

Parents Challenge Humanism, Textbooks in Court

Governor Wallace supports Alabama parents

Alabama parents and citizens are moving closer to turning defeat into victory in a complex court battle which would prohibit the promotion of Humanism in state textbooks.

The cooperation of the Alabama State Board of Education is the only remaining obstacle to an initial victory for Mobile parents and citizens who contend that Humanism, by its own definition, is an established religion. Its "advancement" in state textbooks, they assert, violates their constitutional rights.

Plaintiffs moved closer to settlement when Alabama Governor George Wallace and the Mobile School Board Commission, who were named as defendants in the case, approved settlement terms with parental rights advocates.

The plaintiffs' proposed settlement in *Smith et al v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County* would require that new state textbook guidelines be established which mandate (1) that Humanism be eliminated from textbooks and (2) that state textbooks teach the "established facts about American history, tradition, and patriotism."

A successful settlement, however, may not be the end of the battle due to the recent intervention of People for the American Way and the American Civil Liberties Union on the side opposing the parent plaintiffs. Their injection into the case signals that, regardless of the State Board's decision, the case appears to be headed back to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The current case is a realignment of the 1985 Supreme Court case, *Wallace v. Jaffree*, in which the Court ruled that silent prayer or

meditation in Alabama schools was a violation of church and state. Unsuccessful defendants in that case included 624 Mobile parents, teachers, and students who intervened on the side of the state to support the practice of silent prayer in the schools.

When the case was remanded to Alabama District Judge Brevard Hand, who had previously ruled in favor of silent prayer, the judge realigned the citizen group as plaintiffs in order to challenge the alleged religious content currently in Alabama textbooks.

In doing so, he invoked a footnote in his prior ruling which said that, if the Supreme Court overturned his decision, he would investigate the presence of other forms of religion in school curriculum.

Consequently, the case now tests the strict neutrality of the Supreme Court ruling in *Wallace v. Jaffree*. If a religion which recognizes God is not allowed in the school curriculum, the Mobile parents contend, then other forms of religion which do not recognize God should also be banned.

They say that one such religion is Humanism which, by its own definition in the Humanist Manifestos I and II, is "non-theist" in nature.

According to trial testimony, humanists agree that (1) God is either nonexistent or irrelevant to modern man, (2) Man is the supreme value in the universe, (3) Man is purely a material or biological creature, (4) No absolute morals or values exist, and (5) Man, through the use of his scientific reason, will save himself.

Based on those tenets, lawyers for the Mobile



Alabama Governor George Wallace

plaintiffs, including Robert Skolrood of the Freedom Council, are challenging the "unconstitutional advancement of the religion of Humanism in the curriculum used in the Mobile County school system," the "unconstitutional inhibition of Christianity caused by the curriculum," and the "violation of the statutory mandate to teach established facts of American history, tradition, and patriotism."

Referring to the latter, plaintiffs argued that state textbooks have effectively censored important facts about the historical contributions

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Tennessee mother wins first round for parents

A Tennessee mother who was arrested and jailed after attempting to remove her daughter from reading class has won a victory in federal court in the first round of a continuing legal battle focusing on textbooks and parental rights.

On March 26, the jury in U.S. District Judge Thomas Hull's court awarded Vicki Frost \$70,000 in damages plus court costs in a battle which began as a dispute between parents and school officials over the use of alternative readers in the classroom.

The dispute began in the fall of 1983 when the Hawkins County School Board selected the Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Basic Readers for use in local schools. Following the selection, parents who examined the textbooks objected to some of the content of the readers and protested to school officials.

Parents organized "Citizens for Better Schools" and requested that alternative readers be provided on the grounds that the Holt, Rinehart, and Winston readers were unacceptable for moral and religious reasons. Objections cited by parents included that the readers opposed Judeo-Christian principles, that they

See *Tennessee* page 4

'Romeo and Juliet' film won't be shown in class following suicides

The Bryan High School English Department in Omaha, Nebraska, has decided to discontinue showing the movie "Romeo and Juliet" to students as part of the regular curriculum. The action came after three students committed suicide during one week in February.

A teacher who wanted to remain anonymous said that Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" will substitute for "Romeo and Juliet," the tale of two teenagers from quarreling families who secretly marry and commit suicide.

The 1968 film version is widely shown in high school English classes all over the country. Recently, it has come under increasing attack from parents and critics who claim that the film "romanticizes" teenage suicide, giving students an unrealistic picture of the horror and finality of suicide. Many parents also object to the nude scene.



Scene from 1968 film "Romeo and Juliet"

Critics are quick to point out that their objections are specific to the modern film interpretation, not to the original play.

The film is also under investigation in a St. Louis school district where a committee at the Parkway North High School, including the school psychologist, initially agreed with parent Carol Vaughn that the film could increase the risk of suicide and should be deleted from the curriculum.

Another committee composed of the district's English department chairmen disagreed. "They claimed that the beauty of the film outweighed the risk," said Mrs. Vaughn, who plans to continue her fight.

Texas District Drops 'Magic Circle'

The local school board in Crosby, Texas, suspended the use of "Magic Circle," a controversial counseling program used in local elementary schools since 1978.

As a result of parent protest, the Board voted 4-1 at a special session on March 6 to suspend the program for the remainder of the school year. That vote was confirmed at the regular meeting on March 17 when the Board agreed to establish a summer review committee to make further recommendations.

Magic Circle is a "feelings" and "behavior" centered counseling exercise used in all 50 states in which students and teacher sit in a circle and discuss their "feelings" about designated situations and topics such as "what makes me feel sad." Students are told that there "are no right or wrong answers."

According to program developers at Palomares and Associates in Spring Valley, CA, student participation in the "circle session" is intended to produce a "session of equality" in which participation is voluntary.

But many critics disagree. They protest that peer pressure and fear of teacher reprisal induces the student to participate and express feelings they would otherwise prefer to keep private.

Kathleen Baumbach, mother of four, was one of the Crosby parents who initially challenged the program. She met with the principal and school counselor last fall after a friend alerted her to the program in her eight-year-old daughter's class.

School officials told Mrs. Baumbach that the purpose of Magic Circle was "for children who didn't have good communication with their parents."

The Crosby mother urged the school to obtain prior written informed consent from the parents. She said that assistant superintendent John Canady rejected the suggestion.

Parents did not take formal action until early 1986 when Mrs. Baumbach obtained a copy of the fourth grade teacher's manual called "Magic Circle Human Development," authored and published by Palomares and Associates.

Mrs. Baumbach copied pages from the text to form a sample packet of Magic Circle exercises and distributed them to area citizens, asking them for their opinions.

According to Mrs. Baumbach, the packet did not contain any editorial comment on her part or guidelines for action. "I let the facts speak for themselves," she said.

One exercise included in the packet asked the students to focus on "how I made somebody suffer." During the circle session, three students are asked to role-play how one student might inflict suffering on another. The other students in the circle were subsequently asked to describe a situation when they made someone suffer.

Another exercise advised the teacher that all children lie, a presumption which aroused the anger of many parents.

The packet produced results when school officials scheduled a special school board meeting. One hundred parents expressed their unhappiness with the program during a four-hour session, subsequently convincing the Board to suspend the program.

Following their victory, parents were working to elect school board members in the April elections who will vote to discontinue the program permanently.

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EDUCATION BRIEFS

The role of librarians as political activists is a topic for discussion at the upcoming National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) annual conference June 11-15 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As reported in a publication sponsored by the American Library Association, specific panels include: "Working for Change: Librarians as Activists" and "Bringing Global Feminism into Libraries." Panelists will discuss "what role should librarians play in furthering social and political goals" such as equal rights and comparable worth.

A variation of the Survival Game called "A Wagon Train Going West" is used in the public schools in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania. Students flip a coin to decide which family members will die because of disease, drowning, or Indian attacks. The exercise has been a month-long unit in the 9th grade mandatory American history class for five years. Scenarios include asking the students to flip a coin to determine whether a child who falls from the wagon is dead or alive and discuss which family member has to die due to lack of food.

The National Education Association (NEA) plans to recruit support from the Republican Mainstream Committee, "a national coalition including moderate Republican members of Congress," during the Committee's Chicago conference April 25-27. According to the March 17 NEA-NOW newsletter, NEA staffers will conduct training sessions for the conferees. The teachers' union is also "providing limited financial resources to help NEA grassroots members take part."

A teacher who allegedly took a 14-year old student to get an abortion in Thermalito, California, faces a multi-million dollar lawsuit in which the main issue is parents' versus teachers' responsibilities, according to attorneys for the student's mother. The mother learned of the abortion only after her daughter developed complications and had to be rushed to the emergency room. Other defendants in the suit include the Thermalito School District, the former district superintendent and school principal, and the Feminist Health Center where the abortion was recommended and performed.

A student associated with Accuracy in Academia charges that he was physically assaulted by security guards summoned by his professor at the University of New York to throw him out of the classroom after he challenged the philosophy teacher's remarks. Accuracy in Academia is the new college "watchdog" organization on 200 campuses whose members monitor college professors' lectures for historical accuracy and liberal bias.

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002, (618) 462-5415. Editor: Catherine Sutherland. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription is \$25. Donors of \$25 per year or more will receive it free. Back-issues available for \$2.50. Second class postage pending at Alton, Illinois.

American students lose to Japanese, Chinese

Study shows Americans weakest in math, science

American businessmen are not the only ones feeling the heat of foreign competition from the Far East. New research confirms that American elementary school children, tomorrow's businessmen, trail well behind both the Japanese and Chinese in academic achievement scores.

The findings indicate that major differences in teaching practices may play a leading role in producing the dismal results, which were most apparent in math and science.

The study tested schoolchildren in kindergarten and grades one and five in three cities. Researchers intentionally chose to test American schoolchildren in Minneapolis where the students usually come from native-born, English-speaking, economically stable families, thus giving the Americans a running start.

Minneapolis' foreign counterparts were Taipei, Taiwan, and Sendai, Japan. Ten schools from each city participated.

Under the direction of Harold Stevenson and Shin-ying-Lee of the University of Michigan, and James W. Stigler of the University of Chicago, bilingual researchers from each culture constructed tests to eliminate any cultural bias.

Americans cannot compete

In mathematics testing, American schoolchildren scored lower than the Japanese in kindergarten and both first and fifth grade, and behind the Chinese in grades one and five. While Japanese and Chinese children both showed consistent improvement with age, American children "displayed a consistent decline."

From a total sampling of 720 schoolchildren, only 15 American students were among the top 100 scorers on the mathematics test for grade one, and only one American student was

among the 100 top scorers for grade five. However, 58 American students were among the 100 lowest scorers in grade one, and that number increased to 67 for grade five.

Differences in reading scores were "significant," but less extreme. Chinese children had the highest scores, followed by the Americans and Japanese.

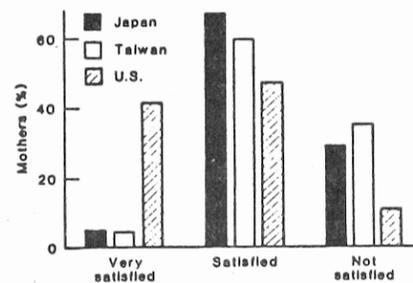
Classroom differences

Based on their assertion that "learning depends, in part, on the amount of time spent in practicing the materials to be learned," researchers conducted extensive classroom observations during at least 1,200 hours in each city.

Fifth grade American children spent 64.5% of classtime in academic activities compared to 87.4 in Japan and 91.5 in China

The observations determined that American first graders spent only 69.8 percent of classtime engaged in academic activities compared to 85.1 for Chinese children and 79.2 for the Japanese.

The gap widened as the grade level increased. By the fifth grade, American children spent a decreased 64.5 percent of classtime in academic activities. In contrast, time spent on academic activities increased to 87.4 percent in Japan, and to 91.5 in China.



Mothers' attitudes toward children's academic performance.

Translated into actual hours, American fifth graders spent only 19.6 hours per week on academic activities compared to 40.4 hours for the Chinese and 36.3 hours for the Japanese.

Observers also focused on actual teacher instruction. They found that children in Taipei were "led by the teacher more than 90 percent of the time; in Sendai, more than 70 percent." In contrast, Minneapolis students "spent less than half their time in classrooms where they were led by the teacher."

Additionally, American teachers only spent 21 percent of the time "imparting information" while Japanese teachers spent 33 percent and Chinese 58 percent.

A frequent complaint mentioned by American teachers was the diversion of energies they spent on performing nonacademic activities which included assuming the roles of counselor and family therapist. This problem was seldom mentioned by the foreign teachers.

Correcting the problem

According to researchers, correcting the deficiencies is essential "if the United States is to remain competitive." But solving the crisis must begin with recognizing the problem, and the same study found that this recognition factor may be a problem in itself.

Despite the poor showing of American students, a survey of American mothers showed that they were more satisfied with their children's academic performance and abilities than the Chinese and Japanese mothers.

Their "excessive positive attitude" led the researchers to conclude that "American mothers have unrealistically favorable evaluations of their children and what they are accomplishing at school."

The study concluded that the problem cannot be effectively corrected by reforms at the secondary school level. Instead, reforms at the elementary level are critical.

Supreme Court sides with non-union teachers

Dues cannot be used for union's political activities

Non-union teachers won a Supreme Court victory on March 4 when the Court ruled unanimously that "agency fees" payed by non-union teachers at a Chicago school cannot be used to subsidize the advancement of political or ideological views they oppose.

Although non-union teachers must still pay an "agency fee" to the union they refuse to join, that fee can only be used for such purposes as collective bargaining on the employees' behalf. The Court said that the union must disclose a breakdown of all expenditures between collective bargaining and other outlays. The record of expenditures will be subject to review by an independent auditor.

PTA refuses to withdraw from 'anti-parent' coalition

Working to nullify Hatch Amendment

The national PTA has refused to withdraw from what parental rights advocates call an "anti-parent coalition" of educator groups working to nullify the regulations for the Pupil Protection (Hatch) Amendment. The refusal came in response to a request from a leading parental rights advocate that the organization withdraw from the coalition or drop the word "parents" from its name.

Malcolm Lawrence, author of the "sample parental consent letter" distributed to over one million parents nationwide, asked 200 PTA leaders at the organization's March 5 legislative conference in Washington, DC, to "work for, not against parents' rights."

Lawrence told the conferees that "parents throughout the nation are rising up to protect their rights in education and are most resentful of the PTA leadership in the HAC (Hatch Amendment Coalition), a role that is a disservice to the history of the national PTA."

The Pupil Protection Amendment requires that schools obtain prior informed written consent of parents before administering federally-funded psychological testing or treatment on non-academic subjects.

Lawrence noted that HAC members have recently been working to persuade the sponsor of the Pupil Protection Amendment, Senator Orrin Hatch, to oppose the regulations issued by the Department of Education to enforce the amendment. Other coalition members include the National Education Association, People for



National PTA president Ann Kahn

the American Way, and the National School Boards Association.

Parental rights advocates see this action as a deliberate move to rewrite the regulations and weaken the enforcement procedure.

Ann Kahn, president of the 5.6 million-member PTA, refused to withdraw from the coalition. She defended the PTA's action saying the organization is "very disturbed by the challenges being made to the authority of the local school districts."

As reported in *Education Daily*, Kahn said that the PTA "can't allow a parental dictatorship" to develop. "If parents feel this [psychological treatment without parental consent] is an intrusion into their lives, they will have to resolve it in the courts," said Kahn.

FOCUS: Youth suicide linked to decline of religion and family

by
Allan Carlson

There are few greater human tragedies than a youth taking his own life. In America, a social and political system intended to offer unprecedented opportunities and freedoms to all citizens has clearly and utterly failed the suicidal adolescent.

Between 1955 and 1975, the number of such suicides in the United States rose by 300 percent. Every year now, about 5,000 Americans between the ages of 15 and 24 kill themselves. A smaller, albeit disturbing, number of children under age 15 also choose to end their lives.

Numerous research articles in professional social and psychology journals over the last 10 years have gone far toward explaining the youth suicide phenomenon, particularly the rise in the adolescent suicide rate between 1957 and 1975. Surprisingly, given the historic secular liberal orientation of these professions, the journal articles testify to the critical role played by religious belief and family structure in preventing youth suicide.

What youth suicide tells us about religion and family

Sociologists have rediscovered religion as the central explanatory factor in changes in suicide rates. Steven Stark of Pennsylvania State University and his associates, for example, have analyzed the relationship between church membership and suicide in the United States' 214 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

They found "a very substantial and highly significant negative correlation" between the rate, even after controlling for a series of variables (including rate of population growth, poverty level, and percent unemployed). The higher the degree of church membership in a given urban area, the lower the suicide rate.

In a remarkable study, Stack calculated the relationship between church attendance (persons being asked: "Did you, yourself happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?") and suicide rate. As expected, he found a significant and negative relationship between the two.

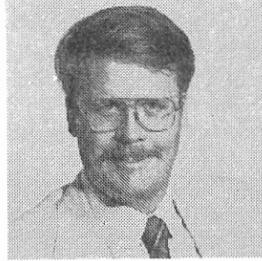
He also discovered the most dramatic relationship between these variables to be among young persons, ages 15 to 29. This group produced an almost perfect correlation: young Americans experienced both the sharpest drop in church attendance and the most rapid increase in suicide rate over this period.

The church attendance decline was more closely associated with an increase in young female, rather than young male, suicides. Stack also calculated an "elasticity coefficient" which showed that a 1 percent increase in church attendance by young adults would translate into a 1.4 percent decrease in suicide.

Other researchers have come up with the same results. Writing in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, William Martin has reported that the suicide rates during the 1970's for American blacks, whites, men, and women were negatively correlated with church attendance. He concludes: "Religious involvement appears to be equally effective as a deterrent to suicide for all the sub-populations."

Researchers at the Universities of Chicago and Washington, using complex data from 42 different countries, found "a strong and highly significant" inverse relationship between "religious integration" and suicide rate. Indeed, the relation between the two variables proved to be exponential, meaning that "past some point or threshold the loss of only a small

...the intact family saves lives.



Allan Carlson

amount of religious integration is associated with a sharp increase in suicide rates."

Such data point to a common conclusion: religion saves lives, particularly among women and youth.

Similar findings reaffirm the continued importance of traditional family life as a protection against suicide. A little-noticed paper published in 1976 confirmed what common sense suggests: the highest suicide rates are found among families with unmarried, divorced, or widowed parents; the lowest rate is found among intact nuclear families.

Another researcher discovered a clear relationship between "gender deviance" as children (behavior that violates gender norms, commonly labeled "sissy" or "tomboy" acts) and suicide attempts as adults.

Here, too, research findings all point toward a common conclusion: the intact traditional family saves lives.

In his most recent paper, Steven Stack draws together the variables of family and religion. He notes that they are linked by a common set of values: self-sacrifice, duty, honor, obligation, and caring for others.

These values stand in conflict, he also says, with those of the individualistic, material-oriented larger society.

Using data for the United States between 1954 and 1978,

Stack shows that indicators of spreading "domestic individualism" (divorce and mothers' participation in the labor force) and religious individualism (absence from church on a given Sunday) are both highly related to the total suicide rate.

Indeed, when combined into a single measure (called the "domestic/religious individualism index"), the results for young persons aged 15-29 are particularly dramatic.

Even after controlling for such factors as unemployment and news reports of suicides, the rise in the labor force participation rate of mothers, the increase in the divorce rate, and the decline in church attendance convincingly account for the rise in adolescent suicide in this period.

Despair or renewal

We are left with only two options in confronting the problem. One, we can cast our lot with those who consider religion and the family to be dying or already dead: in other words, the classic sociological perspective.

The other option drives us back to the brilliant, now disquieting insight of Alexis de Tocqueville, the 19th-century French analyst of the American experiment.

He saw that religion was the first of our political institutions. It was the churches, he said, which inculcated the republican virtues in Americans and which also gave them their first lessons on involvement in public life.

More importantly, it was mores, not laws, which most contributed to the growth and success of American democracy. Such mores, Tocqueville insisted, could only be grounded in religious faith. He recognized that unrestrained individualism would quickly undermine a republican regime. The possibility for such naked pursuit of self-interest, Tocqueville continued, could be found in the commercial proclivities of the American people.

However, religion and its handmaiden, the family, served in America as the powerful and needed restraints on individualism, turning the latter into "self-interest rightly understood," in service of the public interest.

From this perspective, religion and the family are not mere options for us; they are necessities if the American republic is to survive and prosper. Hence, the solution to the youth suicide problem -- indeed the solution to the largest share of our public problems -- is the recovery of those two institutions which restrain and channel the individual toward life, virtue, and community.

Allan C. Carlson is editor of *Persuasion at Work*, a monthly publication of the Rockford Institute. This article was excerpted from the January, 1986 issue, "This Is How the Welfare State Grows: The Case of Youth Suicide," available for \$1.50 from the Rockford Institute, 934 N. Main St., Rockford Illinois 61103.



LEGISLATION UPDATE:

Preventing illiteracy with phonics

The solution to the growing illiteracy crisis in the United States is phonics, not more taxpayer dollars, according to testimony from classroom teachers and professionals at a Congressional hearing on March 20.

The hearing, held before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and Labor, focused on the prevention of illiteracy, a problem affecting more than 25 million adult Americans.

Educators and school officials from New Hampshire, Arkansas, and Nebraska traveled to Washington at their own expense to share their experiences with the look-say versus the phonics methods for teaching reading.

They agreed that phonics produces better results for less dollars than the current look-say reading programs used in over 80 percent of the nation's public schools.

Senator Edward Zorinsky (D-NE), a phonics proponent, testified that "our schools are creating illiterates" by using the look-say approach to reading.

Charles Micciche, superintendent of schools in Groveton, New Hampshire, supported Zorinsky's position with examples from his own school district, which has experienced a dramatic

rise in student reading scores since converting to the phonics method.

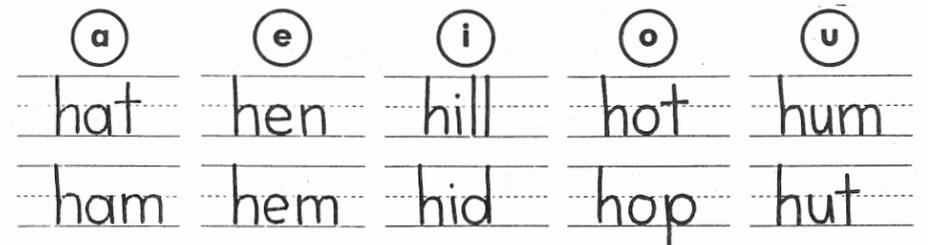
As assistant superintendent prior to 1980, Micciche was assigned the task of determining how to improve the schools' low reading scores. After a two-year study, he found that "our old reading system did not teach the code, the sounds of the language, the tools needed to read and write all words."

Since converting to the phonics method, reading scores have risen dramatically. The district's overall reading scores are presently 18 points higher than the national average.

Micciche added that "the number of referrals in my elementary schools has declined for remedial reading and learning disability placements ... since we established phonics."

The superintendent specifically noted that his district lies in Coos County which, according to a 1980 study, is one of the 20 poorest counties in the nation. Despite the fact that Coos County has high unemployment, divorce, and suicide rates, "our local reading scores have been consistently above state and national figures since 1980," said Micciche.

"I think this emphasizes that children --



regardless of their social and economic background -- can learn well when taught well, and will not learn well when not taught well," said Micciche. Phonics has likewise proven to be cost-effective in Coos County, as Micciche explained.

"When my districts were using a [look-say] package seven years ago, our average cost was sixteen dollars per pupil per year, for a program that didn't work. Since we switched to phonics, our annual cost has stabilized at two dollars and twenty-five cents per pupil per year, and includes hard cover literature books, teacher training, and paper and pencils for the children."

In an interview following the hearing, Mic-

ciche said he believes that cost is also a factor in the education establishment's resistance to convert to the phonics method. A reduction in the number of learning disabled, he said, would also mean a reduction in the number of reading specialists and special education teachers employed by the schools.

A frequent complaint among teacher witnesses at the hearing was that educators themselves are not adequately prepared in teacher training courses on how to teach reading by the phonics method.

"I submit to you," said Arkansas teacher Salley Queal, "that we are entitled to be given processes so that we can teach most effectively."

Coming in May: Growing abuse of child abuse laws

Early childhood education proponents try, try again to succeed in Illinois district

Push for all-day kindergarten continues

Proponents of publicly-funded early childhood education are down, but definitely not out in Springfield, Illinois, where they have successfully circumvented the School Board's recent decision to reject all-day kindergarten.

Despite the Board's hotly contested 4-3 vote on February 3 rejecting optional all-day kindergarten throughout the district, the Board voted 5-2 at the next meeting to move forward with plans for a pilot all-day kindergarten program in four public schools this fall.

The proposal for the taxpayer-funded pilot project was introduced by advocate and School Board Chairman Carmen Chapman on February 17, despite the fact that it was not on the official agenda.

Opponents of all-day kindergarten said that they were unprepared to oppose the "surprise" proposal which they perceived as an intentional end-run to bypass the board's previous decision. They view the pilot as a "trial balloon" to persuade the board to eventually adopt all-day kindergarten districtwide.

Opponents have objected to the expansion of early childhood education on the grounds that it is actually just taxpayer-funded day care.

Plans for the project had been formulated prior to the meeting and Superintendent Donald Miedema confirmed that the four pilot schools had already been chosen, although he declined to name those schools.

Miedema said that a vote could not be delayed even until the next school board meeting on March 4 because there would not be enough time to prepare for kindergarten registration on March 9.

Board member Jean Sherrick said that she felt she was being "rushed into the decision" and voted to reject the pilot.

Project Early Start off to a big start

Supporters of another new publicly-funded early childhood education program in Springfield, Illinois, enlisted the aid of the local public housing authority in their efforts to screen all pre-kindergarten four-year-olds in the district.

According to *Project Early Start* director Elizabeth Sculle, agencies such as the housing office have information which helps to target

Supporters hope to screen every child in the community who will turn five before November, 1986

families whose preschoolers may need remedial help before entering kindergarten. Program recruiters can then "knock on their doors" and make their services known.

Project Early Start has already screened 1,000 Springfield 4-year-olds in 1986 to determine whether or not they should be recommended for special instruction before entering kindergarten. Supporters of the voluntary program hope to screen every child in the community who will turn five before November, 1986.

Operating with a \$260,000 state grant to the Springfield School District, project coordinators contacted parents of preschool children through newspapers, television, and radio, with additional assistance from the public housing authority and area organizations such as the local black ministerial association.



The program also screened the children already enrolled in local day-care and pre-school programs.

Project Early Start plans to "find the children who we can predict will have difficulty in kindergarten" and urge parents to enroll them in the Early Start classes which take place five days a week for 2-1/2 hours in a public school classroom. Busing is provided by the school district.

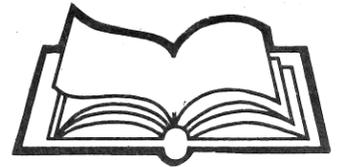
The actual screening procedure is a one-on-one exchange between the child and tester for a period of 20-30 minutes, focusing on motor skills. Parents are discouraged from being present so that they will not inhibit the child's behavior.

Currently, there is no psychological testing in the screening procedure, but Sculle said that in the future she hopes to "modify our screening to do that in a simple way" in order to identify potential emotional and behavioral difficulties and to help children develop "good coping skills."

Parental reaction to the program has been mixed.

"Most parents, if they're honest, have a reasonable picture of their kids," said Sculle. "Others have questions in their minds as to who we are serving."

Book of the Month



Back to Basics Reform Or ... Skinnerian International Curriculum? by Charlotte T. Iserbyt, 46 pp., Barbara M. Morris Report, 1985, \$7.00

When American parents talk about the need to "get back to basics" in education, they usually mean one thing: reading, writing, and arithmetic. But when the education elite call for back to basics reform, they mean something quite different.

Charlotte Iserbyt describes exactly what that "something" is in her 46-page monograph, *Back to Basics Reform*. She lays out how the education elite -- those who are setting the trends with taxpayer-funded grants -- have developed a whole set of "new basics" which are being infused into schools nationwide, unknown to the majority of Americans.

Those so-called "basics" are actually methods, ways of teaching, designed to teach students *what* to think instead of *how* to think.

The former official in the U.S. Department of Education draws upon her experience and exhaustive research to explain one such method in detail: mastery learning.

Already in use in schools nationwide, mastery learning is based on the fundamental principles of B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning theory. The pupil must completely master one task or concept before progressing to another. He is evaluated only in terms of his achievement of predetermined learning objectives.

Such a program could sound innocuous if explained at the local PTA meeting.

But *Back to Basic Reform* explains why mastery learning is really a wolf in sheep's clothing. It tells how and why mastery learning is primarily directed at shaping and changing students' attitudes, beliefs, and behavior.

Mrs. Iserbyt describes how teacher "change-agents" are retrained to teach these methods.

Back to Basics Reform exposes the history, the people, the organizations, and the financial resources behind the rapidly advancing movement to put the "new basics," such as mastery learning and global education for "world citizenship," in all schools across the nation. Those supporters include the National Education Association.

Back To Basics Reform Or... Skinnerian International Curriculum?
* NECESSARY FOR UNITED STATES PARTICIPATION IN A SOCIALLY ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT SCHEDULED FOR THE EARLY YEARS OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY
 Charlotte T. Iserbyt

Alabama *continued*

and current role of religion in our society. To support their claim, they submitted as evidence the recently-acclaimed textbook study directed by New York University's Professor Paul Vitz and funded by the National Institute of Education.

The Vitz study showed a systematic exclusion of historical and religious facts about the United States from 60 widely-used social studies textbooks. (See *Education Reporter*, February 1986).

Governor George Wallace was the first defendant to side with the Mobile plaintiffs. He directed his legal adviser, William Jackson, to sign the consent decree on November 7. The Governor agreed that "Humanism is a religion ... and that the advancement of Humanism in public school textbooks would violate the First Amendment."

The Governor also agreed "that such demonstrated censorship of the existence, history, contributions, and roles of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism constitutes unconstitutional discrimination against religion in violation of the First Amendment."

On February 12, the Mobile Board of School Commissioners voted 4-1 to direct their legal counsel to enter into settlement negotiations. The Board subsequently voted 3-2 to approve the settlement, but the State Board of Education has not yet done so. Efforts by one State Board member to persuade the Mobile Commissioners to reverse their decision have been unsuccessful to date.

At a March 13 meeting of the State Board, vice-president John Tyson refused to take action on the settlement, instead opting for

what parental rights advocates call "delaying tactics."

At that meeting, the State Board heard testimony from 19 speakers. Those speaking against settlement included representatives of Norman Lear's People for the American Way, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization for Women, and the American Association of University Women.

Eunie Smith, statewide pro-family leader, was present at that meeting. She said that advocates of settlement were given no advance indication that they could make a presentation, and were only given three minutes to make their rebuttals.

Following the meeting, Tyson told reporters he wants to bring textbook publishers into the court battle as co-defendants with the state. He said that textbook publishers should be held accountable for an overall "dumbing down" of content quality.

Mrs. Smith responded that, although "we want to influence the publishers ultimately," she does not think that bringing publishers into the case is appropriate action now.

Instead, she said that politics is a key factor in the Board's lack of action. "State Board members do not want to make a decision which could jeopardize their position before the upcoming elections," she said.

Failing a settlement, the case will initially be heard in Judge Hand's court.

According to Mrs. Smith, parental rights advocates have tried to persuade board members that a settlement is in their best interest because a predictable decision by Judge Hand in favor

of the plaintiffs would give the court, not the Board, the jurisdiction to select state textbooks.

The proposed settlement requires that revised textbook selection guidelines be court approved, but it allows the State Board to retain control of the selection process.

Meanwhile, Judge Hand permitted another parents group to intervene in the case. It was not revealed until after the other group was in the case that it is being funded by the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way.

According to parental rights advocates, Judge Hand intentionally permitted the group to intervene in order to send the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Tennessee *continued*

encouraged children to be untruthful, and that they contained death education exercises.

The parents' request was denied even after parents offered to pay for the alternative readers. As of November 1983, those individual schools which did provide alternative readers were prohibited from doing so, and students who did not use the required readers were suspended or expelled.

On November 23, 1983, Vicki Frost was arrested by the chief of police for allegedly trespassing on school property when she went to the Church Hill Elementary School to remove her 8-year-old daughter from the class which used the objectionable readers.

Mrs. Frost was taken to the county jail, fingerprinted, and placed in a cell for six hours before being released.

She subsequently sued the school principal, superintendent, school board, chief of police, and city of Church Hill for one million dollars on charges of false arrest, with legal counsel from Concerned Women for America.

Mrs. Frost's victory does not signal the end of the legal battle concerning the disputed readers. In July, eleven Church Hill parents go to court in a lawsuit they filed in December 1983 against the local school board, school principals, and superintendent.

The families in *Mozert v. Hawkins* are requesting that the district provide a positive, multiple selection of alternative readers and that students who were expelled be reinstated.

The plaintiff families have stated they are opposed to censorship as well as the advancement of religion in the schools.