

2. Social Studies: To educate or to school?

[Article 2 of 10: Examines the complicated proposal to revise how social studies is taught and the unexpected and unacceptable consequence of the attempt.]

To whom does an education belong is the question that put Socrates' life at risk. Athenians executed him in 399 BC for daring to ask. When schooling belongs to the state, authorities can mold students to maintain their power. When it belongs to individuals, they learn to recognize and defend against self-serving government. The Social Studies Framework (SSF) is the latest salvo in this ongoing war.

Magicians distract audiences with illusions. Framework designers distract using Common Core Literacy Standards. Lessons are chock full of material that masks that useful knowledge has been elbowed aside. Complexity covers behavioral training methods that reinforce feelings at the expense of reasoning. Rather than lift students up, the weight of the material keeps students

down.

Just like Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer enticed his friends to want to whitewash Aunt Polly's fence, SSF advocates conned others to want to change the curriculum. They packed a vision of "college and career ready" full of requirements, key ideas, and themes all monitored by evaluations to measure "achievements":

- Parents want college for their children.
- Districts want federal funding, despite the strings.
- Content producers want yearly income.
- Tech vendors want hardware sales.
- Teachers want cookie-cutter lesson plans, organizers, and computerized test marking.
- Elected officials want control.
- Behavioral educationists want culture molded in their image.

Everyone wins but students, cast deep into the fog by "critical thinking" far different from sound analytical skills. Absent

foundational knowledge, students can't mine history for useful patterns.

Too many teachers seem publicly unperturbed about the flaw. Many are more expert in teaching techniques than they are in history, economics, or political theory and much of what they have been required to teach has been peripheral.

Framework designers may not be ideologically driven. They simply may not believe independent individuals value community. They prefer docile conformity, not individual humanity allowed to mature. Citizens should expect real education would arm individuals to defend against such impostors who would chew them up for food.

[Article 3 will examine the social studies culture war at the lesson level. Further articles tease apart the social studies frameworks to show what has been perpetrated on the states.]