loving, mischievous boy we had known and loved, nor did it hint of the circumstances that apparently made Andy feel that suicide was the only answer.

Why did this young man feel the need to aim the gun and fire at himself? What was so bad that the only answer was to end it all? What was it that was unendurable? Who put Andy onto this path of pain and despair? How did we all fail him so miserably?

Why do so many people fall victim to addictions, suicide, and other self-destructive behaviors? I SAY THAT MUCH OF THE PAIN PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO OBLITERATE OR ENDURE OR IGNORE IS CAUSED BY MOTHERS ABANDONING THEIR CHILDREN. Yes, we could say "parents" instead of "mothers", but I believe that deep down inside of each human being is the knowledge that our MOTHERS are supposed to birth, nourish, protect, rear, be there for, endure, help, teach and train, love, cherish, remember, understand, comfort, and care for us. Today the abandonment of children by their mothers is widely accepted; is this because women receive acclaim and respect for their careers, but not for their mothering? Is this why Andys of all ages have so much pain to assuage?

In this society we abandon our children BEFORE they are born by allowing the medical profession and insurance companies to treat pregnancy as though it were an illness or an accident trauma, and the experts (doctors) we rely on feel free to interfere in many ways with the birth process and the newborn. The wisdom of the day also tells us that we shouldn't have to FEEL anything during labor or delivery, so many mothers medicate to zone out. The goal of not feeling pain is prevalent in this country, as witnessed by the enormous sales and widespread casual use of pain relievers and alcohol. Where did the idea come from that we shouldn't ever feel pain?

This flight from feeling has consequences: we learn to ignore, mask, and deny our feelings; then we can follow the "experts" and feel alright about abandoning our children. That way mothers can ignore their consciences and turn the care, nurturing, guidance, and education of their children over to strangers in institutions of all kinds. For, example, I have NEVER heard of a mother who didn't have significant qualms about seeing her child off to his first day of school for the first time. Mothers must overcome their natural feelings to be with their children because the experts have repeatedly affirmed that parents are not capable of teaching their own children, and our children must attend public schools in order to learn socialization skills. If these things are true, today's American high schools would be turning out academically excellent youth who are all social successes.

I feel indignant about experts advising me against my own intuition. I let them take away my newborn child to be in the hospital's newborn nursery; they told me newborns can't see or feel much! And I listened to the experts instead of my feelings as my little child went off to school. The experts also told me that it would spoil my child if I comforted him, and they told me that he would be horrible when he became a teenager. Experts passed laws so that my child could not hold a job or drive a car until they said he would be ready. Experts have told me to find happiness by joining the workforce and leaving the care of my family to strangers. Others insist that I need to "find myself" by leaving the tyranny of my marriage relationship that must be stifling me. Frankly, I've had enough of the experts advocating what amounts to abandonment of the children. What have we been thinking?