

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## Basics Are Back at 'Traditional' School

The Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Mesa, Arizona is no ordinary school. The students' parents did not camp out for 72 hours to ensure that their children would be enrolled in just any public school. Instead, the Franklin School is one example of what concerned parents can do when they do not like what they see happening in their children's classrooms.

Benjamin Franklin School is just one of the growing phenomena of "alternative" schools which, in response to the requests of parents and taxpayers, provide local parents with the opportunity to send their children to a public school which specifically uses traditional teaching methods to teach traditional basics.

The heaviest burden on parents is making sure they are at the front of the line to enroll their children as the popularity of these schools rises rapidly. Since its doors opened in August, 1978, enrollment at Benjamin Franklin has risen from 236 to 800, and there is currently a waiting list of 400.

One reason for the popularity of the alternative school is its proven high academic achievement. The students at Benjamin Franklin have scored "above district, state, and national norms in all categories," according to school district spokesman Judy Willis.

### Parents Demand Choice

Like similar alternative schools, Benjamin Franklin School got its start when parents became disturbed by the curriculum and methods used in their public schools. In 1976, Mesa parents were particularly unhappy with the "open classrooms" in their neighborhood schools in which 120 children and four teachers occupied the same large room.

The parents organized a group called People For Basic Education and requested that the school board approve the development of an alternative school. After an initial negative response, a grassroots effort resulted in the election of a more sympathetic school board in November 1976. A majority of that board voted in June 1977 to establish an alternative school, and Marc Mason, a Mesa elementary school principal, was appointed to run the newly-created Benjamin Franklin School.

Parents continued to be an integral part of Benjamin Franklin's success story. Before parents even knew the location of the school, the intended curriculum, or the textbooks to be used, 236 students were enrolled. Not only did parents help to set the academic course, but they formed the work team which refurbished an old school building in serious disrepair in time for school to begin in August 1978.

According to Mason, a "critical" characteristic of Franklin School is that it uses

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## North Carolina Program Objections

Carl Horn

- **5th and 6th grade:**  
"Make a list of unnecessary rules set up by parents."
- **8th grade:**  
"Discuss masturbation" and some of the myths associated with it.
- **10th grade:**  
Presenting the choice of homosexuality as a sexual "outlet."

## Program Revisions



Jay Robinson

- **Kindergarten to 3rd:**  
Dropping discussion about why a child thinks his/her parents got married.
- **7th and 8th grade:**  
Revising the curriculum guide to emphasize "the positive role of the family" and sexual abstinence for teens.
- **9th grade:**  
Deleting the Planned Parenthood booklet "This is You."

## North Carolina School District Revises Sex Education Program

In Charlotte, North Carolina, kindergartners won't be touring the girls' and boys' bathrooms anymore, first graders won't be discussing reproductive body parts, junior high schoolers will be learning about sexual abstinence, and 10th graders won't be seeing a death and dying film.

These changes are part of a package of program revisions which were made following the citizen and teacher examination of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District's health education program. The mandatory kindergarten-through-10th grade curriculum had been under study since September 1984, and the numerous changes were announced at a televised school board meeting in late January. The changes will affect 72,500 students in the 103-school district.

Citizens and school personnel are divided as to the reasons behind the revisions, which also include making role-playing exercises voluntary and discontinuing the use of some Planned Parenthood materials. Superintendent of Schools Jay Robinson said that such "revisions are normal," especially since the program had not been reviewed for 10 years, and that they are not a reaction to parents who objected to the program.

But concerned parents disagree, and they are claiming victory in what they perceive as a battle over parents' and students' rights. They credit "overwhelming public response" in objection to the program's contents as the motivation behind the changes. As a result of the revisions, they "see the schools moving in our direction."

Critics of the 15-year old program protested that the curriculum undermined morality and modesty, invaded family pri-

vacy, presented a dreary view of traditional marriage, promoted birth control to teenagers, presented a biased perspective on controversial issues such as homosexuality, abortion, and divorce, and blurred male and female sex roles.

The leading voice of those calling for changes was Carl Horn, an attorney and father of four. As a member of the citizens review committee appointed by Superintendent Robinson, Mr. Horn wrote, published and distributed a 94-page minority report citing specific objections to the curriculum. It also gave guidelines for effective action. Currently, 4,500 copies of the report have been distributed in Charlotte and in other states where it is being used as a "model" critique.

Mr. Horn wrote the report in direct response to the 1-1/2 page majority report of the citizens review committee which endorsed the curriculum without changes. Mr. Horn was the only dissenting committee member. Other members of the committee who approved the program included the local long-range planner for Planned Parenthood, a member of the medical advisory board of Planned Parenthood, and a district educator involved in sex education.

The citizens review committee was first appointed in the fall of 1984 when, according to Dr. Robinson, "questions came up, and we were of the opinion there would be challenges to things in the [overall health education] program."

Mr. Horn was not among the original appointees. Dr. Robinson "put him in by request" and said Horn was "very vocal in opposition to the curriculum being value-free and causing promiscuity."

Robinson said that the committee con-

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## Teachers Sue Parents Who Raise Objections

*Victory in court for 11 Florida parents*

*Colorado suit filed*

A lengthy legal battle has resulted in victory for 11 Florida parents who were sued by a human sexuality teacher for allegedly conspiring to illegally tape record her remarks and instruction at parent workshops. In October, 1985, the three-judge panel of the Appeals Court decided in favor of the parents, and the teacher's request for a re-hearing has been denied.

The lower court had previously thrown the case out of court on a summary judgment, saying the plaintiff had "no expectation of privacy," thus affirming the parents' right to tape record the workshops.

Troubles began in the spring of 1982

when parents, including Dick and Arlene Conklin of Delray Beach, were asked by the pastor of their Catholic church to attend an eight week course on a human sexuality program presented by Mrs. Jane Smith, a freelance teacher employed by the Archdiocese of Miami at that time. The course was intended to prepare parents from each parish to eventually conduct the classes themselves.

Mrs. Conklin, a mother of four, attended all eight sessions and was among the parents who expressed concern and objections to some of the teaching methods including values clarification and situation

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A North Glenn, Colorado teacher has filed a lawsuit against local parents claiming "defamation of character" following a 1-1/2 year long dispute over controversial teaching methods. The sixth grade teacher at Malley Elementary School is seeking compensatory and punitive damages.

The suit was filed after the District 12 School Board issued resolutions in October 1985 in response to parental complaints regarding Jan Cole's teaching methods. Issued one year after the original complaints were made to the elementary school, the resolutions require that (1) when a teacher expresses an opinion

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**Inside: Values Clarification**

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

Hollywood High School voted against establishing a teen health clinic in the high school despite the Los Angeles School Board's prior approval of the measure throughout the district. The school's Community Advisory Council voted 14-9 on February 20 to reject the proposal for the primarily blue-collar school. Insiders report that issues surrounding malpractice insurance played a leading role in the decision.

"Phonics is the best method for teaching reading" according to a new U.S. Department of Education report entitled "What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning." Presented to President Reagan on March 4, the report lists 41 findings described as "common sense" by one researcher. (See page 4 for further details of this report.)

A statewide teacher competency test for 205,000 Texas educators was administered on March 10, and failure to pass by June 30 will result in loss of certification and job. Teachers will have two opportunities to pass the three-part test which includes multiple choice questions on reading and writing in addition to a required essay. Teacher and union apprehension has resulted in thousands of educators participating in refresher courses, and the University of Texas expects to net \$1 million dollars in revenue for the study courses it developed. State Commissioner of Education William Kirby predicted that five percent (10,000) will not pass by June 30. Texas joins Arkansas and Georgia as the only three states requiring such teacher testing.

Women are still passing up science as a college major according to a new study by staff of Radcliffe College and the Educational Testing Service. Based on government-collected data, the new analysis found that only 14 percent of female students who scored above the 50th percentile in achievement tests chose a college science major compared to 40 percent of males in the same group.

The Sandinista government is making its presence felt in Nicaraguan textbooks as part of an overall education reform program. One mathematics text features hand grenades as illustrations for addition exercises and asks "if the magazine of a gun holds eight bullets, how many bullets would it take to fill two magazines?" Published by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education, the Sandinista texts are required material in all of Nicaragua's public and private schools.

A hanging noose displayed in a high school health education classroom in Rockland, Maine was taken down after school board members brought it to the principal's attention. Citizens and parents saw the rope noose hanging in the front of the classroom while attending political precinct committee meetings at the school on Saturday, February 22. Also on display was a chart focusing on global suicide statistics. When questioned, a school health teacher said the purpose of the noose was "nothing at all."

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# Studies Show Parent Involvement is a Plus

Parental involvement in school and student activities is a plus for all, according to independent studies conducted in Connecticut, Maryland, and California. According to one study, the gains were greatest when teachers encouraged and directed parental participation. Researchers hope that the findings will counteract a growing trend that pits parents and teachers against one another.

### Maryland Study

A study of 600 elementary schools in Maryland by researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that "teacher-directed" parental involvement had a "direct effect on skill improvement." With parental assistance, students showed academic gains and better school attendance. The academic improvement was especially strong in reading skills, primarily because parents "felt comfortable" with helping their children with this subject.

The ongoing study is based on 1981 data from the schools, parents, and the student achievement scores. The study also found that parental involvement results in positive parental attitudes and that parents give better ratings to teachers who encourage parental participation.

Joyce Epstein, principal research scientist and project coordinator, said that "this mobilization of parent assistance can help attain the goals for a given year."

She said that, based on the study results, a "thorough and directed" teacher orientation for parents at the beginning of the year is highly recommended. This would provide an "opportunity for teachers to explain their own philosophy of parental help" and to demonstrate the teaching methods and materials. Then, the teacher should direct parent participation as an ongoing activity throughout the school year, especially with regard to regular homework assignments.

### Yale Study

"We're convinced that parental involvement is essential," said Dr. Hamilton-Lee of the Yale University team which has likewise found that increased parental involvement means academic progress for students, improved attendance, and even self-improvement by parents.

The Yale researchers studied two inner-city elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut, to learn the effects of parental involvement in an environment where most parents are single and on welfare.

They found that, after the parents acquired a voice in the operation of the school, the schools rose from the bottom of the city's academic ranking to respectable test scores. The students also showed better than average attendance.

Parental involvement was directed by

the "school planning and management team" including the principal, teachers, and most recently, parents. The management team encouraged and directed parent involvement as school library volunteers, classroom tutors, field trip helpers, and cafeteria volunteers.

According to the Yale team director, James Comer, parental involvement resulted in a reduction of adversarial relationships between parents and teachers. It also prompted eight welfare parents to return to school, go to college, and become professionals.

### Stanford Study

Children whose parents are firm, encouraging, and communicative achieve higher grades according to a two-year study in the San Francisco Bay area high schools.

Stanford researcher Sanford Dornbusch said that "low-key, positive reinforcement, like praise and encouragement, works better than material rewards or big, exaggerated or emotional responses."

The study found that parental participation in school functions had a "substantial positive association with grades." Dornbusch said that "this is just a good indicator of underlying values or that contact with teachers may affect particular assignments."



Schlafly addresses Lynden audience

## Drug Program Debate Draws Crowd

Phyllis Schlafly, president of Eagle Forum, addressed a crowd of 1,300 in Lynden, Washington, on February 28 on "Education Problems Today." The controversy over the drug education program "Here's Looking At You Two" brought out the huge crowd in a town of 4,500 people on the same evening as a local basketball tournament.

The Lynden School Board eliminated the program from the public schools after protests from hundreds of parents. School boards in neighboring cities are now taking a new look at the controversial program.

The program's sponsors have been

fighting back to save the program, and a handful of them picketed the Schlafly speech, carrying candles and flashlights.

The full program sells for \$5,290, so they have a large financial stake in it.

Mrs. Schlafly criticized the program because of the hours of classroom time it spends teaching little children that everybody has stress, that stress is normal, that drugs are one way of coping with stress, that everybody takes some kind of drugs (which the course lists as ranging from cocaine to hot chocolate), and because it never tells the children that hard drugs are wrong.

## LEGISLATION UPDATE: School Clinics

Two bills have been introduced in the U.S. Congress to establish "school-based health clinics" which would provide a variety of health services to students, including sex and pregnancy related services, counseling, and referrals.

The in-school clinics have come under increasing controversy because opponents object to the clinics dispensing contraceptives. DuSable high school in Chicago is one school where this is done.

Congresswoman Cardiss Collins (D-IL) has introduced H.R. 3616 to direct the Department of Health and Human Services to award grants from fiscal years 1987-1991 to establish and support "adolescent health demonstration projects in secondary schools" throughout the United States. The "project" would provide "family planning information and services, prenatal and postpartum care, and family life and parenting counseling."

Currently, H.R. 3616 has 16 cosponsors and is pending in the Health and Environ-

ment subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Although the bill does not specifically call for dispensing birth control, an aide to Congresswoman Collins said that "we are not ruling out the dispensing of contraceptives." He explained that the bill was worded to be "more politically palatable" for all concerned. He also said that proponents plan to hold hearings in 1986 in order to "push it through" the subcommittee in the current year, and that hope for passage rests with subcommittee chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA).

In a similar measure, Congressman George Miller (D-CA) is the sponsor of other legislation to establish "comprehensive school-located centers." The provision for the "centers" is included in H.R. 2867, an omnibus child-care bill with 66 sponsors. Section 531 of the overall bill pertains to the school-based clinics and is under discussion in subcommittees of two House committees, Energy and Commerce and

Education and Labor. A staff member of the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families said that the decision whether to dispense contraceptives from the "centers" would be made locally.

The House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families released a majority report on February 10 which advocated family planning clinics in schools, but the minority report stated that, "We have, as a nation, decided that it is easier to give children pills than to teach them respect for sex and marriage."

According to the Support Center for School Based Clinics at the privately-funded Center for Population Options, some states have already introduced state legislation regarding the establishment of school health clinics. They include Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon and Wisconsin.

There are presently 45 such clinics in schools nationwide, of which 10 dispense birth control.



## AIDS: How are schools coping?

As of August 20, 1985, 183 children under age 18 had contracted the fatal AIDS disease (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), and that number is expected to double during the next 12 months. Still, there is no uniform policy for handling AIDS in school classrooms throughout the states.

One common thread among some states, however, is that state agencies are distributing the suggested guidelines issued by the national Centers for Disease Control. The CDC guidelines do not specifically recommend that schools exclude AIDS victims. Instead, they recommend that "most infected school-aged children...be allowed to attend school and after-school day care...in an unrestricted setting."

The CDC guidelines state that decisions concerning AIDS students "are best made using the team approach" including the child's physician, parents, public health and education personnel. Factors for consideration should include the child's behavior and physical condition, neurological development, and the expected type of interaction with others. Special consideration should be given to children who lack control of their body secretions or who display risky behavior, such as biting.

### Florida

Florida schools report 14 cases of AIDS, but as yet, no statewide policy for dealing with AIDS victims has been issued. Instead, the decision to include or exclude AIDS victims from the classroom rests with the district school board, according to Don Darling, a staff member of the Florida State Board of Education. He said that the standard CDC guidelines have been distributed to schools statewide for guidance purposes.

Similarly, Wayne Blanton of the Florida Association of School Boards reported that the Association has recommended that the schools "deal with each case on an individual basis," for both students and employees who have contracted AIDS.

Mr. Blanton said that the 14 students with the AIDS disease are currently being taught at home with the assistance of home-bound tutors and television monitors. He added that "most" school employees with AIDS have been removed

from contact with students and transferred to other work settings.

### California

The California State Board of Education hopes to release a new statewide policy for dealing with AIDS victims in March. The state policy is very similar in content to the CDC guidelines, which are considered a "safe approach," according to Persida Drakulich. But a California state law pertaining to AIDS and physician-patient confidentiality puts that state in a unique position when attempting to deal with AIDS in the schools.

Contrary to other states where a physician is required to report AIDS cases to public health authorities, California state law does *not* require the physician to reveal the condition of an AIDS victim unless the patient signs an authorization.

As a result, Drakulich said there is an "absolute possibility" that there are AIDS victims in California schools. No cases have been confirmed yet, but no one is required to report any either.

### Illinois

Illinois school officials are presently waiting for the Illinois AIDS Interdisciplinary Advisory Council to issue a statewide policy. In the meantime, the Illinois Association of School Boards is urging schools *not* to adopt specific AIDS policies because the schools may face lawsuits for denying children their legal right to an education.

Instead, the Association advises schools to adhere to the current policy for communicable diseases. That policy requires that, when an illness is suspected, the student is isolated, the principal and nurse notified, and the student excluded from school if the suspicion is sustained. Then, local health authorities are notified and notices are sent to parents with children in the same classroom. However, there are no provisions for continued exclusion or quarantine for AIDS as there are for mumps and measles because AIDS is not yet included on the disease chart, according to Association representative Suzanne Humphrey.

Following the Association's recommendation, a Granite City school voted on February 4 to drop the AIDS policy it had adopted one month earlier.

## Educators Meet in San Francisco

Global education and homeschooling were among a wide range of topics covered at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's national convention in San Francisco from March 1-4. In the opening session, Secretary of Education William Bennett told the several thousand educators in attendance that the American people believe that schools should teach "reliable standards of right and wrong."

An opponent of homeschooling suggested one way to discourage the transfer of more children to homeschools. The Virginia educator said, in response to reading *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, "I thought about the times I've used these techniques without realizing the ramifications. ...We don't mean to be doing things that are harmful to them, but as it turns out they have been." She asked, "What are some of the things that we are doing, inadvertently, that we should change?"

At a Global Education workshop, one Washington State educator said, "If you want to explore if we're promoting One World government, one world religion, you should read Phyllis Schlafly." Educators were also told not to respond to Global Education opponents' letters, calls or articles.

A special focus of the convention was the growing trend to transfer curriculum control from the local to state level. The panel moderator described this movement in his own state, Virginia, as "the beginning of the end of local control of schools." Michael Kirst of Stanford University, speaking to represent advocates of state-mandated curriculum objectives, said "Given that we've had local curriculum control, and they've blown it -- somebody's got to come in from 'on High'" and fix it. Kirst also noted that there is no strong political counter movement to fight this state control.

## FOCUS: Values Clarification

by Professor Richard A. Baer

Richard A. Baer, Jr., is a professor in the Department of Natural Resources and director of the Program in Agricultural and Environmental Values, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. He is the author of many scholarly critiques on values clarification.



Professor Richard A. Baer

When groups of "concerned parents" first voiced objections to the use of values clarification in the public schools, proponents of the method typically brushed aside their complaints as little more than reactionary right-wing response to educational innovation. After all, Lewis Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon, who had originated the method in the middle 1960s, had explicitly stated that they were interested not in teaching particular values, but only in clarifying the student's own values. In contrast to earlier traditional attempts to teach values by filling the students' minds with a predetermined set of "true" or "correct" values, values clarification, they maintained, was truly nonsectarian and noncommittal about

pointed out that "teachers are not trained in the use of psychologically probing strategies and, particularly in the case of younger children, the reasonable assumption that students may be unaware of the negative consequences of extensive self-disclosure." To be sure, the method includes the possibility of saying "I pass" when a student does not want to respond to a particular question. But many of the techniques are designed in such a fashion that it is highly unlikely that the student will know ahead of time what kind of information is being sought, and by the time this becomes clear, the student may already have divulged more than he or she wishes. Also, the presence of the teacher as an adult authority figure and pressure from the peer group make it difficult for all but the most self-confident students to "pass" as often as they might really want to, for the method itself incorporates a pressure toward self-disclosure.

• *Values clarification as psychotherapy.* In another article, Lockwood writes that "similarities between client-centered therapy and Values Clarification are significant enough to conclude that Values Clarification is, in essence, a form of client-centered therapy." Lockwood's judgment is particularly significant in light of the fact that many schools employ values clarification not just in one or two optional courses but also as a technique to be used in various required courses. Using the power of the state to require students to participate in what is, in effect, a form of psychotherapy has ominous overtones indeed.

• *Bias against authority, traditional morality, and duty.* One of the most objectionable aspects of Values Clarification is its pronounced bias against authority, traditional morality, and a sense of duty and self-sacrifice.

Equally clear is its bias against a sense of duty or self-sacrifice and toward self-gratification. Current Secretary of Education William J. Bennett and Edwin J. Delattre point to the following values clarification "strategy," which is recommended for discussion with family or friends over lunch or dinner:

*Your husband or wife is a very attractive person. Your best friend is very attracted to him or her. How would you want them to behave?*

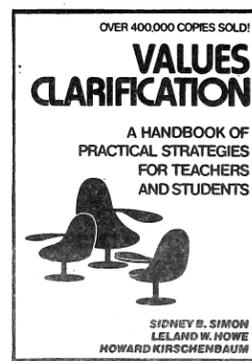
—*Maintain a clandestine relationship so you wouldn't know about it*

—*Be honest and accept the reality of the relationship*

—*Proceed with a divorce.*

Commenting on this exercise, Bennett and Delattre write:

*Typically, the spouse and best friend are presented as having desires they will eventually satisfy anyway; the student is*



particular values. Who would possibly object to it unless they were covertly trying to promote their own rigid and outdated value structures in the schools?

But the "concerned parents" and others did object, particularly about the way in which the method defined all values as subjective, personal, and relative, and the way in which it threatened to violate their children's and their own privacy rights.

Over the past 10 years a substantial body of scholarly criticism of Values Clarification has arisen that in many ways corroborates and reinforces at least some of the objections that have been raised by parents. This literature has been written by liberals as well as conservatives and by atheists as well as theists.

### Criticisms of Values Clarification

• *The claim to neutrality.* Although Rath, Harmin, and Simon claim that values clarification methodology does not teach values and is values neutral, a close examination of the method shows that it in fact involves a form of indoctrination in radical ethical relativism. That is, it teaches the particular value position that all values are subjective and matters of individual choice, and it does this without ever seriously discussing the philosophical arguments for and against such a position. By failing to distinguish between moral and non-moral values and by identifying all values with personal preferences and tastes, Values Clarification assumes a simple form of hedonism, namely the doctrine that pleasure is the highest good in life.

• *The right to privacy.* Values Clarification threatens the right to privacy of students and their families. Alan L. Lockwood of the University of Wisconsin has

*continued on page 4*

**Values** *continued*

offered only choices that pre-suppose their relationship. All possibilities for self-restraint, fidelity, regard for others, or respect for mutual relationships and commitments are ignored.

• **A threat to pluralism and a liberal democracy.** Insofar as Values Clarification understands values in highly relative and subjective terms, it is not only problematic for many Christians, Jews, and others, but it also threatens to undercut the philosophical basis of a liberal democracy. If all values are finally matters of individual choice and preference, then such values as tolerance of other people's ideas, equality, and basic social justice are also matters of personal choice and preference. Such a situation may be tolerable so long as the majority remains strongly committed to such values, but it is certainly not a position likely to give much comfort to Jews, blacks, Mennonites, atheists, and other minorities, for under even slightly different historical circumstances, majority opinion may shift, and there would remain no legitimate appeal to the truth of basic ethical principles and rights.

• **Values clarification as a "religious" position.** Insofar as Values Clarification presents the individual as the final arbiter of truth in the realm of values, it becomes a kind of "religious" position in its own right, one that conflicts with other important religious positions in our society. Let me clarify what I mean. The statement, "God is the final arbiter of truth in the realm of values," is a religious statement. "God is *not* the final arbiter of truth in the realm of values" is also a religious statement, albeit in negative form. This latter statement is directly implied by Values Clarification, for insofar as it presents the individual as the final arbiter of value truth, it excludes God from this position.

Similarly, Biblical religion regards the love of God and the service of one's fellow human beings as the highest goals of man. But Values Clarification's emphasis on self-fulfillment and action on the basis of one's own desires and preferences stands in direct conflict with this religious value.

Whether or not Values Clarification is correct in these estimates of values and of human nature, its "religious" position is only one among many, and it is intolerable in a society such as ours to have the authors press it on a semicaptive audience of students in a public school setting as the truth about values and human beings. Such a procedure represents a gross violation of the doctrine of the separation of church and state.

**Teaching Values**

If the above arguments are sound and the conclusion is accepted that Values Clarification should not be used in public schools or by quasi-public agencies, is it then necessary to give up the teaching of values altogether? Not at all. Just how it should be done is still an open question, but at least broad outlines of acceptability are already becoming clear.

The common distinction between public and private values makes it possible for public schools to emphasize such basic values as fairness, equality, tolerance, courtesy, honesty, and responsible citizenship. The courts have left open the way for teaching such values as these, and few groups have objected to their being included in the public school curriculum.

Reprinted from *Principal*, January 1982.

**Book of the Month**



**What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning**, U.S. Department of Education, 1986, 66 pp., available free of charge from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado, 81009.

Common sense works. And a brand new report from the U.S. Department of Education clearly indicates that common sense in education not only works; it also produces very positive results. According to Secretary of Education William Bennett, many of the new findings contained in the just-released booklet "What Works" confirm the American people's faith in old-fashioned common sense as a key to sound educational practice.

The 66-page booklet concisely distills the findings of hundreds of research studies into brief summaries that explain educational practice found to be most effective in helping children to learn. Fortunately, it does so in words we can all understand. The report does not make any specific recommendations to educators, but it doesn't have to. The findings speak for themselves.

The following are just a few of the more than 40 research findings included in the booklet:

**Phonics:** Children get a better start in reading if they are taught phonics. Learning phonics helps them to understand the relationship between letters and sounds and to "break the code" that links the words they hear with the words they see.

**Getting parents involved:** Parent involvement helps children learn more effectively. Teachers who are successful at involving parents in their children's schoolwork

are successful because they work at it.

**Memorization:** Memorizing can help students absorb and retain the factual information on which understanding and critical thought are based.

**History:** Skimpy requirements and declining enrollments in history classes are contributing to a decline in student's knowledge of the past. A preliminary study to be released in 1987 indicates that two-thirds of 17-year olds could not place the Civil War within the period 1850-1900, and half could not identify Joseph Stalin or Winston Churchill.



**Rigorous Courses:** The stronger the emphasis on academic courses, the more advanced the subject matter, and the more rigorous the textbooks, the more high school students learn.

**Preparation for Work:** Business leaders report that students with solid basic skills and positive work attitudes are more likely to find and keep jobs than students with vocational skills alone.

*What Works* says what so many Americans have believed for so long: that parents, as their children's first and most influential educators, can make all the difference.

But what may be obvious to some will be a springboard for debate for others.

**North Carolina** *continued*

cluded "we were not required to make any changes." But following the submission of the majority report he appointed a 12-member panel of teachers to recommend and make changes in the curriculum.

"I can't imagine reviewing a curriculum after 10 years without making any changes," said Robinson, who waited to announce the changes "until we were well away from the heat of the debate."

Mr. Horn expressed a different reason for the changes which were made despite the favorable majority report. He said that, with the assistance of his printed critique and media coverage, parents became aware of the program contents and a public outcry then prompted the educators to revise the curriculum.

According to Horn, the superintendent is currently involved in showing a multimedia presentation called "The Christians Are Coming" to educators statewide, in conjunction with the North Carolina affiliate of the National Education Association as well as People for the American Way. Horn said that the film, which includes taped footage of himself, is designed to discredit the parents, their concerns, and their motivations.

Mr. Horn is working on a statewide effort to elect pro-family candidates to many offices, especially to school boards. He has also been asked to lend assistance to the neighboring community of Morganton where local parents are concerned about the school's health program.

**Florida** *continued*

ethics. Parents specifically objected that chastity was never mentioned.

During the workshops, the teacher had expressed concern over the presence of tape recorders. After some hesitancy, she permitted their use saying, "I don't care if you record me. I have nothing to hide."

When a letter from the Archbishop in response to a report on the program signed by 200 parents indicated that some unnamed changes would be made, the case was considered closed by the parents.

Then, in the summer of 1983, Mrs. Smith sued Dick and Arlene Conklin and nine other parents for monetary damages. The lawsuit accused the parents of conspiring to illegally tape record her remarks to the class, citing a Florida statute prohibiting wiretapping.

During cross examination of the teacher, the defense asked Mrs. Smith how she knew that the parents were working together against her. According to parents she replied, "By their body language. When you see people who all have slanted eyes and they look like they are going to throw up, you just know."

Judge Thomas Sholts dismissed the case and stated in a summary judgment that the teacher had no basis for claiming that tape recorders were used illegally. The Appeals Court handed down a unanimous decision in favor of the parents.

Legal fees for the parents are estimated at \$100,000, while Mrs. Smith's lawyer works on a contingency basis.

**Traditional** *continued*

a "pure phonics approach to the teaching of reading, writing, and spelling." All Franklin teachers, who receive the same pay as those at other public schools, are required to take at least one 44-hour class in order to teach phonics effectively according to the *Writing Road to Reading* curriculum by Romalda Spalding. Many parents also attend evening classes at the school to learn the method themselves.

The Spalding curriculum also contains a penmanship program and a complete spelling program. The whole Spalding curriculum costs the Franklin School less than \$20 per classroom for the entire year.

Report cards are sent home every six weeks, six times a year, which increases the contact between home and school by 50 percent over most other school systems.

Homework is mandatory Monday through Thursday nights. Parents are expected to sign daily homework slips in order to be aware of what is being presented at school and to enhance parent-child contact.

Franklin also offers extracurricular activities such as band and chorus, and the Mesa Parks and Recreation Department provides an after-school sports program.

Franklin teachers must meet strict standards, too. They all undergo annual evaluations, including two evaluations during their first three years at the school.

One problem Franklin school continues to encounter is tardiness. Since the district does not provide bus service because students live throughout the school district, parents must provide transportation and carpools.

The question most parents ask is, why doesn't the Mesa School Board provide a second basic-education school to meet the obvious demand?

**Colorado** *continued*

that could be considered controversial, the teacher should clarify that opinion as personal and reasonably solicit divergent and opposing viewpoints, (2) a classroom teacher can only give health, medical and dietary advice in an emergency situation, and (3) when a method is subject to an objection based on the tenets of an established religion, the school will help the teacher meet legal requirements and provide an alternative activity to students without penalty.

Parents Sandy Montoya and Arlene Lehman were among the parents who complained to the school independently and unknown to one another in the fall of 1984. Parents were voicing similar concerns about experimental methods including "stress management" and "occultic" techniques used in the classroom.

In one exercise, students were told to lie down on the floor while listening to music in order to explore the inner-rooms of their minds. The reason later given for this exercise was to improve creative writing. Parental consent was not solicited.

After months delay and no response from the school, a series of meetings and an open hearing of the policy subcommittee on controversial issues culminated in a 35-page report of the subcommittee in support of the teacher. Parents rejected the report, and a school board meeting at which both sides presented their case resulted in the district resolutions.

A pre-trial court date is set for January 1987 and jury trial for March 1987.