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Schools of Mischief

USING SCHOOLS TO RETRAIN KIDS' EMOTIONS — WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

by Jane Robbins, attorney and a senior fellow with the American Principles Project and Dr. Karen Effrem, pediatrician and president of Education Liberty Watch.

The government wants to dictate and monitor the feelings of schoolchildren, regardless of the violations of conscience and privacy involved.

In response to our recent article in *The Federalist* exposing the dangers of so-called social emotional learning (SEL), Allison Crean Davis argues that parents have nothing to fear from governmental monitoring and manipulation of their children's psychological states. Writing for a new organization called The 74 (funded by the DeVos Family Foundation), she urges that Americans wait for the "iterative march of science" (no, we don't know what that means either) to help us figure out the best way to implement and measure SEL in schools.

Davis likens SEL to Common Core: a "promising, well-intended initiative" that should be given a chance to work. Surely that comparison will ease parents' minds!

Davis wants education to be more like medicine, yet she bemoans the fact that benighted parents didn't wait for the "research" to come out on Common Core before opposing it. If the Common Core scheme had followed the pattern of medical research,

the standards would have been tested on small groups of students and, if effective, only then would have been offered to a wider population.

Instead, untested, academically inferior, developmentally inappropriate, and psychologically manipulative standards were foisted on the entire nation by unelected officials. Think what families and teachers and taxpayers would have been spared if proper testing had been done. If Common Core's allegedly "high standards" were marketed as a drug, the Food and Drug Administration would have withdrawn it as misbranded snake oil, and doctors prescribing it would have been sued for malpractice.

Who Minds the Children: Parents or the State?

Davis justifies the focus on SEL by pointing out what everyone knows: that people do better in work and in life when they have certain intangible qualities such as enthusiasm and integrity. The question, though, is who should be instilling and monitor-

ing the development of such qualities in children: their parents, frequently assisted by churches and other faith communities? Or the government, through the schools, collecting information on how well children measure up and feeding it into the ravenous government data system?

Davis is firmly in the "government" camp. Also in the "government" compare her employer, Bellwether Education Partners, Philanthropy Roundtable (chaired by Betsy DeVos), the Gates Foundation, and Jeb Bush's ExceInEd. Her article mentions parents only once, in connection with dismissing our arguments. Instead, she emphasizes the need to focus on "science."

"If education is going to mature as a discipline," she writes, "it needs to embrace an evidence-based, not ideologically based, approach." Humanity has been educating children for millennia, but not until the twenty-first century does it have "science" to help it "mature." Were Aristotle



