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How to Eliminate the Educational Abdicators: Public Schools - What's Broken and How to Fix It

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BOOK REVIEW

How to Eliminate The Educational Abdicators: Public Schools—What's Broken and How to Fix It, by Louis F. Weipert. Denver, Colorado: Didasko Publishing, 1984. 269 pp.

In the nearly thirty years since the Soviet launching of Sputnik, American education has undergone an intense period of evaluation, modification, and often misguided renovation. The function of the school has been expanded from that of educational institution to an entity of unparalleled social awareness. Author and educator Louis F. Weipert suggests institutions of learning have become the dumping grounds for many of society's ills. America's public schools have been forced to cater to the emotionally, physically and mentally handicapped while feeding the poor, balancing (where enforced) racial inequalities, medicating the ill and accommodating the linguistically different. The American Dream of fairness and equality for all is in essence crippling this nation's schools. While all are being served, few are being educated.

The result of such diverse and disjointed efforts on the part of academia is a general and widespread apathy regarding education. In the wake of the overwhelming social responsibilities being placed on the school, America is now being faced with a malaise regarded by Weipert as educational abdication.

The author defines the educational abdicator as one who has relinquished any responsibility for education but continues to influence it nonetheless. An abdicator is iden-

tified as not only one whose career lies within the realm of education but encompasses those from outside who likewise influence and shape the nature of public education. Among those whose indifference to scholastic endeavors most negatively effects education are students who habitually enroll in extracurricular activities that remove them from the classroom or those who opt for classes designed to entertain instead of instruct and inform. Also detrimental are parents who send their offspring to school without first having taught the basic disciplines of manners and courtesy. Valuable instructional time is lost when civility must be taught in the classroom. Educators at all levels abdicate their responsibility when they permit boredom and indifference to creep into their classrooms or reduce their academic and behavioral expectations in an effort to avoid conflict. Administrators are seen by Weipert as abdicating when the public relations aspect of their positions takes precedence over that of instructional leader. Increasingly troublesome are the special interest pressure groups who, although representative of a minority of the population, are demanding equal representation in a system already overburdened with a multiplicity of nonacademic obligations.

Weipert offers no immediate cures for our educational ills. That which is disabling our nation's schools has not evolved overnight. Responsibility for it rests with each of us for, as the author indicates, we are all the malefactors as well as the unwitting victims.

While Weipert's biased and often hostile rhetoric may offend and perhaps anger readers of liberal educational persuasion, he does nevertheless open some emotionally charged topics of education to much needed scrutiny. This is a book that must be read by educators and administrators alike. It will undoubtedly be discussed and debated for some time.

—by Susan Day Harmison