

**Horse and Buggy Schools and Psychology Just Won't Cut It Anymore-Tradition;  
Tradition.**

**By**

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Upon seeing my favorite musical, "Fiddler on the Roof" for the sixth time, I was impressed how powerful tradition is in our lives and when it is no longer very useful, how difficult it is to break. Tradition continues to rule the organization of our public schools and to dictate the psychology, which is used in our classroom and families.

Our current education model for schools was developed when the United States was a rural country. This is often referred to as the "Rural Model..." Children attended school 5 days a week for 36 weeks. This allowed a farm child 14 weeks in the summer to work in the fields. Saturdays were reserved for a trip to the nearest village and Sundays were reserved for church. While the rural model has been obsolete for many years, children still attend school 180 days a year, which means they are not in school 185 days a year, including a 12 week summer, where they forget much of what they have learned. It appears that the reason we organize our schools in this way is because we have always done it that way- tradition.

Even more concerning is how First Force Psychology (behaviorism), which was created and developed in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is still the prevailing psychology used in our schools and families today. This psychology did not conflict too much with fundamental religion and continues to be accepted through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First Force Psychology is based on rewards and punishment, otherwise known as stimulus response psychology. First force psychology was first developed with dogs and

remains nothing more than obedience. The basis being what works with animals also works with human beings. These intelligent psychologists forgot that human beings could think, chose, and change while animals are limited to instincts and training-tradition.

One of the best examples of the prevailing psychology today is the almost universal acceptance since the 1970's of Lee Cantar's, "Assertive Discipline." It is behaviorism warmed over but presented in a much more understandable way. Few object or even question it because parents, grandparents, and teachers who used the theory and practice of behaviorism on them probably raised them and, of course, they believed they turned out all right-tradition.

There is some truth in the fact that many, many students with the help of dedicated teaches and parents have turned themselves out quite well into responsible and useful adults. In spite of the outmoded rural model, it is amazing how well the schools do compared to other countries which have 10 and 11 month schools. Even with the emerging competitive global economy, it appears that we have no intention of abandoning the rural model or spending more money on education- tradition.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no let-up in criticism of our schools and parents. Self-appointed experts for years have claimed that our schools are a disaster, particularly our inner-city schools. They claim our teachers are doing a poor job and children are learning little. Parents are accused of being neglectful, permissive, and not getting involved with their children's homework. Thus, the cry for the privatizing, vouchers, school choice, merit pay, and longer school day. There have been some suggestions for a longer school year such as 210 days but no ideas as to funding it- tradition.

However, few suggest year-round school because everyone knows that both teachers and students would burn out under the vertical structure, the prevailing psychology, and the classroom atmospheres of today. There is some indication that there is some burnout every week with the long school day and compulsory homework. Some believe that teachers and students need weekends and summers to recover from the tensions and stress- tradition.

I have been interested in breaking the tradition of the 180 day school year and the use of behavioristic psychology for over 55 years. This came about in the 50's as we experienced a tremendous increase in enrollment and a shortage of classrooms with double shifts in many schools. I had some evidence that half-day students did as well as full-time students. About the same time, I had discovered the best of progressive education and Adlerian psychology with its encouragement, cooperation, freedom with order, choice and social interest. This new psychology would prevent burnout and result in enjoying school. Thus I came up with half-day school, six days a week and year round without a substantial increase in funding- tradition possibly broken.

I have written several articles and made numerous presentations as well as an unpublished manuscript on year-round school in 1956 but gained little support over the years. Let me share with you a handout I wrote 40 years ago entitled, "Humanizing Education Year-round- An Adlerian Model." Since then I have been involved in disseminating Third Force Psychology and William Glasser's Choice Theory. I still have hope for year-round education. It is high time education becomes a full time enterprise.

**If you like a copy of Dr. Meredith's handout, please email Tim Evans at:**

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