



# Reclaiming Education

TEACH YOUR CHILD  
TO BE A CONFIDENT LEARNER

Cynthia Ulrich Tobias  
with Mary Jo Dean

Every informed and active parent of young children will want to read *Reclaiming Education*. Cynthia Tobias, one of the most acclaimed learning specialists in the country, helps you navigate the school years with finesse and confidence.

DRS. LES & LESLIE PARROTT, *New York Times* bestselling authors of *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*

The greatest trick the devil played was to convince us he didn't exist, and the singular trick government schools managed was to convince us they weren't religious. Every school is a religious school, and Christian families would do well to read Cynthia Tobias's book *Reclaiming Education* to better understand how to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, not government.

SAM SORBO, producer at Sorbo Studios and author of *They're Your Kids*

In her new book, *Reclaiming Education*, my friend and child-learning specialist Cynthia Tobias has compiled an immensely practical and commonsense approach to understanding the various learning styles of children and how to tailor their education around those styles for maximum learning experiences—whether in public school, homeschool, or private school. She also deftly illustrates the Trojan horses of modern public education to indoctrinate our children with values we dislike—and what to do about it! Cynthia sounds the alarm and calls us to be diligent in, knowledgeable about, and involved with our children's education. Parents, get this book and get educated yourself on how best to teach your kids! They deserve it.

JOE BATTAGLIA, president of Renaissance Communications, broadcaster, and author of *The Politically Incorrect Jesus* and *Unfriended*

I strongly recommend *Reclaiming Education* for all parents and teachers. It's a quick, compelling read, and the workbook puts practical tools and strategies right in kids' hands. I use the downloadable student workbooks with my middle-school classes at my Christian school, and they love finding out how their natural strengths can help them be more successful in *all* their classes. It's really made a difference, especially when we have kids who are smart and capable but struggle with standard methods of learning.

KELLI SOYRING, teacher at Sound Christian Academy in Tacoma, Washington; voted Teacher of the Year by *South Sound Magazine* in 2022



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FOCUS  
ON THE FAMILY®

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published by Tyndale House Publishers*

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People's names and certain details of their stories have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved. However, the facts of what happened and the underlying principles have been conveyed as accurately as possible.

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*To my husband, Jack Talley, who provided endless support and encouragement; and my sister, Sandee Baker, who was always ready to cheerfully proofread and give me valuable feedback.*

CYNTHIA

*To my husband, Brennan; thank you for  
your love and support. I love you.*

*To Spencer, Sawyer, and Annie; thank you for your grace,  
patience, and perseverance. You have made my life so incredibly  
wonderful. I'll love you forever . . . you know the rest.*

MARY JO

## Foreword

**OUR TEAM AT** Focus on the Family considers it a privilege to partner with Cynthia Tobias in publishing her latest book, *Reclaiming Education*. I've had the honor of knowing Cynthia personally for many years now. She is an experienced, extraordinary educator with a genuine heart to help children learn best . . . in the *ways* they learn best. Not only does she want to equip parents to raise educated children, but she also wants to see those children become adults who love the Lord and continue learning joyfully, and to His glory, for the rest of their days.

This volume is aptly named. Never has it been more crucial for parents to “reclaim education”—in other words, to take a close look at the state of education in our country so they can wisely and prayerfully weigh their choices and, ultimately, provide the best academic approach and setting for their children. I'm well aware that there are many dedicated teachers and school administrators serving tirelessly in our educational system. However, we must also acknowledge the ideological battlefield that public education has become. Teachers' unions and other political forces have arrayed themselves against parents and are doing everything possible to indoctrinate children into social beliefs that lie far outside the mainstream, traditional understanding of education.

I will go so far as to say that, if my sons were starting elementary



school today, I would not enroll them in a public school. I certainly realize that each parent has complex and unique circumstances that must be considered. Nonetheless, if you are staring an educational decision in the face, I would simply urge you to think and pray carefully about whether you will introduce your children to a system that becomes more intellectually, morally, and spiritually bankrupt with every passing day.

Throughout this book, Cynthia offers invaluable insight and encouragement about the various learning styles and how they can be harnessed to optimize a child's academic success without compromising his or her character. I don't know anyone more knowledgeable about what makes children tick, and Cynthia's practical tips are sure to be helpful regardless of your own children's individual learning styles or personality bents.

Meanwhile, Cynthia's coauthor, Mary Jo Dean, challenges you to leave the homeschooling option on the table! Millions of families around the country have embraced this lifestyle as a means of instilling biblical faith and traditional values in their children, inspiring a lifelong passion for learning, discovering their unique gifts and callings, and resisting the culture's relentless efforts to pull them away from their Christian upbringing. By and large, homeschooled children are thoughtful, mature, and well-adjusted, and I believe that's because their primary influencers are their parents.

If the thought of stepping outside the educational box seems overwhelming, take heart! Within these pages, you will discover that you can escape the bonds of a one-size-fits-all educational model and find how to maximize your children's learning potential. What's more, when you discover the environment and tools that best dovetail with their distinct, God-given strengths and weaknesses, you will set them on a path toward learning that will continue long after the diplomas are handed out.

*Jim Daly*  
*President, Focus on the Family*

# Preface

*Your Child Can Succeed*

**WAR HAS BEEN DECLARED** on the families of America. What's at stake? The hearts and minds of our children. Who is the enemy? Those who would replace education with indoctrination. Those who would insist that parents step back and let federal and state organizations and teachers' unions legislate the content and direction of what students will learn and how they will learn it.

But you as a parent are the first line of defense in this battle. God has entrusted your children to you, and you're designed to love and protect them more than anyone else can. You are their first and most influential teacher, and your home is their first classroom. You know them better than anyone.

When it's time to begin their formal schooling, how you choose to educate your children matters more than you can possibly imagine. Public, private, charter school, homeschool, or a combination of any or all of these—you can't afford to base your decisions strictly on convenience or finances.

We parents need to take an active role in equipping our children to succeed in school and beyond. In a world that

pressures them at every turn to simply conform to and comply with a secular worldview, we need to weave a strong and enduring commitment to God into the very fabric of their lives. We need to make sure they know they have been fearfully and wonderfully made by their creator and designer.

This book will show how public education is failing our children, and the latter part will speak to workable alternatives, including homeschooling. But however you decide to educate your children, this book will equip you to teach them how to succeed as lifelong learners in *any* academic setting. That doesn't mean simply making learning easier for them. It certainly doesn't mean lowering any standards or compromising on discipline and behavior. It means teaching each child to discover his or her natural, inborn strengths and figure out ways to use them in order to learn. Accountability stays intact. The important thing is to use their *strengths*—we can't build on weakness. And the world needs their kinds of strengths more than ever.

Our fervent prayer is that you will read this book with an open mind and heart. We pray you will take the time to truly help your children recognize and understand how their minds are wired for taking in and processing information and how they can motivate themselves to learn, even in the most challenging and difficult of circumstances.

Every child you have is God's gift to you. It's not a coincidence that you got the kids you've got. God chose you to nurture and guide your children to adulthood. And we don't believe it's a coincidence that you're reading this book. We can't wait to see what God will do.



## PART ONE

# Why You Need to Reclaim Your Child's Education



## Problem: Public Schools Are Failing

Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder; inscribe them on the doorposts of your homes and on your city gates.

**DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (MSG)**

**SEVERAL YEARS AGO**, I (Cynthia) was speaking on base for a group of Air Force wives, and I used Proverbs 22:6 as my text: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (NKJV).

I then pointed out how the Amplified version of the Bible goes into more detail: "Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it" (AMPC).

We spent the next ninety minutes talking about how important it is to understand that no two children are alike and exploring the many different ways we could bring out the best in each child.

After my presentation, the Air Force chaplain stepped up to talk to me. He explained that he had spent many years studying the original Greek and Hebrew used in the Bible. He said, “I appreciate your emphasis on getting to know every child’s strengths. I want to give you an insight that illustrates how critical that concept actually is.”

He went on to explain that in Proverbs 22:6, the Hebrew word rendered *train up* can have a unique and little-known meaning. In the days when Proverbs was written, the term may have been used to describe a practice done right after birth in which the mouth of a baby was cleared to allow breathing. The chaplain indicated that if this meaning is in view here, we could understand this term as meaning “create an environment for life.”

So the verse essentially means this: *Create an environment for life for a child according to his individual gifts and bents, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

One of the most awe-inspiring aspects of becoming a parent is the realization that you are your child’s first teacher and greatest influencer. From the moment of your child’s birth, your imprint is made on this tiny, miraculous human being God has entrusted to you. Your attitudes, your behavior, your decisions, your reactions—those are some of the first lessons you’re teaching. Your child is watching, listening, and absorbing what you’re saying and how you’re saying it. Whether your son or daughter was born to you or grafted into your family by adoption, your home and family become the core of his or her life, the source of safety and security. It is a sacred trust.

You teach your children how to hold a spoon, how to walk, how to talk, and how to avoid danger. You use instruction and discipline to help them distinguish right from wrong, bad from good. You model what their priorities should be, and you teach them to recognize and resist temptation.

You quickly discover that those “individual gifts and bends” make each child unique and sometimes unexpectedly challenging. With each successive child, you realize there are also no one-size-fits-all parenting techniques. Most of all, you understand that children are definitely not going to make your life convenient.

But you also begin to understand—amid the chaos, the mess, and the exhaustion—that you have the privilege of rearing and nurturing children who can change the future, and even perhaps the world. Every individual is created by God for a purpose only he or she can fulfill. And part of your purpose as a parent is to instill in your children character, integrity, and a heart for God, their creator.

In the greater scheme of things, you don’t have a lot of time to do it. There are roughly 960 Saturdays between birth and high school graduation. The time you spend with your kids is brief and precious.

### **WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?**

In November 2022, the NEA (National Education Association) released this tweet on social media: “Educators love



their students and know better than anyone what they need to learn and to thrive.”<sup>1</sup>

This statement somehow “misspelled” the word *parents*. No one knows better than *you* what your children need to learn and thrive. In fact, allowing educators to take over the role of parenting can have devastating consequences.

As your children develop—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—you make many critical decisions about how and what they learn. When it’s time for them to start formal schooling, you need to ask yourself some key questions about each option you consider:

- Is my children’s safety the top priority?
- Will those who teach them honor the moral and spiritual beliefs I’ve instilled in them?
- Will their uniqueness be recognized and valued?
- Does it matter to the educators what friends my children choose?
- Do I have a good grasp of what’s being taught in the classroom? How accessible to parents are the curriculum and the policies?

And the most important question of all:

- Will I relinquish control over these issues, on a day-to-day basis, to an educational system that may or may not agree with my core beliefs?

## WORLDVIEW MATTERS

If yours is a Christian family, it's important to you that your children grow up with a biblical worldview, with God and His Word at the center. God is the standard for truth, and we look at everything through the lens of Scripture. If you send your children to a Christian school, you expect that the biblical worldview will be integrated into every subject and that students will be surrounded by teachers and staff who put God first.

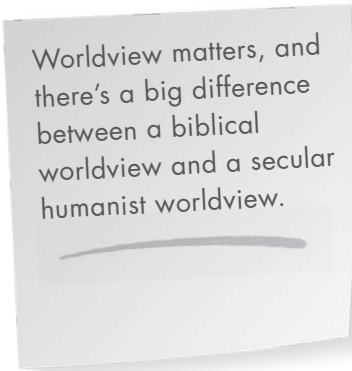
But what about public school? You may have always thought that public schools do their best to remain neutral in terms of worldview in order to objectively teach literacy and other core academic subjects. And perhaps that's still true in some local areas. But on the federal level, the Department of Education and the teachers' unions are definitely *not* neutral.

In December 2018, the NEA published an article entitled “‘Education Is Political’: Neutrality in the Classroom Shortchanges Students.” What do they consider neutrality? The article quotes assistant professor of teacher education Alyssa Hadley Dunn as saying that “education, at its core, *is* inherently political.” The article also states: “The kind of neutrality that concerns Dunn is, for example, a decision to avoid discussion of ‘controversial’ issues—racism, inequity, climate change, or gun violence, for example—out of fear of appearing political or partisan.”<sup>2</sup>

Assistant professor Dunn was part of conducting a larger study:

The study concludes that teacher training programs need to better prepare educators in adapting their classrooms to help students understand current events and political upheavals. . . . [U]ltimately, teachers are charged with preparing their students to work toward a more democratic society. . . . And while too many parents still believe the classroom door should always be shut to any political discussion, they may be “ignoring the reality that such a move is never really possible,” Dunn says.<sup>3</sup>

You may have compelling reasons to send your child to public school. But before you do, go in with your eyes wide open. Stay involved. Stay informed. Stay knowledgeable about what your child is learning and which textbooks and curriculum materials are being used. Remember: Worldview matters, and there’s a big difference between a biblical worldview and a secular humanist worldview. Your children will spend eight hours a day being taught the public school’s worldview.



Worldview matters, and there’s a big difference between a biblical worldview and a secular humanist worldview.

### THE WAKE-UP CALL

In 2020, parents all over America received a jarring wake-up call

about their children's education. As a result of the pandemic lockdowns, it was suddenly required that all students switch to remote learning at home. After an initial chaotic scramble to provide equipment and internet access and a frantic flurry of activity rearranging work schedules and childcare, something huge that had been hidden for decades began to be revealed.

Parents and caregivers started to take notice of what was on their children's computer screens as they watched their teachers teach and interact with students. And an overwhelming number of parents discovered that they hadn't been paying enough attention to what was being taught in their children's classrooms.

Most parents believed that public education taught the basic academic subjects, that the majority of teachers were highly qualified, and that everything centered on the students who were being educated. They thought they could trust public schools to do what's best for their children. But as it turns out, in many cases that simply was not true.

"U.S. students consistently score lower in math and science than students from many other countries. According to a Business Insider report in 2018, the U.S. ranked 38th in math scores and 24th in science."<sup>4</sup>

And in November 2022, even more disturbing details were revealed: "According to a Gallup analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, there are about 130 million adults in the U.S. who have low literacy skills." The analysis also revealed the following:

- Fifty-four percent of Americans between the ages of sixteen and seventy-four read at below the sixth-grade level.
- According to the Project for Literacy, the average American reads at the seventh- or eighth-grade level.
- One in four children in the United States grows up without learning how to read at all.
- Two of three students in the United States who can't read properly by fourth grade end up on welfare or in jail.<sup>5</sup>

What have the public schools been teaching if not the basics of literacy? Academic instruction has taken a back seat to social justice and the sexuality and gender identity of children.

In the fall of 2016, teachers in Seattle public schools created one of the first Black Lives Matter at School events despite controversy over the issue of political activism in education. Since then, this program has spread into thousands of schools throughout the country.<sup>6</sup>

The program's website describes the organization as "a national coalition organizing for racial justice in education." They go on, "We encourage all educators, students, parents, unions, and community organizations to join our annual week of action during the first week of February each year."<sup>7</sup>

The program offers curriculum materials that provide classroom activities for kindergarten through twelfth-grade students based on the Black Lives Matter movement's

“13 Guiding Principles.” Here are just three of those guiding principles:

- “We are committed to disrupting the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement.”
- “We are committed to fostering a queer-affirming network.”
- “We are committed to being self-reflexive and doing the work required to dismantle cis-gender privilege and uplift Black trans folk.”<sup>8</sup>

Specific examples of what to say to students are included in the curriculum. For instance, here is what they suggest elementary teachers tell their students: “Everybody has the right to choose their own gender by listening to their own heart and mind. Everyone gets to choose if they are a girl or a boy or both or neither or something else, and no one else gets to choose for them.”<sup>9</sup>

This is indoctrination, plain and simple, instilling in young children an anti-biblical worldview. Such curricula are already widespread through our public schools, and their use continues to grow.

In case you still believe that public schools are primarily teaching academic subjects, or that you as a parent have the exclusive right to teach your kids about sex and gender, consider this statement from Planned Parenthood claiming that *they* will educate all children, from kindergarten to high school graduation:

As a respected leader in sex education, Planned Parenthood delivers programs, resources, and tools in classrooms, communities, and online that help people make informed choices about their sexuality and relationships, so they can lead full and healthy lives. We are committed to advancing the health of young people in this country by providing comprehensive sex education that is medically accurate, culturally responsive, equitable and accessible—as well as inclusive of varying gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations.<sup>10</sup>

#### WHAT ABOUT ALL THE GOOD TEACHERS?

There are thousands of good teachers in public schools scattered throughout the United States, and there are many *exceptional* teachers—some amazing educators who break out of the mold and boldly blaze new paths. My early classroom teaching career was spent entirely in public schools, and I was privileged to work side by side with several great teachers. But I quickly found out that the public school system is stacked against the educators who want to make their students the top priority. Teachers actually have little control over curriculum and administrative policy. And most have no choice but to join and pay dues to the national and local teachers' unions.

These teachers love your children, but they have serious limitations placed on them with respect to class size, discipline measures, parental involvement, and opportunities to

help children individually. Your children, during the course of their kindergarten through twelfth-grade education, will sometimes get a real gem—a teacher they'll remember for the rest of their lives. But it's likely that most of the time your children will be taught in traditional schoolrooms by teachers who must juggle their full-time work and family life while complying with a lot of institutional and union regulations, both political and social.

Even the most qualified and loving teachers in public and private schools still have to teach many students the same things at the same time and in much the same way. It's not realistic to expect them to personalize and individualize their teaching styles to accommodate the way each student learns. This is one of the best reasons to stay in touch and support your child's teacher whenever possible so that you can find ways to help your child be an active participant in his or her own learning success.

### **WHY ARE WE STILL SENDING OUR CHILDREN TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS?**

Why are we still sending our children to public schools? Some of these sentiments may sound familiar:

- *If we can just get him through school . . .*
- *He's barely skating by, but I think he's going to graduate.*
- *She hates school, but she only has to make it four more years.*



- *I'm just looking forward to some kid-free days.*
- *Well, maybe next year she'll get a better teacher.*
- *This emotional roller coaster is normal for middle-school kids.*
- *I already pay for public school with my taxes. We sure can't afford private school, too.*
- *I didn't like school either. He'll survive.*

When you send your children to public school, you are trusting that those who teach them—for six or more hours per day for 180 or more days per year for at least thirteen years—will continue to instill in them the attitudes, behavior, and beliefs you have so carefully planted. You are also accepting that your children will spend the same amount of time with friends and peer groups who will deeply influence what they believe and how they act. But once you begin to see what the not-so-hidden agenda really is, you may want to seriously reconsider your options.

As Christian parents, we have to take back the education of our children. It won't look the same for everyone. But we must no longer take someone else's word for what and how our children are learning. What you may have taken for granted in the past when it comes to public schools, private schools, or even homeschooling may have now shifted in ways you didn't see coming. You may believe that your alternatives for educating your children are limited by money, location, or your own knowledge and abilities.

But what if you could make sure that your children not

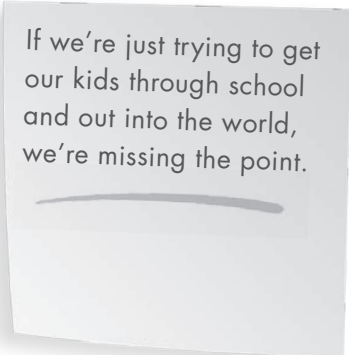
only have the best opportunities for success in their education but also the ability to become confident, lifelong learners? What if you could have more control over their spiritual and emotional learning? And what if your children could be the most important part of this whole process?

Teaching isn't simply pouring information into a child and then testing them to see if they learned the information. It's not about giving them an education and sending them on their way. Attendance and homework and good grades don't really mean anything if students don't know how or why they learn.

If we're just trying to get our kids through school and out into the world, we're missing the point. Who will care about them more than you do? Who will instill in them good values, a strong work ethic, and a spiritual and moral compass?

This book will provide you with an abundance of practical ideas and strategies for making lifelong learners of your children. It will introduce you to a world of possibilities and give you confidence if you decide to break away from the default option provided by the government. But even if you ultimately decide to keep your children in public school, you'll find solid, proven ways to equip them to take responsibility for their own success in learning.

Many things in this world are beyond your control to change,



If we're just trying to get our kids through school and out into the world, we're missing the point.

but there are also some powerful things you *can* change. This is a book full of hope for your children's futures! We want to offer you immediately useful ways you can teach them to be everything God wants them to be. When it comes to instilling motivation to learn, it's always best to get your children involved in their own solutions and success.

This book could be your game changer.

### **BITE-SIZED TRUTHS**

- Teachers aren't working with blank slates—children are bringing what they've learned from their parents.
- Your children often know more about what's going on than you think they do.
- There will be sacrifice involved in your children's education—but make sure it's not your children who are being sacrificed.