

Why an education bill about school testing? Once the testing frame applies not just to students but also to schools, then schools can, metaphorically, fail—and be punished for failing by having their allowance cut. Less funding in turn makes it harder for the schools to improve, which leads to a cycle of failure and ultimately elimination for many public schools. What replaces the public school system is a voucher system to support private schools. The wealthy would have good schools—paid for in part by what used to be tax payments for public schools. The poor would not have the money for good schools. We would wind up with a two-tier school system, a good one for the “deserving rich” and a bad one for the “undeserving poor.”

The conservatives don’t have to win on issue after issue after issue. There are many things a progressive can do about it. Here are eleven.

First, notice what conservatives have done right and where progressives have missed the boat. It is more than just control of the media, though that is far from trivial. What they have done right is to successfully frame the issues from their perspective. Acknowledge their successes and our failures.

Second, remember “Don’t think of an elephant.” If you keep their language and their framing and just argue against it, you lose because you are reinforcing their frame.

Third, the truth alone will not set you free. Just speaking truth to power doesn’t work. You need to frame the truths effectively from your perspective.

Fourth, you need to speak from your moral perspective at all times. Progressive policies follow from progressive values. Get clear on your values and use the language of values. Drop the language of policy wonks.

Fifth, understand where conservatives are coming from. Get their strict father morality and its consequences clear. Know what you are arguing against. Be able to explain why they believe what they believe. Try to predict what they will say.