

# **The Deliberate Dumbing Down Of America**

by Charlotte Iserbyt

Charlotte Iserbyt is the consummate whistleblower! Iserbyt served as Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, during the first Reagan Administration, where she first blew the whistle on a major technology initiative which would control curriculum in America's classrooms. Iserbyt is a former school board director in Camden, Maine and was co-founder and research analyst of Guardians of Education for Maine (GEM) from 1978 to 2000. She has also served in the American Red Cross on Guam and Japan during the Korean War, and in the United States Foreign Service in Belgium and in the Republic of South Africa. Iserbyt is a speaker and writer, best known for her 1985 booklet Back to Basics Reform or OBE: Skinnerian International Curriculum and her 1989 pamphlet Soviets in the Classroom: America's Latest Education Fad which covered the details of the U.S.-Soviet and Carnegie-Soviet Education Agreements which remain in effect to this day. She is a freelance writer and has had articles published in Human Events, The Washington Times, The Bangor Daily News, and included in the record of Congressional hearings.

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## **Are children deliberately 'dumbed down' in school?**

Geoff Metcalf interviews former U.S. education adviser Charlotte Iserbyt

**Editor's Note:** Most parents want their children to receive a quality education. Yet, low test scores, drugs and violence on campus are increasingly prevalent in public schools and the disconnect between

occurring when so much time, money and attention are being directed toward improving education in the United States?

Today, WorldNetDaily staff writer and talk-show host Geoff Metcalf interviews someone who has some shocking answers, Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt. During the '80s, Iserbyt was a senior policy adviser in the U.S. Department of Education and has also written "The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America," a chronological history of the past 100 years of education reform. In this interview with Metcalf, she discusses the impact of the federal government, the United Nations and influential corporations on the American educational system and a little-known program called "School-To-Work."

By Geoff Metcalf

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**Question:** The first thing I have to ask you -- I'm still not sure if this is a blessing or a curse -- but ever since I returned to talk radio ten years ago, I promised myself I wouldn't interview any author until I read their book. I was intimidated when yours arrived in the mail.

**Answer:** I don't blame you.

**Q:** It is a big puppy. 714 pages worth.

**A:** It is a big baby.

**Q:** What led you to this project? You were with the Department of Education in the '80s -- why the book?

**A:** I actually started collecting research in the early '70s. I was on a local school board after living outside the country for 18 years for the United States Department of State. When I came back, I was very upset with the changes I had seen in our school district -- which had happened to be a pilot-school district for change. The kids were rolling around on the floor -- they didn't have to learn grammar or anything -- and I was

complained, I would go to school board meetings and ask very legitimate questions like, why don't they teach grammar?

**Q:** How dare you ask such a silly question?

**A:** And, finally, a retired teacher came to me and she said, "You are right on! I want you to go for some training to become a 'change agent.' We're going to find out what is going on." So, she paid for me to go to this training. The training came out of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and was funded by what was to become my office in the U.S. Department of Education. It was funded earlier in the '70s -- and it was still funded under Ronald Reagan, by the way. This particular project was called "Innovations in Education/Change Agents Guide."

**Q:** So what did you learn in the training?

**A:** I was taught how to identify the resisters in my community. Those people who -- good people -- good Americans who have seen and know clearly these programs in the schools were not there to help our children academically.

**Q:** Hold on. This sounds as if instead of any modification in curriculum, the objective was to go after the people who were complaining about changes in curriculum?

**A:** Complaining about "values clarification" and complaining about "sex ed" and complaining about all of these subjects that have education hanging off the end of them. You know, we didn't used to have "math education" and "reading education" -- that's not really education. When you have "education" hanging off of it, you know that they have another agenda (except for "Drivers Ed"). Anyway, these were the people in our communities in the '70s who were saying, "I don't like that sex education. I don't think it is up to schools to teach my children there's no right or wrong." And saying, "I don't like that drug education and what's that critical-thinking education?"

Q: Who were you?

A: I was a resister. I was actually being trained to identify myself. And I didn't like it. The other part of it was, I was trained to go to the highly-respected people in our community ...

Q: Wait a minute. So, once you identified these so-called resisters, these people who were critical of people who defend the indefensible, then what do you do?

A: That's a very good question. No other talk-show host has ever asked me that. It's a good question. What do you do? You identify them and then the superintendent will try to get them onto a task force and make them have "ownership" and ...

Q: Ahhh -- a re-education program?

A: Yeah -- you got it! That's a very good question -- really, truly -- I've never had a talk-show guy ask me that question.

Q: It seems like an obvious question.

A: It is a very obvious one, and that's why it took me a while to come up with an answer. But that's exactly what the reason was. And, then, the other thing I was going to do was to identify the important people in the community -- good people, good Americans who have really been used with the Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Garden Club -- go to them and convince them that these programs are vital to the survival of this country, of the world: The world is changing we have to have these programs.

I was really shocked. I was absolutely appalled. You have to remember: I had been out of the country 18 years and I had left a country that was red, white and blue, mom and apple pie, and all that.

A: Well, yeah! I was a dinosaur. I had lived in socialist countries and I had traveled in communist countries and I had seen a lot. And, I thought to myself: "What the [blank] is going on in my own country?"

Q: Charlotte, what about teachers? There are some good teachers who are genuinely dedicated ...

A: Many. Many, many more than most people think -- and they have to keep quiet.

Q: Yeah but what is their reaction when they are presented with these controversial, non-academic methodologies that don't have anything to do with teaching anyone anything?

A: They are very unhappy, and they try to continue to do something that does have something to do with teaching and learning. I just recently heard the state of Oregon has passed legislation to get rid of tenure. I was always opposed to tenure. Now I'm in favor of tenure because what they are going to do now ...

Q: ... now, see, I'm opposed to tenure. Why do you support it now?

A: Because of the way they are going to use it. Now, they can get rid of the good teachers without any problem. It used to be getting rid of the bad ones right? Now, they are going to get rid of the academic teachers. The teachers who do not agree with George Bush's education agenda -- you know the outcome-based, direct education, teach-to-the-test. These poor teachers -- these poor children -- and they do not agree in the changing of the definition of quality teaching.

Q: Charlotte, I'd like you to explain to our readers at what point did it become more important to manufacture this concept of self esteem -- and the fact that if you can "feel good" about the process, it doesn't matter what the results are. When did that happen?

set the agenda for the next hundred years and that was to change our country from a free, individualistic economy to a planned economy -- and to do it through the schools. And the way they would do it, would be to change the social studies so nobody would know what our form of government is -- and how precious it is -- and to not teach the Constitution. This is the Carnegie Corporation plan -- to implement a planned economy through the schools. And it is going in right now.

Q: OK, that's the background and foundation. But at what point, recently, did they effect the significant change in direction, content and product?

A: At what point did all the touchy-feeling stuff happen? Carnegie happened in 1934, the United Nations in 1945 ...

Q: The only touchy-feeling stuff I encountered in school was if you didn't do what you were supposed to do -- when you were supposed to do it, the way you were instructed to do it -- Brother Benilde would smack you up side the head with a book.

A: Well, that's right, but they don't want people to be educated, and this is a very important point. I know there are people out there who think: "Goodness, I thought the whole purpose of the corporations forming partnerships with the public sector (which actually is corporate fascism) was so that the schools would give our children better academic skills?" That's not true. According to David Hornbeck -- Mr. Carnegie and the big honcho for "School To Work," he said in his book, "Human Capital," which he wrote with Lester Solomon, that the corporations do not want educated people.

Q: Why?

A: Because educated people are very difficult -- they ask too many questions, they quit their jobs, etc.

Q: Actually, the way it has developed now, (and I think the primary

corporations will identify what vacancies and needs they have and "train" workers. Charlotte, I want you to explain "School To Work" because I get so angry and seething when I think about it -- and try to talk about it -- that I sometimes butcher it.

A: So do I. I think the best way -- and I really recommend Congress do this, because it would be cheaper than going to Europe -- I would like all of them to go down and spend six months in Cuba. Is that a good answer?

Q: If they don't come back, it would be great.

A: Well, go down to Cuba and you will see the same system implemented there that they are implementing in Oregon, in California and in Maine and everywhere. Where the children are identified at a very early age, psychologically profiled -- fourth grade in some cases. In fact, the whole idea of work is started in kindergarten.

Q: Hold on a moment, Charlotte, because we have to stress something here.

A: What?

Q: This is not fiction. This is not something out of a Stanley Kubrick movie. This is something that is going on right now!

A: That's right. It is in. It is not vocational either -- which is something I have always supported. I'd like to share with your readers the story I sent you about the 12-year-old youngster in Minnesota. He understood what I was talking about and he said to his mom, "I want to choose my own future!" And he went to a big rally they held in Minneapolis at 12-years old. Isn't it interesting that this 12-year-old understands what "School To Work" is.

Q: And, beyond that, what about the people who don't "find" themselves until they are 40?

A: You're not kidding. I'm a bit older than that and sometimes I wonder if I've found myself ... I'm still looking for myself.

Q: I often joke when people ask, "What are you going to do when you grow up?" Duh? It presupposes I will grow up and that I will know. I'm still working at it.

A: We all have a lot of talents we don't know about until later on when something happens. You are absolutely correct. The thing is that is the German dual-track system of education and work-force training. It is the Soviet system -- people don't like to use that word. It is the Cuban system.

Q: What people need to recognize is they are trying to identify kids at an early age for what their aptitudes are. Not based on what the kids talents and abilities are, but what the corporation need is.

A: That's right. Actually everything is focused on the good of the state now. It is the state that is important -- not the individual's upward mobility, the individual's future life. That's the way education used to be. You asked me earlier when the change took place.

Q: Are you going to answer it now?

A: Yes. It really took place in 1965 under Lyndon Johnson. And that followed the agreements that Eisenhower signed with the Soviet Union in 1958. I feel they very strongly influenced our agenda in education.

Q: I just dodged the bullet. I graduated in 1966.

A: You were lucky. In 1965, they couldn't get American educators to implement this agenda that the Carnegie Corporation wanted. Also, an incredible psychologist -- Brock Chisholm -- at the United Nations recommended getting rid of the conscience to the World Health Organization. And he recommended doing that through the schools by training the teachers to be little psychiatrists.



None of this was accepted by any American educator until 1965. I don't think even at that time they really accepted it but it did pass. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was a major, major shift. It moved our marvelous system of education -- which, up until 1960, was the best in the world -- from academics, what you know in your head, to a performance-based system which we're screaming about: outcome-based education, mastery learning and Skinner (who said "I can make a pigeon a high achiever by reinforcing it on a proper schedule"). I think your readers can understand the difference between knowledge based in your head and performance based. Performance is how you perform on the job -- that is not the role of the public school system or any education system that I can see.

Q: And it changed in 1965?

A: That changed in '65. From that time on, all these incredibly horrible values-destroying programs were developed: values clarification, survival games, critical thinking. Geoff, I have a manual published in 1967 that is three inches thick of values-destroying programs. And people say, "Why Columbine?"

Q: Let me ask you this -- because I've spent a fair amount of time talking and writing about it -- the connection between the epidemic prescribing of psychotropic drugs to kids as a means of controlling them?

A: Absolutely. There's a very interesting appendix in my book about a Hawaii Master Plan in 1968. A pilot project for the whole country that was carried out in Hawaii and federally funded and it included just about everything that is taking place right now. But there was a recommendation in there to use these psychiatric drugs on our children. This has been planned for a long time. They don't want independent little active monsters running around in the classroom.

Q: There is an interesting sidebar to this. There is a woman in the San Francisco Bay area who has home schooled all her kids. Her daughter just went in the Army. The recruiters were surprised and elated that she

something like an \$18,000 bonus for enlisting. They couldn't understand why she was so far superior to all the other recruits. Obviously the key reason is she was shielded and protected from public education.

A: There is no question if a parent is able to do that (and not all are -- I'm not sure I could have) they certainly should be home schooling. Or, if you can't home school, try to find a private school.

Q: But that shouldn't be necessary if the public schools had not been so corrupted.

A: It shouldn't be necessary, but we need to note that there are good public schools. Although there won't be for long because of the redefinition of academics -- and that good teaching is no longer what it used to be -- so we won't have really much of a public school system. There'll be nothing left in a few years because of the legislation that is going through Washington, D.C., right now and the way they have been crashing the public school system ever since I left my office in the Department of Education. However, right now, you have to look carefully at private schools. In many cases, they may well be worse than the public schools at the moment.

Q: So what do you suggest to concerned parents?

A: Well my recommendation is different from anybody else's because I guess I'm naive and have stars in my eyes and wear rose-colored glasses ...

Q: ... and you are sheltered in Maine.

A: Oh yeah ... sheltered in Maine ... well, I'll tell you when I moved here I thought I had moved out of the country. People don't quite understand "School To Work" here either and we are very important in "School To Work." But the only solution to this problem -- and it is a big problem because it doesn't just deal with education -- if we allow this so-called "education" system to continue, this country hasn't got a chance to hold

They are taking our form of government -- Congress did this in the '90s with this legislation where they effectively changed our free system of government to a planned economy. A planned economy is not a free system at all. And if Americans think it is, they ought to go down to Cuba and take a look. In my opinion nothing short of abolishing the U.S. Department of Education will take care of this problem. And that means not back to the state level but back to the local level.

Q: Weren't the Republicans going to do that?

A: Yes, Ronald Reagan promised to do that when I was there. And I think many of us were really disappointed that this didn't happen. There is no way for us to cure the problems in American education and for this country to stay free as long as that building is allowed to exist there in partnership with the Department of Labor. It gets all of its instructions ...

Q: Charlotte, I got a correspondence a couple of years back and the letterhead had both departments at the top of it.

A: That's right. They are in partnership. But, another thing is, they do not put the United Nations on top -- that is where the whole thing actually comes from. What we're putting in now -- I don't think people realize and this -- includes the school-choice proposals I'm talking about. What is going in now is international. You have the same school-choice proposals, charter schools, et cetera going into Russia. You have the Outcome-Based Education / Direct Instruction in Hong Kong. And for people to feel this is even a national program -- it is not. It is international.

I think that Benjamin Bloom is probably the behavioral psychologist who came up with the outcome-based ed and mastery learning -- he was a big U.N. guy. He died a couple of years ago. The purpose of education, as far as the United Nations is concerned, is to change the thoughts, actions and feelings of students. Bloom went on to define "good teaching" ...

Q: What ever became of the concept of seeking out knowledge and information?

A: No, no -- people have to understand and it took me long time too -- when we see all these failures, we put all the money into the system and then the test scores go down, and we keep saying, "Why? Why? Get with it folks!" I finally realized about 10 years ago when I finally started putting all the stuff together, when we think it's a disaster, to them, it's a success.

Q: They are accomplishing their objective.

A: Absolutely. Because they don't care whether our children can read, write, count, et cetera -- they really don't. When they put these programs in like Outcome-Based Ed -- and we have proof of that one -- because we have the evaluation of the major outcome-based education program that went in under Reagan ...

Q: What did it say?

A: The evaluation said that, no, it really didn't work, that success -- academically -- was not there. But it was successful because it turned the system on its head from inputs that we used to have to outputs. Output is performance, and it's necessary for workforce training.

Q: If the government took all the money that is whizzed down that rat hole of the U.S. Department of Education -- and didn't give it to the states -- but somehow distributed it through block grants or something to the local schools, and put the local schools in competition ... I remember my wife used to brag because she went to high school in Lexington, Massachusetts, and once upon a time they had the best school system in the country ...

A: Yep ...

Q: Not any more ... but if you allowed the local schools to compete, the

competition.

A: I think it's true, but you are always going to have the strings attached as long as you have the federal money coming in. That's why I would like to see us just abolish the U.S. Department of Education -- in which case, all the state departments of education are going to collapse because they get up to 80% of their operating budget from my old office.

Q: Cool! That would be a good thing.

A: Wouldn't it be wonderful? And, then, we go back and restore the finest system the world has ever known. Now that to me would be even more devastating to the United Nations people -- the internationalists -- than getting out of the U.N. Because if the biggest country, the most important economic power in the world, the United States, all of a sudden decided to jump off board of the "School To Work" agenda, which is an international one, they are going to be in such trouble they will not know what to do.

Q: Therein is the problem -- selling it. What about George Bush continuing with this?

A: He wanted it all along. Bill Clinton was certainly involved in "School To Work" but it was George Bush the elder who initially put his big message into the Congressional Record. The elder Bush was big on apprenticeships and "School To Work." And, I hate to say it, but Ronald Reagan was the one who actually contributed the most to "School To Work" by implementing the concept of Public-Private Partnership. That's in the Communist Manifesto -- Industry and Government.

Q: Don't be shy or reticent. I have been telling people as long as I have had a forum, it is not a question of who is right or wrong but what is right or wrong.

A: You're right, but that is very sad. When Reagan went along with the partnership concept -- which, like I said, is in the Communist Manifesto,

with Gorbachev on education, Then, the Carnegie Corporation got involved -- and what they are giving us is the Soviet system.

Look, in my book, in 1932, you saw William Foster, chairman of the Communist Party USA write a book "Toward a Soviet America" and what he called for was a United States Department of Education, the Pavlovian method that is going in under direct instruction. He called for the scientific method. He called for the teaching of evolution. Get rid of patriotism. All of this has gone in.

Now you can't tell me that George Bush doesn't know this. He was the one who recommended keeping the U.S. Department of Education last July. When the Republicans wanted to keep in the platform to get rid of it -- to abolish the Department of Ed -- he took that out. He purposefully took that out. He knows, although he talks local. He says we're going to have local controls. How can you have local control when you have the United States Department of Education dictating every single thing to our schools right now? There is no way we have any local control left.

Q: We have heard from some people about a Japanese concept of Kai Zin. It but basically it deals with tearing down in order to build up something new.

A: That is absolutely correct. In order for them to implement the new system they have to destroy the old one. David Hornbeck is the majordomo on that. He's been in I don't know how many states. He's destroyed Kentucky, he's destroyed Philadelphia. I don't know where he is now but you have to watch him. It is so sad that parents do not see what we see because it has been so gradual and now, when you have George Bush and Ted Kennedy agreeing on George Bush's education agenda, that doesn't really leave any room for anybody to be concerned.

Q: When the allegedly rabid left and right start agreeing without compromise that in and of itself is cause for concern.

A: That's right. But where do we go? George Bush is the controlled right

they have met at the radical center. These are the people who are supporting the communitarianism idea which if you look in the dictionary it says, "communistic form of government." Who on earth would ever dream that the Republican Party could end up with someone in the White House who is supporting a concept -- communitarianism -- that is defined in any dictionary you want, as a communistic form of government?

Q: But the dumbed-down American populous either doesn't believe you or they marginalize you as just a conspiracy theorist. Despite these people being in your face with it.

A: You're right -- the most important documents with the proof, of course, are the very old ones. Yeah, they are in your face but they are not in the faces of the average good American who has really been manipulated. It has been a very diabolical plan. They use the three-pronged fork. They use semantic deception, which are words that sound so good like "basic skills." Then they use gradualism like the frog in the cold water -- you heat it up over 50 years and the frog is dead. And then you have the dialectic where you deliberately create a problem -- and you get people to scream and go out of business -- and then you impose the solution and people are so upset at the problem that they accept anything. That's the three-pronged fork, without which we never would have been taken. Plus, the dumbing down -- because if the American people do not understand the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and that we do have a special form of government here, we are not going to know when those things are taken away from us.

Q: And those in our Congress were either intentional or manipulated co-conspirators.

A: That is exactly what has happened with the Congress when they voted for this change in our economic system to make it like Cuba -- they obviously didn't know that we had a wonderful free-enterprise system that had brought people to the shores of America for the past 150 years.

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