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NEA ADMITS CONTROVERSIAL CLASSROOM TACTICS

This column has previously itemized many of the materials, techniques, questionnaires, and activities used in public school classrooms to which parents object because they deal with emotions and values rather than academic learning. Some readers have reacted in shock because they find it hard to believe that any school could really be doing any of those non-academic, psychological, manipulative things.

I recently came across a fascinating list of classroom techniques which was devised by the National Education Association (NEA). This list is included in "A Training Program Developed by Western States Regional Staff, National Education Association," which is entitled "Combatting the New Right."

This manual is designed to train NEA members how to defend themselves against criticisms by parents. The NEA frankly warns its members, "If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, be prepared to defend yourself." Here are the NEA questions.

"Do you ask students to clarify or examine their values?" "Do you teach sex education?" "Do you permit students to review information on abortion or birth control?" "Is death education discussed in class?"

"Do you ever indicate that it may be OK to lie?" "Do you teach about values that may be different from those of the student's parents?" "Do you teach in an 'open classroom' that fosters 'socialistic anti-competitive' practices?" "Do you ever say to students there are no right or wrong answers to some questions?"

"Do you teach students about other cultures or 'pagan cultures'?" "Do you permit students to read books with 'dirty words'?" "Do you teach that 'anything goes' or 'if you feel it's OK, do it?'" "Is the study of evolution given more emphasis than creationism?"

"Do you have Halloween activities that promote witchcraft or paganism?" "Does any material in your school discuss divorce, suicide, drug addiction, or other harsh realities of life?" "Have you abandoned such disciplines as penmanship?" "Is any student reading material 'sexually suggestive'?"

"Do you put restrictions on a parent's right to be involved in the classroom?" "Do you use self actualization activities in your classroom?" "Do you teach 'emotional skills' as well as academic skills?" "Do you train your students to be 'global citizens'?" "Do you use role playing as a teaching technique?" "Do you use open ended stories and discussions with no right or wrong answers?"

"Do you use behavior modification techniques?" "Are your students involved in sensitivity training, values clarification or group therapy?" "Do you teach humanism?" "Do you ask students to fill out 'snooping questionnaires'?"

The NEA manual gives its members explicit instructions on how to outmaneuver parents when they object to these non-academic courses in the classroom. Teachers are taught how to intimidate the parents by crying "censorship," "academic freedom," and "intellectual freedom" rather than attempting to defend individual materials.

The manual coaches the schools on how to read the First Amendment and the Library Bill of Rights to parents. The former is irrelevant to the selection of materials in the classroom, and the latter is just a self-serving piece of liberal propaganda which has no legal standing at all.

When the schools are filling up school time with the non-academic materials included in the above NEA list, it's no wonder that they have failed to teach children to read and write, add and subtract. It's no wonder that we have 23 million functional illiterates in our nation today.

A children's advocacy organization called Design for Change has just released statistics on Chicago schools. Of the 39,500 students who entered a Chicago public school in the fall of 1980, only 18,500 were graduated in 1984. Of those who did graduate, only 6,000 had 12th grade reading ability while 5,000 others had only 8th grade reading skills or less.

When the figures for minorities are separated out, the situation is even worse. Of the 25,500 blacks and Hispanics who entered Chicago schools in 1980, only 9,500 were graduated four years later, and only 2,000 had 12th grade reading ability.

Maybe one reason is that precious time was spent on non-academic subjects and psychological manipulation instead of basic skills, and precious energies were directed at resisting the efforts of parents to find out what is going on.