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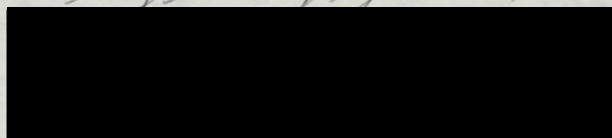
Dear Mr. Lamb,

If you haven't addressed  
Oct Come Based Education on  
C-Span I hope you will.

Most parents haven't any idea  
what is happening to their children  
and they must be made  
aware.

The public schools are condemning  
our children to a life of failure.  
I understand its even spreading  
to some of the private schools.

Very truly yours,



Mass. N.Y. 11758

# What's wrong with outcome-based education?

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**O**utcome-Based Education (OBE) is sweeping the country in the name of school "restructuring." OBE calls for a complete change in the way children are taught, graded and graduated, kindergarten through 12th grade. Since the American people seem ready to accept drastic surgery on our failed public schools, state departments of education are seizing this opportunity to force acceptance of OBE as the cure. But OBE has parents even more agitated than they are about explicit sex education. Crowds of a thousand or more parents are known to have gathered in Pennsylvania, Oklahoma and Ohio. Here is a summary of the ten major objections that parents have raised against OBE.

**1.** OBE is packaged in a deceptive language that appears to be mischievously chosen to mislead parents. Public school administrators have an obligation to present their "reform" plans in plain English so that parents can easily understand the objectives, the methods, the content, and exactly how OBE is different from traditional schooling.

OBE advocates continually use double-entendre expressions that parents assume mean one thing but really mean something different in the OBE context. When they talk about "new basics," for example, they are not talking about academics such as reading, writing and arithmetic, but OBE attitudes and outcomes. When they talk about "higher order thinking skills" or "critical thinking," they mean a relativistic process of questioning traditional moral values.

The following statement from OBE literature is typical: "OBE schools are expected to become 'success based' rather than 'selection oriented' by establishing the instructional management procedures and delivery conditions which enable all students to learn and demonstrate those skills necessary for continued success." OBE salespersons don't tell parents that "success" for all children means "success" in demonstrating only the dumbed-down outcomes that the slowest learners in the class can attain. OBE means "success" in mediocrity rather than excellence.

**2.** OBE uses students as guinea pigs in a vast social experiment. OBE advocates are not able to produce any replicable research or pilot studies to show that it works. OBE is being forced on entire state school systems without any evidence that it has been tried anywhere and found effective.

The best test of all OBE-type systems was Chicago's experiment in the 1970s with Professor Benjamin Bloom's Mastery Learning (ML), which is essentially the same as OBE. ML was a colossal failure and was abandoned in disgrace in 1982. The test scores proved to be appallingly low and the illiteracy rate became a national scandal. Bloom, the father of ML, is well known for his statement that "the purpose of education is to change the thoughts, feelings and actions of students." (*All Our Children Learning*, page 180.)

Dr. Bill Spady, sociologist and director of the International Center on Outcome-Based Restructuring, defined the connection between OBE and Mastery Learning in an article entitled "On Outcome Based Education: A Conversation with Bill Spady" (*Educational Leadership*, Dec. 1992-Jan. 1993): "In January of 1980 we convened a meeting of 42 people to form the Network for Outcome-Based Schools. Most of the people who were there—Jim

Block, John Champlin—had a strong background in Mastery Learning, since it was what OBE was called at the time. But I pleaded with the group not to use the name 'mastery learning' in the network's new name because the word 'mastery' had already been destroyed through poor implementation."

The major OBE/ML experiment, which took place in Utah in 1984-86, shows how federal funding enabled OBE to spread nationwide. A letter applying for the federal grant, written by Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction G. Leland Burningham to then U.S. Secretary of Education T. H. Bell (July 27, 1984), stated: "This [project] will make it possible to put Outcome-Based Education in place, not only in Utah but in all schools of the nation." Spady's Far West Regional Laboratory received the federal grant and he was made director of this pilot project, which is now implementing OBE/ML nationwide.

**3.** OBE offers no method of accountability to students, parents, teachers, or taxpayers. Since OBE includes no objective standards of achievement that are measurable, it will be years and millions of tax dollars into the future before we know whether school children are learning anything important or are wasting their time. Educators admit that OBE is very expensive since each student works at his own pace at mastering every outcome/skill/behavior until he succeeds. Perhaps this is what they mean by "lifelong learning."

For as long as most of us can remember, secondary schools have been structured on a measurable grid called the "Carnegie unit." The traditional high school curriculum includes four units of English; three units each of mathematics, science and social studies; two units each of arts and humanities; a unit of health and physical education; and several electives. After you complete enough units (usually 21), you receive a high school diploma and colleges will admit you.

Outcome-Based Education tosses these traditional units out the window and replaces them with vague and subjective "learning outcomes" that cannot be measured objectively by standardized tests and for which there is no accountability to parents and taxpayers. OBE will make it virtually impossible to conduct any kind of tests that allow comparisons with students in other schools, other states, or prior years. Under OBE, grades have no relation to academic achievement and knowledge. Colleges will have no criteria by which to judge whether students are ready for admission.

In the elementary grades, OBE does not teach children essential reading, writing, and arithmetic skills (such as addition, subtraction and multiplication tables), but pretends to teach them "higher order thinking skills" instead. OBE ignores the obvious fact that OBE can't engage in "higher order thinking" until OBE has some facts to think about. For example, an Iowa State OBE assessment test for the 11th grade shows no requirement of math skills beyond the fundamental computations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

**4.** OBE is a dumbed-down egalitarian scheme that stifles individual potential for excellence and achievement by holding the entire class to the level of learning attainable by every child. To accomplish this, children are placed in Politically Correct groups (race, ethnicity, gender, class) for "cooperative learning" and may

be given a group grade instead of individual grades. Cooperative learning researchers admit that the purpose of this strategy is to eliminate grading and competition in the classroom. This is the essence of OBE and explains why all measurable criteria—standardized tests, the Carnegie units, traditional subject-matter, and report cards—must be eliminated.

OBE is based on the unrealistic notion that every child in a group can learn to the designated level and must demonstrate mastery of specific outcomes before the group can move on. The faster learners are not allowed to progress, but are given busy work called "horizontal enrichment" or told to do "peer tutoring" to help the slower learners, who are recycled through the material until the predetermined behavior is exhibited.

Cooperative learning researcher Robert Slavin said in "Mastery Learning Reconsidered" (funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1987): "If some students take much longer than others to learn a particular objective, then . . . either corrective instruction must be given outside of regular class time, or students who achieve mastery early on will have to waste considerable amounts of time waiting for their classmates to catch up." If OBE were applied to basketball, the basket would have to be lowered so all could score equally.

In order to master all outcomes, children with a particular talent are required to forfeit time in their area of strength. Because no child moves ahead until all demonstrate mastery, the inevitable happens: the faster learners quickly learn to slow their pace in order to avoid extra work, and they just give the answers to the slower learners so the group can move forward. Incentive and motivation are reduced, and boredom and resentment increased. The result is that all students demonstrate "mastery" of mediocrity, and none can aspire to excellence. **Every child** loses under this system.

**5.** In an OBE system, academic and factual subject matter is replaced by vague and subjective learning outcomes. According to OBE guru Bill Spady, "the traditional subject-based curriculum disappears" from OBE. New OBE report cards substitute check marks for grades, focusing on general skills, attitudes, and behaviors instead of individual subjects.

A look at the outcomes that have so far been made public show that they are heavily layered with such "Politically Correct" notions as training for world citizenship and government (instead of patriotism), population control, radical environmentalism, and government "solutions" for every problem.

**6.** A high percentage of OBE "outcomes" concern values, attitudes, opinions and relationships rather than objective information. A large number of OBE's goals are affective (concerned with emotions and feelings) rather than academic (concerned with knowledge and skills). OBE requires students to meet vague psychological objectives relating to self-esteem, ethical judgment, and adaptability to change. Moving from one level to the next, and even graduation, is dependent on meeting behavior-change requirements and government-mandated attitudes.

OBE thus involves a major change in the school's avowed mission. Henceforth, its mission is to conform student beliefs, attitudes and behavior to prescribed school-mandated social norms, rather than to provide an academic education. Parents are concerned about what methods will be used to change behaviors that are deemed incorrect.

"Self-esteem" is a major attitudinal outcome demanded by OBE. Many of the techniques used to change a child's self-esteem or his adaptability to change are psychotherapeutic. This amounts to prac-

ticing psychology without a license as well as engaging in unprofessional group therapy. Arizona recently made an attempt to protect its school personnel by providing them with civil and criminal immunity.

Parents who are trying to rear their children with strong religious values are concerned that willingness to go along with the crowd is taught by OBE as a positive rather than a negative attitude. Since "tolerance" is a major attitudinal outcome demanded by OBE, parents are concerned that this includes "tolerance" for extra-marital lifestyles of all kinds. The non-directive "decision-making" classroom technique leads children to believe they are mature enough to make decisions about sex and drugs that parents believe are unhealthy and may even be illegal.

The public school establishment is highly secretive about the OBE tests, but tests that have come to light include many questions of attitude and opinion for which there are no right or wrong answers. What is the correct answer, for example, to questions about whether the student "understands others" or "applies good consumer behavior?" Nevertheless, the student is required to conform to the government-mandated outcomes, whatever they are.

OBE raises the fundamental question of who should decide what values, attitudes, and beliefs a child should be taught. Should it be the parents or the U.S. Department of Education, which funded OBE? Should the public schools be allowed to teach values that may be controversial and sometimes even contradictory to values taught to children by their parents?

Behavior modification is fundamental to achieving OBE-type results. OBE uses "stimulus-response-stimulus" pattern, a rewards-and-punishment process based on Ivan Pavlov's and B.F. Skinner's programmed learning/behaviors modification techniques. Under OBE, students are recycled through the process until they meet the mandated outcomes.

Educators see computer-assisted instruction (CAI) as a powerful programmed-learning tool to change children's values. Here are some samples of their thinking. "The computer is ideally suited to the role of facilitator in values education. It inherently possesses the Rogerian qualities of genuineness and congruence.... Values clarification and values analysis are aptly suited to being used as a basis for software development." ("Can Computers Teach Values?" *Educational Leadership*, April 1982.) "The computer will work on the principle that students' attitudes can be changed effectively by using the Socratic method of asking an appropriate series of leading questions logically designed to right the balance between appropriate attitudes and those deemed less acceptable." (Donald Bushnell, "The Role of the Computer in Future Instructional Systems," *AV Communication Review*, 1963.)

**7.** OBE sets up a computer file on each child to track the child's efforts to master the learning outcomes. These "electronic portfolios" will take the place of traditional assessments and test results and will become the basis for the school's efforts to remediate whatever attitudes and behaviors the school deems unacceptable. The portfolios will include all school, psychological and medical records, and are to be available to prospective employers after graduation.

The computer portfolio on each child plays an essential role in the tracking of individual students. The computer records how the child responds to behavior modification, what is his threshold of resistance to remediation, and whether he develops positive attitudes toward the mandated outcomes.

Parents are concerned about who will have access to these files

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and what will become of the data compiled on each student. Professional journals describe the goals like this: "The computer's vast storage capacity permits access to a much broader base of data than just one classroom. In fact, the response of the entire population of a school system could easily be compiled, stored and shared." (*Educational Leadership*, April 1982.) Student privacy is tossed out the window. Will the child be able to get a job if he has not demonstrated the OBE values and Politically Correct attitudes? Some have suggested that state law should forbid employers to hire anyone who does not have a certificate showing mastery of the government-mandated outcomes.

**8.** OBE is a method for concealing and perpetuating the number-one crime of the public school system—the failure to teach first graders how to read. OBE is wholly committed to the "whole language," word-guessing method, rather than the phonics method. This ensures that children will learn only to memorize a few words that are massively repeated. Teachers are cautioned not to correct spelling and syntax errors because that could be damaging to the student's self esteem and creativity.

The education elitists who are promoting OBE are perfectly content to have the schools turn out quotas of semi-literate workers who can be trained to perform menial tasks under supervision in order to serve the demands of the global economy. OBE graduates will never be able to aspire to enjoy the great literature in the English language.

The rationale was explained by well-known reading researcher Thomas Sticht, who said in 1987, "Many companies have moved operations to places with cheap, relatively poorly educated labor. What may be crucial, they say, is the dependability of a labor force and how well it can be managed and trained—not its general educational level, although a small cadre of highly educated creative people is essential to innovation and growth. Ending discrimination and changing values are probably more important than reading in moving low-income families into the middle class." (*Washington Post*, August 17, 1987.)

The U.S. Department of Labor is a big player in the OBE movement. OBE will aid in managing and training the work force by tracking all students beginning in the 4th grade and routing them through vocational education tracks as needed. Functional literacy competencies are defined as an ability to read a map and a bus schedule. Sticht is also a member of the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and, as Associate Director for Basic Skills at the National Institute of Education, promoted similar techniques called "competency education" and "mastery teaching." (*Washington Post*, August 17, 1977).

**9.** OBE, of course, involves high costs for administration and the retraining of teachers in an entirely new system which will be reflected in higher school taxes. The computer portfolio system is reported to be five times as expensive as traditional assessment tests. Putting computers into the hands of first-graders to give the facade of moving into modern technology is a gross waste of funds. Computers may actually be a detriment to learning elementary writing and arithmetic skills, but they may be very useful in changing values, as noted above.

**10.** OBE involves tightened state control at the expense of local control. Although OBE salespersons claim otherwise, the new system tightens the grip of state education officials and federal education laboratories because they write the required outcomes, develop the curriculum, train the teachers, and judge the performance of the students (all of whom must conform to national goals).

Even though local school districts may be told to develop their own plan for achieving the designated outcomes, the plans must be approved by the state departments of education. Texas Commissioner of Education Lionel Meno gave his definition of local control (*Texas Lone Star*, June 1991): "The state sets the goals, the local districts choose how they will comply."

Teachers will not be able to get around the OBE system, and teach the basics anyway, because the teachers are graded on how their class meets the outcomes. Teachers who do not conform will be phased out, and the schools will be taken over by the state, as is mandated in Kentucky.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the famous Russian author and former political prisoner in Soviet Gulags, said in a speech in the mid-1970s: "Coexistence on this tightly knit earth

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should be viewed as an existence not only without wars...but also without [government] telling us how to live, what to say, what to think, what to know, and what not to know."

Unfortunately, that's what Outcome-Based Education is—a process for government telling our children how to live, what to say, what to think, what to know, and what not to know. What the children say, think and know must conform to the liberal politically correct ideology, attitudes and behavior. What they do not know will be everything else. And because they won't know the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, they won't be able to find out. OBE is converting the three R's to the three D's: Deliberately Dumbed Down. 

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