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A wrong way to fix failing schools

‘Public boarding schools’ would replace parents with the state

By [Tammy Bruce](#)

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Last week at the National Summit on Youth Violence Prevention organized by the Department of Education, the Department of Justice and other various federal agencies, Secretary of Education Secretary Arne Duncan did what leftist bureaucrats have done throughout history: announce the dream of supplanting parents with the state by taking control of children "24/7."

He couched it slightly differently, but not by much.

Mr. Duncan touted the possibility of "public boarding schools." He said to the gathered crowd of federal bureaucrats and apparatchiks, "One idea that I threw out ... is the idea of public boarding schools. That's a little bit of a different idea — a controversy (sic) idea — but the question is do we have some children where there's not a mom, there's not a dad, there's not a grandma, there's just nobody at home?"

"There's just certain kids we should have 24/7 to really create a safe environment and give them a chance to be successful," he said.

Nothing screams liberalism like a policy wonk who insists on confiscating your children because of the cultural hell the bureaucrats themselves created.

Since President Carter created the Department of Education in 1979, we have poured trillions of dollars into the public school system as the federal government increasingly micromanages what and how your children are taught.

The result is horrifying: According to StudentsFirst, in 2012, the United States placed 27th out of 34 countries in math performance and 20th in science performance. They also report, "Sixty-six percent of all U.S. fourth graders scored "below proficient" on the 2013 National Assessment of Education Progress reading test, meaning that they are not reading at grade level. Even more alarming is the fact that among students from low-income backgrounds, 80 percent score below grade level in reading."

According to the Department of Education itself, and reported by The Huffington Post, 32 million adults, or 14 percent of the population, in the United States can't read. Twenty-one percent of adults in the U.S. read below a fifth grade level, and 19 percent of high school graduates can't read.

In testimony to Congress in 2011, Andrew Coulson of the Cato Institute noted, "We spent over \$151,000 per student sending the graduating class of 2009 through public schools. That is nearly three times as much as we spent on the graduating class of 1970, adjusting for inflation. Despite that massive real spending increase, overall achievement has stagnated or declined, depending on the subject."

How far a decline? According to 2005 coverage in The New York Times, in 1992, "the National Assessment of Adult Literacy found 40 percent of the nation's college graduates scored at the proficient level, meaning that they were able to read lengthy, complex English texts and draw complicated inferences. But on the 2003 test, only 31 percent of the graduates demonstrated those high-level skills." And the problem has only gotten worse.

In 2013 in New York City, 80 percent of public high school graduates who enrolled at City University of New York (CUNY) "had to relearn the basics of reading, writing or math — the highest percentage in years. A stunning 79.3 percent of city public-school grads who went to CUNY's six two-year colleges arrived without having mastered the basics, up from 71.4 percent in 2007," according to The New York Post.

In other words, these high school graduates and community college applicants in New York City were functionally illiterate.

It's clear: From Baltimore to Chicago to Detroit to New York City, liberal policies doom people's lives. Control of politicians and bureaucrats of our daily lives guarantees failure. The knee-jerk reaction by liberals is to throw more money at a problem and make the system bigger. It isn't the lack of funding for public education that dooms American children — it's the nature of the system itself that makes success impossible.

Under President Obama, the budget for the Department of Education has more than doubled, from \$32 billion in 2009 to over \$69 billion in 2013, yet illiteracy is increasing, as is hopelessness and despair.

Yet what Mr. Duncan is proposing is nothing new to leftists. As their education and economic policies fail, unemployment, hopelessness and violence increases. Then like genuine leftists, they use the chaos they create to justify taking even more control of children's lives.

Liberal politicians know American families, if left unmolested, raise children with faith and values; we raise center-right children. This is not good news for big-government liberals. How best to intervene? Make sure public schools, using federally mandated curriculum, spend more time with your children than you do.

So far, it has worked out well for the establishment: An American citizenry that is functionally illiterate has less control over their lives, is more inclined to be told what to do, and less able to fight back.

So let's not let this crisis of education go to waste. Let's make it even worse with "public boarding schools." How convenient. After all, what could go wrong?