

**Woods:** This book of yours, *Crimes of the Educators*, is extremely broad in terms of the topics it hits on. It's not just an essay about the difficulties with American education. It takes on one specific topic after another, all of which are controversial and all of which are very important. Let's start off by having you give us the basic overview of the book, what the basic message is and why you and Samuel Blumenfeld wrote it. Then I want to pelt you with questions about some of the specific claims in it.

**Newman:** Excellent. I guess the overarching theme here is the point we really, really want people to come away with is that what's going on in the government schools, these unimaginably terrible results that we're seeing. Everybody acknowledges that education is in a crisis. But the case that we make is that this is all deliberate. The children are not becoming dumb by accident. It's not some kind of huge, national oops kind of thing. This was a very deliberate, strategic plan that was implanted to dumb down the American children and we argue that this is criminal.

We point out a variety of activities and goings on in the school that we consider to be criminal activities that ought to be prosecuted. I think that's our biggest message here because everybody understands that that schools are messed up and nobody's learning anything. People can't even read their high school diplomas. But people assume that they're well-intentioned and maybe people just don't understand how to run the school system and it's an accident, but it's not an accident. It's deliberate and we have the documents to prove it.

**Woods:** Are you saying that the solution as we move into the future is to try to reform the government school system so that the bad people have less influence?

**Newman:** Well what we argue is that first of all the education establishment needs to be exposed and defunded, so we need to get rid of the Department of Education. The solution that Sam and I both see is just kind of opening up the market place. There needs to be more choice. There needs to be more options. More people need to homeschool. We need a more robust private school system. The states can be free to try their own things. Local districts can be free to try their own things. But right now we're moving in the exact opposite direction. We're moving toward centralization at the national level and even at the international level. They're talking about global standards. The UNESCO has the World Core curriculum.

We argue that we're basically at a fork in the road here where you're either going to go toward more centralization, which is going to produce more and more disaster, or we can move toward more freedom, educational liberty, where parents take a leading role and churches run schools and communities and private organizations and charities. Just let the free market work. The government system has clearly failed. It's in obvious need of reform if it's even salvageable at this point and that's a big if. We argue that freedom is the solution here.

**Woods:** Your overall claim is going to sound shocking to a great many people. I'm sure you don't shy away from being provocative. I do want to point out to people who might be skeptical of what you're saying that if you read the *New Republic* magazine from the Progressive Era, because they got started around 1914, 1913, right around there. Couple of the worst years in U.S. history they got started. You read the issues they put out in those years. You read what they had to say about World War I. They don't just say the United States needs to get into World War I because the Germans are a threat and we have to stop them. They also say there will be great domestic consequences if we get involved because we will be able to wean Americans away from their silly traditional views of private property and individual rights and the traditional way Americans have always lived. Regionalism, states' rights, localism, all those things will go by the wayside during the war because people will get used to the government interfering in private property. They'll get used to all kinds of decision-making being made at higher levels than they had been made at previously.

In other words, they looked at World War I as a great educational opportunity to foist on the American public. If these same people who were also behind progressive education, they think World War I is a great educational opportunity, think of what education itself would be for these people. It would be a great opportunity to shape minds in a particular way.

**Newman:** That's exactly right. We traced this back originally to John Dewey. He's kind of the founding father of the modern progressive education system and those were exactly his goals as he stated himself. His idea was to move America from this individualistic free market kind of traditional values republic with a constitution and individual rights and private property toward a socialist, collectivist utopia. He cited *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy. It was a novel published in 1888, a fantasy about a communist America by the year 2000. This utopia where there was no private property and everybody worked for the good of the community

and all this nice stuff. That's what Dewey and his cohorts envisioned for America, but they knew that as long as America remained the most highly literate on the planet, I mean everybody know how to read. It was just required.

We set up the schools so people could read their Bibles. It was just obvious that everybody needed to read. Dewey didn't like that. He considered that reading was a very private activity and it promoted individualism, suppressed notions of collectivism, and the social good, and the common good and all these things. He set out to destroy literacy, the foundations of literacy in this country. He wrote about the plan. We republished one of his essays called "The Primary Education Fetish," where he outlines this idea that we need to get reading out of the primary schools and kids should focus more on social activities.

One of their chief methods for accomplishing this was to change the way that people learned how to read. We have a phonetic alphabet. The letters each have a sound associated with them and they work together in a certain way and then you decode the meaning of the word and then the sentence. Dewey and his fellow Progressives, is the term they like for themselves, they decided that the kids should learn how to read using this look-say, whole-word sight method. They have all kind of different nice terms to conceal what this really is. But in a nutshell, they're teaching the kids to learn English as if it were Chinese. They look at the word and they're supposed to memorize it and associate it with a concept, just like you would with a pictographic language like Chinese or hieroglyphics. That's not how our language is supposed to work. There's a handful of people who can memorize enough words that make it work, but there's a lot of people who can't.

They promoted this method. They took over the teachers' colleges. They got a lot of money from the Rockefellers and others to do this. Now we see the results today. This system is in virtually every government school in the country. The federal government itself understands the problem. They did a literacy survey in 1993 and they found that 55% of American adults could barely read. The schools are cranking out illiterates by the millions and it's costing us hundreds of billions of dollars to do it and these kids can't even read their high school diploma. Obviously this is a disaster and more importantly it was a deliberately engineered disaster for the exact purpose that you just described. They wanted to change the values of the American people toward collectivism and socialism rather than individualism and free markets.

**Woods:**

I wrote a book back in 2004 called *The Church Confronts Modernity*. It was published by Columbia University Press. It is an expanded version of my doctoral dissertation, which is why it sold so few copies. But one of the important points in that does involve Progressive education and it talks about John Dewey.

In particular it's interesting to note what his view of the Catholic schools was because from his point of view, he wants everybody in the government schools so that he can push the particular agenda he wants pushed. If somebody's allowed to go to some other type of school, this undermines the whole plan. He said in there, and I wish I had the quotation right in front of me, but he truly viewed the Catholic school system as a sinister force in a democracy because his view was that in a democracy, according to his definition of the word, the people need to be very flexible in their points of view. They need to be able to change their views kind of on a dime. When the Progressive planners tell them they need to think this way, they need to be prepared to abandon their older views and now think this way. They need to be flexible. Ready to change with the times. Ready to change with what the judges now tell them the constitution means. Ready to change. The Catholic schools are teaching them dogmatic truths. Well, this runs completely contrary to the whole Progressive outlook. He viewed it as a terrible scourge, which I found revealing.

Second thing I would point out is more anecdotal. In my own experience in academia years ago, I found exactly what you're saying. Almost no student I ever had could write at all. Almost none of them could write competently. If they could write competently, I would have been happy. I'm not even looking for elegant prose. I'm looking for competence.

But then I assigned a book by Thomas Sowell. I'm sure you like Thomas Sowell. He's also written on education. He's written on civil rights and so on. I assigned them a book Sowell wrote, not for other scholars, he wrote it for the general public, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?*, a wonderful little book from the mid-1980s. I wanted them to see all these myths that have been perpetrated about affirmative action and this and that.

What I found was not that they found the book controversial; they found it impossible to understand. This is a book written for the general public to help them evaluate public policy, to help them understand what's going on in the world. Even my brightest students could not make head nor tail of this book. I loved this book. It's a wonderful book. It's devastating. It's fun to read. They

can't understand anything about it. I don't even expect you to comment on that because what can you say?

**Newman:** It's just a symptom of exactly what we're talking about, Tom. The illiteracy in the United States is so widespread. The implications of this are terrifying. People can't even read their Constitution. How are we supposed to preserve liberties if people can't even understand the basic, most fundamental facts about what the republic is based on, much less relatively complex books and all the works of culture and history and literature works that came down through the centuries and the Bible? Actually this has been going on for quite some time now. We're creating generations of people who have no ability to acquire knowledge independently. They can't pick up a book and read it. They have to rely on what the talking heads on television tell them and what the teachers, the Progressive educators in the schools tell them.

The long-term outlook under this kind of system is not going to be good for anybody who values liberty or anything that's associated with markets and knowledge even. Because we are at a point now where illiteracy is so wide spread, critical thinking abilities have been reduced, it's getting all worse.

Under the Common Core for example, they're rolling out this Look Say method everywhere. Just something like half of the Catholic schools have agreed to adopt it. Even homeschooling now is in the crosshairs of the Progressive educators because exactly what you said before about John Dewey. As long as you have some people outside of the system, there's still going to be that little kid to point out the emperor has no clothes. Now we're seeing a fiendish attack on the people who are educating children properly. If parents don't wake up and if tax payers don't wake up and realize what's going on here, this is all just going to keep going downhill to the point where I don't even want to think about the future.

**Woods:** I don't want to give people a false impression of the book because most of what you're talking about is a series of evaluations of what's going on right now, with reference to history to be sure. But you're talking about a lot of topics that are in the news today, about ADD and ADHD and the drugs that are used and the crazy math that is being taught and as you say the method of reading. Let's say a little bit more about that.

Presumably at this point enough time has passed that we can evaluate, in terms of achievement in reading, the effectiveness of traditional phonics and the old

sounding out of words as versus this so-called Whole Word method. It's not even a contest I understand, right?

**Newman:** That's exactly right. Actually this was known to John Dewey and his cohorts even when they were promoting this. They had done experiments with the Look Say and the Sight method back in the 1830s, 1840s and Boston even tried it out for a while. It was such a miserable failure that it was just considered quackery. Nobody would you teach a kid to read English as if it were Chinese. The phonics method is what works. It's what has been used for time immemorial because we have a phonetic alphabet and a phonetic writing system. It's not even logical to try to teach using the Whole Word method.

We bring that, you're right, all the way up to today with what's going on. At this point even a lot of the books that are marketed as phonics are not phonics, they're the Sight method. I'll give you an example. We just bought some for my son and they're supposed to be phonics books. You open up and the very first page is a list of words you need to memorize.

You don't learn to read by memorizing what words look like. That's exactly what you would do in for example, the Chinese language or in Egyptian hieroglyphics. It's not logical for the type of alphabet and the type of language that we have, but that's what's going on all across the country. The Common Core promotes this. Even the pre-kindergarten and the kindergarten books that are "aligned with the national standards," the Common Core that the Obama administration is pushing and Bill Gates is pushing, this is all based on the Look Say, on the Sight method. Even UNESCO, the UN education agency, they're pushing this at the global level. We quote from them in the book as well. They have a document on how children need to learn to read. They say we can throw in a little bit of phonics there, but for the most part we just need to rely on the Whole Word method. We know this doesn't work. These people know that this method is quackery.

Now the teachers in the schools probably have no idea. They go through the teachers' colleges as required and they're taught that this is how you teach kids to read. That's what they learn in their textbooks. That's what they hear from their professors. We argue that in a sense they're just as much victims as the students that they're victimizing.

The Progressive education establishment understands full well what they're doing. This has been known, again, since the early 1800s when the first

experiments were done with it. Then in the 50s we had *Why Johnny Can't Read* by Flesch. We've seen this continue all the way up to the present day. The government has noted some of the symptoms of it, like Ronald Reagan put together the National Commission on Educational Excellence. They said, hey, if a foreign power had imposed this educational mediocrity on our country we would have considered it an act of war. We argued that it should be considered an act of war. Just because foreign power didn't impose it, doesn't mean that it's any less serious to destroy the minds of the American people for nefarious purposes. If a parent did that, they would be prosecuted.

**Woods:** We did an episode of this show on Common Core some time ago, so I will link to that on the show notes page for this episode which will be [TomWoods.com/390](http://TomWoods.com/390). Of course we'll be linking to your book, *Crimes of the Educators*, there. But we should say little something about Common Core. You've already brought it up. I want to just read to you a paragraph from a short article that appeared on *The American Conservative* website. This article is meant to suggest that maybe the concern over Common Core is misplaced. I want you to answer it. The paragraph reads, "All proponents and opponents of Common Core should take a good look at the standards themselves. When one actually looks at the material it becomes clear that they focus on skills, not content. To use one analogy, the Common Core does not say how you should teach your child to ride a bike. That is up to your discretion. But Common Core will test your child on their ability to ride the bike proficiently. Thus, one cannot really "adopt" Common Core for curriculum. It doesn't really provide curricular content. One could use it to measure the difficulty and proficiency of one's curriculum, but that's slightly different." Do you think that's an accurate assessment?

**Newman:** Unfortunately, not at all. Actually Bill Gates, the guy who put more than two billion dollars of his own money behind Common Core, made that quite clear to us. In 2009 he was speaking to the National Conference of State Legislators and he said, once we have the Common Core and once the tests are aligned to the Common Core, then the curriculum is going to be aligned with it as well.

They're talking about the standards maybe not being that bad. Let's just look at the experts that they put on the Common Core validation committee. They had two subject matter experts, one for math and one for English. The one for English, Dr. Sandra Stotsky, I've spoken with her before. She's a wonderful woman. She's not opposed to national standards per se, which is probably one of the reasons she was selected to serve on this committee. It was supposed to

be kind of a rubber stamp committee I think. She said, no way, I'm not signing off on this. This is going to reduce the critical thinking abilities of children. We're taking out all of the great literature and all of the classics and replacing it with "informational texts." The Common Core does give some examples of what kind of informational texts should be used. Obama executive orders, EPA regulations on insulation in your roof, things like that. She argues that these are terrible. They don't even come close to comparing to decent standards that they had in places like Massachusetts and she refused to sign off on them.

Then we can look at Dr. James Milgram, the math expert. He's a professor at Stanford in mathematics. He said, no, I'm not signing off on this. He wrote a big letter explaining why he wasn't going to. I encourage people to read it. It will blow your mind. Among other concerns, he said, some of this stuff is based on incorrect math. We're now rolling out a set of national standards that's going to apply to basically the whole country, even the states that didn't join Common Core are being ensnared in this, that is based partly on incorrect math. He also blasts the silly methodologies that are used in Common Core. I can't tell you how many teachers I've talked to who say, hey, this isn't how you teach math. This has to come first. I can't do this in my classroom. The kids are just getting confused, and they cry and they think they're stupid. They're not stupid, the standards are stupid. The only two subject matter experts on the rubber-stamped committee selected by the Common Core people refused to sign off on it. That should give people an idea about how terrible these standards actually are. Even if we accept the notion that we ought to have a set of national standards to begin with.

**Woods:** What can you say about, at least briefly because I've also done an episode, I had an author on, a doctor who not very controversially argues that ADHD is being overdiagnosed. He also argues that autism is being over diagnosed. I've already covered that topic, but your chapter heading for that chapter is Drug Pushing: "The Cure" for ADD and ADHD. What did you find there?

**Newman:** It's not just ADHD and ADD. What we found is that a lot of these so-called psychiatric problems and behavioral issues are being caused by what the schools are doing. Dyslexia is another good example. They're teaching kids to read the wrong way and their brain is getting wired backwards. Then they can't read properly and they diagnose it with this quack medical label.

Sam has done the experiments. He's taken kids who are supposed to be with dyslexia and things like this and taught them how to read using phonics. What he

finds is that he can “cure” them. They don’t have dyslexia anymore after they learn how to read with phonics. We argue that what’s going on with the ADD and the ADHD is a very similar thing. They’re harming the minds of these children. Nobody can sit still when, maybe the kids don’t understand exactly what’s happening, but they know that this isn’t right, so they act out, they don’t sit still, they’re not interested in learning this propaganda. Then instead of dealing with the root cause of the problem, which is what the schools are doing to the children, they push hard drugs on them. Make no mistake, these drugs that they’re using for ADD and ADHD, these are really serious drugs. I mean this is like crystal meth that you just happen to get at the pharmacy. These are heavy duty amphetamines. The idea that we ought to be medicating eight-year-old boys with hard drugs, it’s mind-boggling.

**Woods:** You point out toward the end of your book that this is not a phenomenon that’s isolated here in the United States. It’s not limited to the United States, that we see similar pedagogical trends taking place all over the world. Where’s it all going? What’s the end goal of all this?

**Newman:** Right. The amazing thing about this topic is that they’re so open about it, actually. One of the things that I did for the book was I spent a lot of time going through UNESCO documents and training manuals for teachers, speeches by Arne Duncan, Obama’s Education Secretary. They’re basically telling us flat out where this is all going and what we’re doing. Arne Duncan, for example, brags to UNESCO. He gives a speech to UNESCO. He calls them his global partner in global education reform, which of course is taking place here as well. He says, we’re creating the next generation of green, global citizens ready for their green jobs in the green sustainable world order. You know, green is just the new red. I call them watermelons; you know green on the outside, red on the inside. If you look at the policies they’re promoting, they’re practically the same. Obama’s green job czar was actually a self-described communist revolutionary. That’s why he was forced to resign.

Then you look at what UNESCO is doing and it all lines up very well. UNESCO just recently, last week actually, this happened after we put out our book, they put out a report on much progress they were making on their Education for All initiative. This is an effort to standardize education globally. They’ve decided that all humans require certain knowledge and they’re going to define what knowledge the humans require. They’re going to make sure that’s it’s taught in schools around the world. Among other knowledge that humans requires is

pornographic sex education from the time they're about five years old. You can look at the manuals. I won't even talk about it here because some of it is so outrageous. It's not appropriate for a talk show. They're pushing this in schools all over the world.

The UN also has this thing called the Sustainable Education for All, so we're moving into this 21<sup>st</sup> century of sustainability they call it. They're so blunt. One of the quotes that I think was most interesting to me, they say, higher education and more education leads to higher incomes. Higher income means more consumption of goods and services and resources and therefore more education is not compatible with sustainable development. Now, if we're having all this education for sustainable development and the green world order that they're bragging about and more education is not compatible with sustainable development. They're basically telling you right upfront what they're doing here. They don't want educated citizens. They want indoctrinated citizens. They're teaching them nonsense in history, in science, in environmentalism.

If you listen to what they're saying, they're practically telling us that we're moving toward a new era of global central planning. That's what all this data collection is for. UNESCO says we need similar data collection all around the world. We need all kids to be learning. They even developed a world core curriculum, believe it or not. Bill Gates signed an agreement with them in 2004 with UNESCO to develop a master curriculum, but they already had a world core curriculum developed by Robert Muller. He was the Deputy Secretary General of the UN. He was kind of a new age weird guy. He was a self-described disciple of Alice Bailey. She's the founder of the Lucifer Publishing Company. She said, spirit entities would come into her and she would write these books about education and the New Age. You know, really influential in UN circles.

I encourage people to read what these people are saying because they're telling us where they're going. The only reason people aren't aware of it is because the media isn't connecting the dots. What we do is we take the primary source documents and quote from them and if you want to argue with it, take it up with UNESCO.