

Fighting Schools to Save Education

This week an older reader, Ed, sent me an email lamenting the current state of education in our country. He gave several examples, including "I remember when I was about nine years old, my dad who didn't finish the Sixth Grade had to help my brother with Eighth Grade spelling."

Ed's email took me back six decades to the elementary school in Boonville, North Carolina, which I attended in grades 1-6.

During those years, we learned how to read and to write cursive. We memorized poetry and our multiplication tables, we studied history and absorbed basic facts of science, we belted out traditional American songs, said the Pledge of Allegiance, and celebrated holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas in the classroom.

Compared to today, our resources were limited. The school had no library other than a few shelves of books in the classrooms, and our meals in the cafeteria included dishes like tomato soup, grilled cheese sandwiches, and fatback delivered by local farmers. Recreation on the playground involved games like kickball, Red Rover, and for the boys, King of the Hill and wrestling. Cultural enrichment meant a visit from a Marine Corps recruiting officer in the fifth grade, some school plays, Christmas concerts, and a hypnotist who once made a high school girl walk and cackle like a chicken during a school assembly.

Pretty rinky-dink, yes?

In the seventh grade, at my own request, I entered Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, a school now long defunct. Twenty other boys were in my class, kids from places like Detroit, New York, and Washington D.C., boys whose educational

advantages far surpassed my own. My dad was a small-town doctor, but some of my classmates had fathers who were serving overseas as diplomats, or who worked in high-powered corporations and law firms. Many of my classmates had received an elementary school education a boy from a town of 600 souls in rural North Carolina could scarcely imagine. Compared to them, I was a hick, a country mouse surrounded by sophisticated city mice.

Despite these disparities, at year's end I somehow won the medal for being first in my class academically.

I still have that medal, buried in some box in the basement of the house where I live. Only now, more than five decades later, am I wondering how I managed to win it. How did it happen that I beat out nineteen of my classmates and got top academic honors for seventh grade?

Let me assure you that my success had little or nothing to do with my IQ. In a fit of pique, a Cuban-American teacher once shouted at Charlie, a friend and classmate of mine, "You have the highest IQ in junior school, but you won't do the work!" So it wasn't natural intelligence that explained my success.

Instead, I see now that much of the credit belongs to my elementary school teachers, those women who taught me the basics of subjects from math to literature, who schooled me in our country's heritage, and who demanded I perform to their expectations. I look back at them—Mrs. Fleming, Mrs. York, Mrs. Spear, and the others—and thank the powers that be they were my teachers when I was young.

From what I read, public school teachers like these and the basics they taught us have gone the way of petticoats and patched blue jeans. Many who devise the curriculum in our schools these days seem less concerned with teaching geometry or American history and more interested in social engineering: focusing on systemic racism, for example, or the latest sexual

fads. We've now reached the point where even the traditional ways of [teaching math](#) are considered racist.

I know I'm coming across here as a grumpy old guy looking at the past through rose-colored glasses, but I also personally know parents who believe the schools and the state are shanghaiing their kids through indoctrination and failing to give them a real education today.

Now some of those parents are banding together to make their voices heard. No Left Turn In Education is a [grassroots movement](#) of parents from all backgrounds that believe "K-12 education should be free from indoctrination and politicization." In their Mission Statement, the organizers declare that "Radical teachings motivated by a political agenda and deliberately spread by many teachers, administrators, school board members, and even state officials have infiltrated schools across the nation."

The founder of this group, Elena Yaron Fishbein, tells her story [here](#). I hope readers will take a few minutes to read it. At any rate, in just a few months, interest in No Left Turn and its call to return our schools to the teaching of traditional subjects "based on facts, investigation, logic and sound reasoning" has exploded.

Is it a case of too little too late? Have we passed the point where we might resuscitate the basics and teach real critical thinking in our classrooms?

Some might answer in the affirmative.

But my money is on the Mama Bears.

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advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#) and Gab [@CharlemagneInstitute](#)!

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