



Educrats Are Panicking As Their Extremism Alienates More Families

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The optics on unconditional surrender are terrible, which is why Gov. Kate Brown of Oregon avoided fanfare when she signed Senate Bill 744, a law that suspends high school graduation requirements for reading, writing, and math. Her reasons: to combat systemic racism and boost graduation numbers for minorities.

Meanwhile, in Virginia, Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS), already feeling the heat for advancing critical race theory, has doubled down by greenlighting Policy 8040, which provides exceptions for transgendered students at the expense of the rest of the student body and the faculty. The approval came a few days after LCPS showed its contempt for parents and community members by restricting their ability to attend board meetings and voice their concerns there.

Up in Rhode Island, the state branch of the National Education Association (NEA) is suing to block the public records request of a kindergartener's mother who has dared to question the wisdom of teaching critical race theory to five-year-olds.

On the national scene, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union, has threatened another year of school closures if students (vaccinated or not) don't wear masks, a demand that is utterly unsupported by the science she claims to be following. This shakedown comes after emails revealed in May that the AFT had been instrumental in convincing the Biden administration's Centers for Disease Control to delay reopening schools in early 2021.

Taken together, these events at the beginning of a new school year indicate one thing: the educational establishment in this country is losing its grip on power and running scared.

A Regime in Crisis

When in peril, authoritarian regimes react in predictable ways. They try to deflect attention from the glaring problems they created and often flat-out lie about how things are going. If need be, they will crack down on those who oppose them. Most important of all, they try to increase their subjects' reliance on them.

All of these actions are signs that those who run these regimes are facing a serious threat in the form of a burgeoning revolution. The American education establishment is confronting just such a revolution.

Discontent with American schooling has been growing for decades, but the ruling junta has been able to contain the damage in large part through a massive disinformation campaign demonizing the various forces arrayed against them. Until recently, the power of the teachers' unions and their political allies seemed all but invincible.

Then COVID-19 hit, and the game changed. Suddenly, parents saw just what their children were being taught, and they were not pleased. What's more, they saw the ineffectiveness of remote learning and the hubris of those who foisted it upon their children. Now the smoldering embers have become a fire and the regime is scrambling to reassert control.

Assaulted on Several Fronts

Homeschooling is the most direct beneficiary of parents' new revolutionary fervor. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) reports a major surge in homeschooling using U.S. Census Data.

Even when compensating for remote learning by “[labeling] students as homeschoolers only if they were not simultaneously enrolled in public or private schools,” the data shows that three times as many homeschooled students in the spring of 2021 than there were a year before. While the HSLDA cites fears of COVID as one reason to expect the homeschooling boom to continue, it also notes that safety issues unrelated to COVID, such as bullying, and curriculum concerns are other major factors.

Recent information for the other two education options, charter schools and private schools, is more sparse. However, charter school creation and enrollment have been steadily increasing over the past decade and the movement will most likely benefit from the anti-teachers' union sentiment engendered by lockdowns and curriculum shifts.

As for private schools, a report from the Cato Institute notes the economic turmoil of the last year and a half has forced some to shut their doors and reduced overall enrollment. However, because of their independence from school districts, private schools were far more likely to resume full-time in-person learning by the end of 2020, an important point to consider should public schools initiate lockdowns and remote learning in the future. Also, private school parents “reported fewer negative effects—academic, emotional, physical—on their children from the pandemic than traditional public school parents,” which testifies to the superior COVID responsiveness of the private sector.

The true measure of the cultural shift taking place, however, is in the increase in support for school choice. A RealClear Opinion poll conducted this past June indicated an increase in this support across the board, including for parents being able to direct how to spend some or all of COVID money set aside for K-12 education. Most surprising is the fact that in just over a year, support for school choice from registered Democrats increased from 59 percent to 70 percent, which bodes ill for the decades-old alliance between the party and the teachers' unions.

The educational establishment's spate of saber-rattling reveals the weakness of its commitment to the families it supposedly serves. Although it still possesses incredible resources, it fears real competition like never before. It is high time that American parents treat the educrats like the paper tigers they are and declare their independence by embracing the other educational options available in a free society.