

# Indoctrination Has Always Been the Goal of Progressive Education

In recent years, many Americans have adopted the idea that public education is neutral ground. Such a mentality has undoubtedly sprung from the fact that the public school is the agent of the government, an entity which strives to keep itself clear from sectarian, political, or other ideological viewpoints.

But in recent years, the falsity of this idea has been coming to light. A prime example of this is the [Edina public schools](#), where teachers have been giving lessons driven through the lens of race, class, gender, and other social justice norms.

As [reports](#) indicate, such news has not gone over very well with parents, many of whom express shock and disappointment that their children are being indoctrinated rather than educated.

But these parents really shouldn't be surprised, for such an approach to education has been touted by progressives since at least the 1930s, if not sooner.

A [paper](#) written by George Counts in 1932 is a prime example of this fact. Counts, an educator who eventually went on to lead the American Federation of Teachers, was so bold to ask if the education system dared to build a new social order. He wrote:

*"If Progressive Education is to be genuinely progressive, it must emancipate itself from the influence of this class, face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all of its stark reality, establish an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and*

*challenging vision of human destiny, **and become less frightened than it is today at the bogies of imposition and indoctrination.***"

Counts went on to say that education in the 1930s was operating under several fallacies, one of which was the concept of valueless, or non-biased instruction:

*"There is the fallacy that the school should be impartial in its emphases, that no bias should be given instruction. ... **My thesis is that complete impartiality is utterly impossible, that the school must shape attitudes, develop tastes, and even impose ideas.***"

In order to accomplish this purpose, Counts recognized how necessary it was to line up biased tools to aid in the indoctrination process:

*"This means that some selection must be made of teachers, curricula, architecture, methods of teaching. And in the making of the selection the dice must always be weighted in favor of this or that. Here is a fundamental truth that cannot be brushed aside as irrelevant or unimportant; it constitutes the very essence of the matter under discussion. ... I am sure, however, that this means stacking the cards in favor of the particular systems of value which we may happen to possess. ... I would merely contend that as educators we must make many choices involving the development of attitudes in boys and girls and that we should not be afraid to acknowledge the faith that is in us or mayhap the forces that compel us."*

In essence, Counts understood that education is primarily values-based. Those values can be traditional, they can be progressive, or they can be something else, but inevitably, they will be whatever those at the head of the class or the

administrator's office or the school board intend them to be.

Given that this principle was recognized almost a century ago, does it not seem a bit naïve on the part of parents and concerned citizens to say that they had no idea that such indoctrination is occurring in the schools?

The larger question, however, concerns what we do with this knowledge. Is it time we allow parents to choose their child's education based upon the value system that they want instilled in their child?

[Image Credit: Public Domain]