

Dissertation to Assembly Ed. Comm. - 10/15/03 (prep. 9/30)

Shit. That is what the taxpayers got for the twelve billion dollars shelled out last year to operate the N.Y.C Board of Ed.

In March of 2001, I received a July 2000 “report to the governor” – latest stats I have. It was reported that the total population of the NYC public schools for the 1998-99 academic year totaled 1,058,005. With 13 grades (K-12) that averages 81,385 students per grade. The number taking the English regents and getting a grade of at least 65% was 32,474; the number in 9th grade math was 25,033; the number in American History was 23,003. Bottom line? Over 60 to over 70% of the kids could not meet the demanded “standard”. 74% of the student body, at that time, was black or Hispanic. Four months ago, with the Math A regents alone, 74% of the city kids, who bothered to take the test, flunked – that is until Dick Mills, in his infinite wisdom, lowered the passing mark to 39%.

For mis-educating most of the 1.1 million kids in the system, the government spent nearly eleven thousand dollars per student. What did we get for that money? G.M. would have been out of business overnight for producing such a product for this kind of cost. But, then again, the B.O.E. has the advantage of sucking at the public tit. For every two kids who finished grade 8 in the NYC public school system in 1999, less than 1 in 2 walked away with a diploma last June.

Randi Weingarten says class sizes are too large. Really? Her union army numbers 80,000. With 1.1 million kids in the system, that averages 13 ³/₄ kids per teacher. I guess something doesn't “add up”.

And what of discipline? If a kid punches another kid in school or threatens physical violence, maybe the kid gets a few vacation days off from school as a reward. Outside the school buildings, if I assaulted or threatened someone on the street, I might end up in jail. Only zero tolerance for bullying, threats, and acts of violence will do the trick. Put the thugs, punks and hoodlums out of the schools and into cages on places like Rikers Island – and let them get their “education” there. – for the sake of all decent kids.

Let's stop the bullshit about “standards”. Insisting that every student must be able to conjugate Spanish verbs, solve for the roots of a quadratic equation, memorize a soliloquy from Hamlet, know the year Charlemagne was crowned, and know the difference between his gluteus maximus and a Bunsen burner is asinine, elitist, irrational, and counterproductive. Oh, yes, stupid and mean as well.

What is necessary for a kid to know in this society before going out into the “real” world? The ability to read, write, and speak the English language with a reasonable degree of fluency, a good grounding in arithmetic, and training in some usable, marketable skill. The world needs people for jobs like optometrist, cosmetologist, insurance, or real estate agent, licensed practical nurse, electrician, plumber, carpenter, bricklayer, auto mechanic, heavy equipment operator, embalmer, barber, truck or bus

driver, police officer, soldier, firefighter, butcher, baker, restaurant worker, bank teller, etc. None of this requires an academic liberal arts commitment to master the rudiments of algebra, history, literature, lab science, or a foreign language.

It should be noted that N.Y. teacher education “standards” are a contemptible joke. How “professional” can a N.Y. high school history teacher be, for example, when, to be certified, he need take not a single college history course whatsoever? None. Nunc. Nada. Zilch. Zero. And this is NOT confined to the discipline of history. And who allows this state of affairs? The teachers union. The state education department. The state education commissioner. The NYS Board of Regents. The N.Y.S. Legislature.

While we’re at it, another vulgar and bigoted practice needs to be swept into the dustbin of history. This whole crap about a minimum age to get a state h.s. equivalency diploma. A diploma is supposed to represent a certain level of academic attainment. If a kid demonstrates the requisite achievement, who the hell is some petty educrat – like Richard Mills – to withhold the earned recognition? My daughter has a birth certificate. It tells how old she is. A h.s. diploma is not – and was never meant to be – a substitute birth certificate. Having met the academic requirements for a GED at 14 ½, she was told she must wait 2 ½ years to get her diploma. This, despite the accomplishment already of 34 college courses with a 3.85 G.P.A.. This is supposed to be the hallmark of a sane – and humane – education system? I think not.

A majority of this state’s legislature, Board of Regents, State Education Department bureaucrats, and our state education commissioner have consigned a huge chunk of our young to the scrap heap of crime, welfare, and poverty. It is disgraceful. Children are born with an innate sense of curiosity – they want to know how things work. It is the stultifying, authoritarian, bureaucratically rigid minded educrats who demand that standards – theirs – are what must be shoved down the throats of the rest of us. The “standard” should be whether or not a person can perform some useful labor in society. A janitor’s contribution to society is equally as “worthy” and dignified as that of a college president or corporate lawyer. If the gatekeepers were crushed, more sons and daughters of janitors would get a shot at becoming college presidents and corporate lawyers, by the way. And the gatekeepers know that.

In sum, education is like a brassiere – one size does NOT fit all. How many will be made to suffer, and at what cost to society, until that simple lesson sinks in? Inquiring minds want to know.

