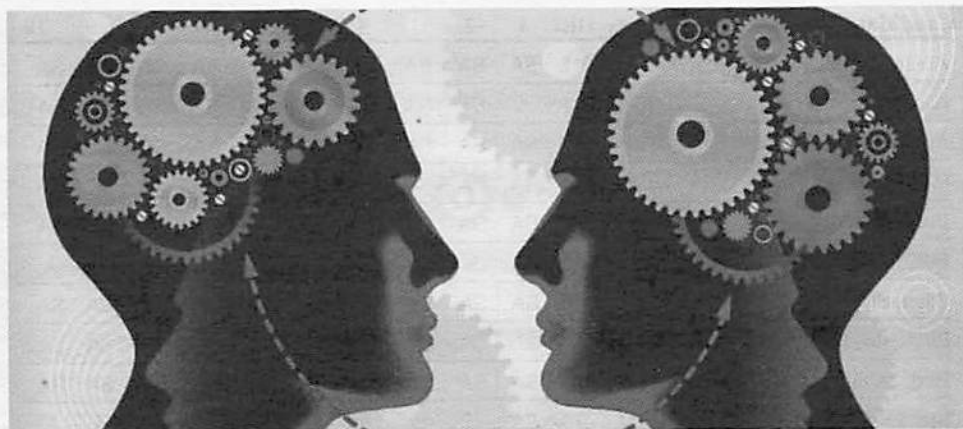


## The Latest Creepy Orwellian Education Tactic

By Dr. Karen Effrem and Jan Robbins, as published in The American Spectator, April 20, 2018

what this portends for the future of education and student privacy.

The report Pearson presented apparently didn't mention the ethical violation of ignoring the consent requirement applicable to psychological research. Nor did SEL proponent Joshua Starr, who voiced concern only about the effectiveness of Pearson's tricks: "In a narrow way, it's great if kids are getting these kinds of messages, and that's leading to greater persistence," said Starr of Phi Delta Kappan. "But it's certainly not sufficient."



As British professor Williamson noted, "It's concerning that forms of low-level psychological experimentation to trigger certain behaviors appear to be happening in the ed-tech sector, and students might not know those experiments are taking place."

The only commenter *Education Week* found who flagged the absence of consent was Ben Williamson, a lecturer at a British university: "It's especially troubling ... that the company did not seek informed consent from the young people who became subjects in their study."

The failure to obtain consent from the research subjects – a tactic that SEL proponents didn't deem even worth mentioning – illustrates the dangerous road that lies ahead for students from pre-K through college. The SEL pushers seem to simply assume that corporations and their allied government schools have the right to conduct psychological experiments on unsuspecting students.

The point of the Pearson experiment, as well as other SEL schemes, isn't just to help students do their best – it's to change their behavior and indeed their personalities in fundamental ways. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which wields tremendous influence over education practices globally, plans to use data from its new SEL profile for "personality development." For instance, OECD identifies "extroversion" as one of the "Big Five" personality traits that schools should assess and develop.

A question to ask is has the government determined that introverted children are defective, and that SEL tactics should be employed to turn them into something they're not?

The Pearson report doesn't see the problem. The report touts "the possibility of leveraging commercial educational software for new research into the emerging science around students' attitudes, beliefs, and ways of thinking about themselves." Indeed. And when corporations and the government learn how to influence "attitudes, beliefs, and ways of thinking," is there any limit to what they can do? Can they counteract the effect of family and faith on political or social issues? Can they mold students to be passive, uncritical receptors of information – information carefully monitored by the same corporations and government?

Pearson is selling off its K-12 operations, so for the foreseeable future the company will prey only on higher-education students. But for every Pearson there are hundreds of corporate bad actors – aided and abetted by the government – who will conduct similar experiments on much younger and more malleable children. **Parents should block such platforms from ever being used in schools.**

--- Dr. Karen Effrem is a pediatrician and president of Education Liberty Watch.

--- Jane Robbins is an attorney and a senior fellow with the American Principles Project in Washington, D.C.