

Arming Children for the Battle of Prepackaged Thinking

“I’m so glad to be back in the classroom!” a young high school student told me the other day.

Her enthusiasm is understandable. As one of the first students to get back to some form of normalcy in public schooling, she’s probably the envy of many others who want to be in person with their friends and teachers, even if their faces are obscured by masks.

Yet as students begin to head back to in-person school, a narrative is quickly emerging that goes something like this: Kids are behind. We need drastic measures to catch them up.

That first part is certainly true, and was so even prior to the pandemic based on the proficiency scores reported by the [Nation’s Report Card](#). The second part also has some truth to it, but the proposed solutions are, in essence, more time spent in woke or politically correct classrooms. At least if a [recent article by Anya Kamenetz](#) from *NPR* is anything to judge by.

Summer school is the number one recommendation on the list which Kamenetz puts forth. She also mentions tutoring, but then goes on to name “safer and more equitable schools” as her third recommendation.

Reading between the lines, this seems to be a code word for further governmental involvement in the everyday lives of families and children, including “support for mental health and needed accommodations” and “strong relationships with caring adults.” Students, Kamenetz reports, are also “asking for different content in the classroom,” a curricula focused

on “empathy” and celebrating diversity, exposing the “violent history of America.”

Forget about foreign language immersion programs. This is woke immersion at its finest.

Unfortunately, woke immersion programs have been on the rise for years. The effort to drive Shakespeare, long the gold standard of English literature, [from the classroom](#) is an example of this. Shakespeare represents “white supremacy” and a Westocentric view of the world. Teachers who dare to teach The Bard do so through a woke lens of “Marxist theory” and “toxic masculinity analysis.”

Even the area of [mathematics is not safe from woke culture](#). Recent training materials instruct teachers in ways to promote antiracism and create “a collective approach to dismantling white supremacy.” Said white supremacy “shows up in math classrooms,” the materials explain, when “the focus is on getting the ‘right’ answer,” or when teachers “treat mistakes as problems,” because such actions signal “*perfectionism*” and “*paternalism*.”

Schools may say they are helping kids “catch up,” but really they are just instilling them with a bunch of prepackaged thoughts.

These prepackaged thoughts were addressed by John Taylor Gatto in an essay entitled “[Confederacy of Dunces](#).” Dunces, Gatto wrote, are what schools produce best and on purpose. They are “the victims of the non-thought of secondhand ideas” who well know “the opinions of *Time* magazine and CBS, *The New York Times* and the President.” They are selective in “which pre-thought thoughts, which received opinions” they take to heart. Gatto goes on to say:

Mass dumbness is vital to modern society. The dumb person is wonderfully flexible clay for psychological shaping by market research, government policymakers, public-opinion leaders, and

any other interest group. The more pre-thought thoughts a person has memorized, the easier it is to predict what choices he or she will make. What dumb people cannot do is think for themselves or ever be alone for very long without feeling crazy. That is the whole point of national forced schooling; we aren't supposed to be able to think for ourselves because independent thinking gets in the way of 'professional' thinking, which is believed to follow rules of scientific precision.

What can parents do to make sure their children are not fed prepackaged woke talking points? Gatto provides wise advice to parents of all stripes, whether their children are in private or public schools or are homeschooled.

1. Teach Practical Skills

Students have "no idea how their own part fits into the whole," Gatto says. Teaching them practical skills such as gardening and carpentry, and even the basics of creating one's own entertainment, will help students understand how the world works. This in turn will make them far less susceptible to those who try to fill their minds with prepackaged woke thoughts.

2. Provide Real Books

When today's schools assign books, they often assign them with reading comprehension guides. Unfortunately, these prepackaged questions don't help children think outside the box, nor do they encourage an interest in reading. On the other hand, giving a child a book to read for fun and having him ask the questions and direct the conversation will expand his mind and foster an interest in reading, rather than killing it. "Books that show you the best questions to ask aren't just stupid," Gatto writes, "they hurt the intellect under the guise of helping it, just as standardized tests do."

3. Evaluate Experts

“It’s very useful to some groups that children are trained to be dependent on experts, to react to titles instead of judging the real men and women who hide behind the titles,” cautions Gatto. To avoid this, parents should teach their children to evaluate the “experts” around them. Does a certain “expert” have good character? Where does he get his information? What books and other experts does she readily appeal to? In doing so, children will be more likely to recognize and reject propaganda.

The battle for the hearts, minds, and souls of our children is only intensifying. Making sure that your child is equipped with tools to engage in the battle against prepackaged thoughts is the first step toward ensuring they won’t become another woke automaton.

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