

California Mandates Abstinence In Sex Education



Gov. George Deukmejian

California Governor Deukmejian signed a new sex education bill into law this month

which was supported by a coalition of groups for traditional values. The bill was heavily lobbied against by the American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood.

The debate centered around what should be taught in public school sex education courses. The California legislature and the Governor put themselves firmly on the side of traditional values and legislated the teaching of sexual abstinence until marriage. Illinois and Indiana, among others, have already mandated that public schools teach sexual abstinence until marriage. Those bills passed the legislatures by large bipartisan majorities.

The California bill does not mandate that schools teach sex education, but requires that "all public elementary, junior high, and senior high school classes that teach sex education and

discuss sexual intercourse shall emphasize that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only protection that is 100% effective against unwanted teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually."

It further states that "all sex education courses that teach sex education and discuss sexual intercourse shall be age appropriate."

The findings spelled out in the California law state that the California teen pregnancy rate has tripled in the last 15 years and that the California abortion rate for teenagers is 64.8% higher than the national average. This is the same time period in which sex education courses became a regular part of the public school curriculum.

In May, before passage of the bill, powerful

opposition to abstinence education emerged from the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU's California Legislative Office in Sacramento sent a letter to state legislators which read as follows:

"It is our position that teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage is a traditional American value is an unconstitutional establishment of a religious doctrine in public schools. There are various religions which hold contrary beliefs with respect to marriage and monogamy."

Supporters of the new law note that the courses are not mandatory and that all students still have the right to be exempt from any material which offends their "religious training and beliefs" or "personal moral conviction." (See text of statute, page 2.)

Parents Use State Laws To Opt-Out of Objectionable Sex Ed

The California Pro-Life Medical Association is urging parents to submit "Excuse of Pupil From Objectionable Education" forms in order to get their children excused from "sexuality" or "family life" courses which they find objectionable. The Association also recommends that several or many parents as a group present these forms to their school boards with a spokesman making the presentation at a board meeting.

The Association hopes that school boards will approve the form and include it with the packet of information which is sent to parents at the beginning of every school year.

The form was developed by the California Pro-Life Medical Association. The schools' response to the form, which was first used during the 1987-88 school year, has been uniform compliance, according to reports from parents received by the Association.

One Southern California family, who preferred not to be identified, said they were pleased with the effect of the form on their children's education because now "teachers are less willing to teach unapproved materials." Two years ago, their son was offered extra credit to change his grade in a Spanish course from a "B" to an "A" if he would watch an unrelated R-rated film on video at the school after hours.

Last year, after this family submitted the "Excuse of Pupil" form, the principal contacted all their two sons' teachers. Several of the teachers personally contacted the family to let them know they were aware of the request and that they intended to comply. There were only two incidents during the year which required parental notification. In both instances, the family chose to exempt their children from participation.

Other results this family has seen from use of the "Excuse of Pupil" form is that it encouraged other teachers to stand up for pupil's rights. One teacher, who taught an AIDS education program from which their son was exempted, admitted later that the class had been a waste of the students' time and that he would probably not teach it next year.

Section 51550 of the California Education

Code states: "No governing board of a public elementary or secondary school may require pupils to attend any class in which human reproductive organs and their functions and processes are described, illustrated or discussed, whether such class be part of a course designated 'sex education' or 'family life education' or by some similar term or part of any other course which pupils are required to attend."

The statute goes on to state that, if such classes are offered, each parent must first be notified in writing and an opportunity provided to request that his child not attend the class. The statute further specifies that all written or audiovisual materials used in such classes shall be available for inspection by parents. The penalty on school personnel for willful non-compliance with this section is revocation or suspension of their certification document.

Section 51820 provides substantially the same parental rights over public school instruction about venereal disease.

The "Excuse of Pupil" form is printed on page 2. The California Pro-Life Medical Association may be contacted at P.O. Box 99, Palm Springs, CA, 92263.



Witches Cause Nightmares for Girl and Father

Timothy and Joyce Jackson's 2nd grade daughter came home from school October 4 and was afraid to go to sleep that night. Their daughter's teacher had read aloud to the class from Roald Dahl's book, *The Witches*. The Jacksons called the principal to find out what was going on in the classroom. The principal, according to Mr. Jackson, said the book was "just a fairy tale."

Mr. Jackson asked the school to lend him the book to read for himself. When the school failed to provide a copy, he found his own.

Mr. Jackson notes that the first line of the book states, "This is not a fairy tale; it's about real witches." After reading part of it, he said, "I have nightmares, so I understand how my daughter felt."

The Jacksons then began calling other parents of children in the same class and reading the book's preface to them. Many of those parents are now keeping their children out of "reading aloud time," too.

Some parents told the Jacksons that they hadn't understood why their children had asked for notes to be excused from reading time. Other parents discovered that their children on

their own had previously asked the teacher if they could go to the office instead of listening to the story, but the teacher had said, "You'll listen until we get a note from your parents."

According to Mr. Jackson, in his discussion with the principal, she offered to send a note home with the second graders informing the parents about the book. Her note was unacceptable to Mr. Jackson because it would list the people who had endorsed the book, but not mention why some parents were concerned.

Mr. Jackson suggested that the principal include the book's preface in her note. She refused, saying that would be taking the material out of context. Jackson then offered to buy a copy of the book, send it to all the parents, and give them the opportunity to read it and assess its appropriateness for their own child before the teacher continued with the reading sessions. The principal refused.

After one day of phone calls, Mr. Jackson said that eight parents had withdrawn their children from reading time. Mrs. Jackson is now working with the PTA on this issue and waiting for a response from the school board. *Excerpt reprinted on page 4.*

U.S. - U.S.S.R. to Swap Students in 1989

An American-Soviet student exchange and academic partnership program was officially launched on September 14 based on a proposal by President Reagan earlier this year.

The U.S.-U.S.S.R. High School Academic Partnership Program will allow up to 1,500 students per year from each country to attend schools for one month in the U.S. and the Soviet Union over the next three years.

The program will be administered by the National Association of Secondary School Principals on behalf of a consortium of private organizations including the American Council of Teachers of Russian and Sister Cities International.

More than 20,000 high schools nationwide will receive partnership information and applications. Twenty-five schools from each country

will be selected with up to 15 students from each school chosen to participate in the exchange program. The deadline for filing applications for the first round of exchanges was September 25, and the selections are to be announced next month. The program operators hope to expand the selection to 100 schools in the next several years.

School selection will be made based on: overall academic excellence; offering at least two, preferably three or four years of Russian; commitment to international studies including the history and government of the Soviet Union; a current Sister Cities affiliation; and others.

The first group of high school students from the Soviet Union will come to the United States in January. U.S. students, accompanied by a

teacher from their high school, will journey to the U.S.S.R. in March. Participating U.S. students should have completed two years of Russian.

"If our two peoples are ever to change the stereotypes which we have of each other, we must begin by bringing our young people together to learn about and from each other," said U.S. Information Agency Director Charles Wick.

President Reagan proposed the exchange program to Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev during the Moscow summit in May. The final agreement was signed October 1.

For more information, contact U.S.-U.S.S.R. Partnerships, Room 530, 1619 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C., 20036, 202/328-7309.

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Forty-five university presidents meeting in France adopted a resolution to "develop common curriculums on disarmament and the theory and practice of international conflict management in their universities." Presidents from universities in China, Japan, the Middle East, the Pacific Rim, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Western Europe attended. I.A. Medvedev, rector of the Kalinin State University in the Soviet Union, said, "I would like to see our movement develop into something very active and not remain purely academic, something like Doctors for Peace, Engineers for Peace."

NEA President Mary Futrell announced the National Education Association's (NEA) endorsement of Michael Dukakis for president. She said, "No other candidate running for president has ever received more support in an NEA mail ballot endorsement process. . . . President Dukakis would appoint an education secretary who would fight for education instead of trashing it." The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also endorsed Dukakis. A vote at the AFT convention in July showed 93% favored Dukakis, and in August the executive council voted unanimously to endorse the Massachusetts Governor.

Shelby County School District special education students' parents were informed that their children would be in a Classroom Scouting Program every Friday afternoon from 1 to 2. The notice also told the parents how much they would have to provide in fees and dues. Parental permission was not secured to place these children in the program. Parents assume that the alternative would be to sit alone while the rest of the pupils are involved in scouting activities. The district serves the Memphis, Tennessee area.

The American Association of School Administrators reports that challenges to library books and school materials increased by 168 percent in the last five years. According to the Association, those challenging the materials want to impose their views on the educational system by removing or restricting use of certain materials. Judith Krug, director of the association's office for intellectual freedom, claims that these challenges have had "an adverse effect on the ability of the schools to provide a broad-based education."

A Wisconsin teacher told her second grader that she must wear a sweater over her T-shirt because it displayed the words, "Jesus Loves Me." Parents were surprised that the teacher called those words objectionable on the basis of religion, when the school is allegedly "riddled with New Age" teachings in its courses.

The Arkansas Business Council has developed an education-reform agenda which is supported by Gov. Bill Clinton and the director of the state education department. Its proposals include comprehensive preschool education for at-risk 4-year-olds, mandatory full-day kindergarten, before-and-after-school care, health clinics, counseling services, drug abuse prevention programs, teacher pay increases, and "teacher's academies" for continuing teacher education.

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CA SexEd Law

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Sixty-four percent of male teens and 44 percent of female teens have had sexual intercourse by age 18.

(b) Each year, one in seven teens contracts a sexually transmitted disease.

(c) The teen pregnancy rate for California's 15- to 19-year-olds — the sum of births, abortions, and miscarriages — has increased by 32.9 percent in California from 1970 to 1985.

(d) The abortion rate for teens 15 to 19 years of age has more than tripled from 1970 to 1985 and now exceeds the rate of births among California women under 20 by 38 percent.

(e) California's abortion rate for 15- to 19-year-olds is 64.8 percent higher than the national average.

(f) California's Superintendent of Public Instruction and the California State Board of Education have issued the Family Life/Sex Education Guidelines which affirm sexual abstinence outside the context of marriage.

(g) Sex education programs which do not emphasize sexual abstinence are inconsistent with society's concern for reducing unwanted teenage pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases.

SECTION 2. Section 51551 is added to the Education Code to read:

51551. (a) All public elementary, junior high, and senior high school classes that teach sex education and discuss sexual intercourse shall emphasize that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only protection that is 100 percent effective against unwanted teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually. All material and instruction in classes that teach sex education and discuss sexual intercourse shall be age

Book Disturbs Child

Rhonda Duncan's 4th grade son came home from school very disturbed, complaining to his mom about the book being read aloud in his class. The book which caused the problem is *The Night of the Solstice* by L. J. Smith (Macmillan).

When Mrs. Duncan asked the teacher about the story, the teacher suggested that they keep him out of class during reading. That week, the teacher made a home visit to the Duncans to explain the book to them. She compared it to C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*.

The mother, while comforted by the comparison, still wanted to read the book for herself. The book is about 4 children who travel by secret passageways between earth and another world where they have many dangerous adventures. However, the Narnia books loosely parallel Christian doctrines, while *the Night of the Solstice*, Mrs. Duncan fears, gives children a "taste of the occult." Among items which contribute to her assertion are that the children work a spell which contains a human bone, and the reward to one of the children for her heroism is to become the Sorceress's apprentice. Beverly Gilbert, lecturer on occult-related crimes, said, "This type of book could definitely prepare a child, the same as *Dungeons and Dragons*, to accept some of the more serious aspects of cult/occult activities that are now happening across our nation."

Rather than remove the book, Mrs. Duncan hopes that the library will establish a shelf of books containing "religious materials" to which *The Night of the Solstice* and the *Chronicles of Narnia* would be confined. Books from this shelf in the elementary school library would, she hopes, be checked out only with parental permission. She also hopes that parental consent would be obtained before this type of book is used in the classroom.

appropriate.

(b) All sex education courses that discuss sexual intercourse shall satisfy the following criteria:

(1) Course material and instruction shall be age appropriate.

(2) Course material and instruction shall stress that abstinence is the only contraceptive method which is 100 percent effective, and that all other methods of contraception carry a risk of failure in preventing unwanted teenage pregnancy. Statistics based on the latest medical information shall be provided to pupils citing the failure and success rates of condoms and other contraceptives in preventing pregnancy.

(3) Course material and instruction shall stress that sexually transmitted diseases are serious possible hazards of sexual intercourse. Pupils shall be provided with statistics based on the latest medical information citing the failure and success rates of condoms in preventing AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

(4) Course material and instruction shall include a discussion of the possible emotional and psychological consequences of preadolescent and adolescent sexual intercourse outside of marriage and the consequences of unwanted adolescent pregnancy.

(5) Course material and instruction shall stress that pupils should abstain from sexual

intercourse until they are ready for marriage.

(6) Course material and instruction shall teach honor and respect for monogamous heterosexual marriage.

(7) Course material and instruction shall advise pupils of the laws pertaining to their financial responsibility to children born in and out of wedlock.

(8) Course material and instruction shall advise pupils that it is unlawful for males of any age to have sexual relations with females under the age of 18 to whom they are not married pursuant to Section 261.5 of the Penal Code.

(9) Course material and instruction shall emphasize that the pupil has the power to control personal behavior. Pupils shall be encouraged to base their actions on reasoning, self-discipline, sense of responsibility, self-control, and ethical considerations, such as respect for one's self and others.

(10) Course material and instruction shall teach pupils to not make unwanted physical and verbal sexual advances and how to say no to unwanted sexual advances. Pupils shall be taught that it is wrong to take advantage of, or to exploit, another person. The material and instruction shall also encourage youth to resist negative peer pressure.

(c) This section shall become operative July 1, 1989. (See news article, page 1.)

Excuse of Pupil From Objectionable Education

To: President and Members of the School Board, Superintendent, Principal and Teachers:

I am the parent or guardian of _____, who is enrolled in the _____ grade at _____ school of the _____ school district.

This letter is written, legal notice that I am exercising my rights under California law (Education Code Sections 51240, 51550, and 51820) to request that the above-named pupil be excused from and not attend or participate in any class, presentation, project, extracurricular activity, or program presented by the school district or by agents under its direction, which involve any of the following:

sex or family life education; the acquiring or use of birth control drugs or devices; killing of prenatal babies by abortion; infanticide; euthanasia or suicide; homosexuality; bestiality, sadism, masochism, or other sexual perversions; showing of any R or X rated (pornographic) films; "values clarification"; or the use of questionnaires, role playing or other strategies to question, expose or criticize any private, religious or moral values of the above-named pupil or members of his/her family.

This notice applies not only to direct sex or family life education programs, but also to any of the above-mentioned subjects which may be infused or included as "... part of any other course which pupils are required to attend." (as provided in Education Code Section 51550)

I expect to be notified of the presentation of materials and subjects as required by Education Code Section 48980 and of the approximate date of their presentation as required by Education Code Section 48983, so that I may exercise my right to inspect and review instructional plans and materials, as provided in Education Code Sections 51550 and 51820; and in order that I may monitor the exemption of the above-named pupil from classes or activities involving the above-mentioned objectionable subjects.

I request that the principal and all teachers or other agents of the school district who are involved with the education of the above-named pupil be informed of this legal, written notice, and that they be aware of the penalty of revocation or suspension of certification document for knowingly and willfully violating my rights, as provided for in Education Code Section 51550.

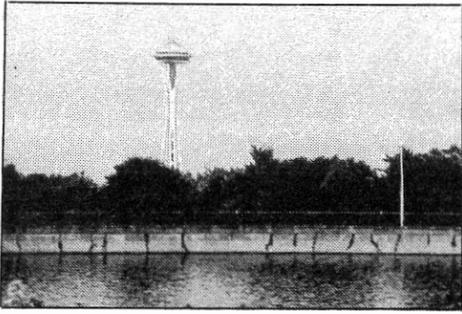
I request written acknowledgement of receipt and filing of this written, legal notice.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Number _____ Street (or rural route) _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

() _____

Area Code _____ Local Telephone Number _____



Seattle Considers Gay Counseling

The Seattle Commission on Children and Youth has circulated a Draft Report on Gay and Lesbian Youth which contains recommendations designed to be implemented in the public schools. These recommendations call for introducing training about homosexuality into the public school classroom and providing "positive role models" for homosexual youth.

The Commission urges utilization of the curricula of "health" and "family life" courses in order to make sexual orientation "an acceptable topic of discussion in both the counseling and classroom setting."

The Seattle Commission on Children and Youth, which is chaired by Randy Revelle and Dr. Robert Bidwell, is under the jurisdiction of the Seattle Department of Human Resources. The Commission invited comments on its draft report up to August 12. Originally scheduled for early September release, a final report has been adopted, but it has not yet been printed. The recommendations for the final report which the Commission wants implemented in the schools are printed below.

Project 10

Local parents who have expressed concern about this draft report believe that it was modeled on a homosexual counseling course called "Project 10," which is now in use in the Los Angeles Unified School District. This project teaches students to accept homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle.

The explanation for the title "Project 10" is the assertion that one person in ten is a homosexual or lesbian. One of the materials distributed by Project 10 counselors is a paperback book called *One Teenager in Ten* edited by Ann Heron (Warner Communications).

A 16-year-old girl blew the whistle on Project 10 at San Fernando High School a few months ago. She had expected to take a history test in her fourth-period class, but instead found herself taken to the library with other students to hear a lesbian teacher tell that she practices "safe sex," that it is OK for students to have sexual feelings for others of the same sex, and that 10 percent of the students are probably gay.

The teacher, Virginia Uribe, gave the students telephone numbers for additional homosexual and lesbian information, and she distributed sexually explicit material. One book graphically and favorably describes the seduction of a minor girl by her lesbian dance teacher.

Uribe told the press that she has already visited about 40 schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District and has been given board approval to visit all 121 junior and senior high schools in the district. She has been a science teacher at Fairfax High School in Los Angeles for more than 30 years. The principal refused to answer calls from the press.

The literature for Project 10 describes it as being merely for students "who identify themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual or who want accurate information." But no such identification or request had been made of or by the San Fernando High School students who were given the course, nor was there any parental notification given or consent obtained.

FOCUS: Colleges Seek to "Cure" Prejudice

Carol Innerst is the education writer for The Washington Times and has won several education reporting and writing awards. Previously, she served the Philadelphia Bulletin as an education and general assignment reporter. A University of Maryland graduate, she is a wife and the mother of two children.

Hundreds of America's colleges and universities, responding to charges that their campuses are hostile to minority students, are requiring staff and students to undergo "sensitivity" training.

The rush by colleges to hire human behavior specialists to poke and prod individual psyches on such touchy topics as racial prejudices and homophobia is sweeping the campuses in tandem with a growing institutional inclination to make the study of non-Western culture an academic requirement.

Among the schools that have launched mandatory, non-credit sensitivity training regimens or have changed their curriculum to require ethnic studies — but not the study of Western culture — are the University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Massachusetts, University of California at Berkeley, Stanford University, Bryn Mawr College, Smith College, and Mt. Holyoke College.

A sampling of universities and colleges reveals a range of approaches to developing cultural sensitivity, many starting with training sessions for staff and student resident advisers, who in turn will carry the message to the student body.

Equity Institute, Inc. of Amherst, Massachusetts, is one of a handful of organizations offering sensitivity training sessions on more than 300 American college campuses for fees ranging from \$2,000 for a one-time workshop to as much as \$80,000 a year for a three- or four-year program.

Their mission is to attack, treat and try to cure the "sickness" of mind that allows some people to speak contemptuously of hispanics, hurl racial epithets at blacks, harass women, or tear down gay and lesbian posters.

Their larger goal is to change America's traditionally white college campuses into multi-

cultural institutions where black, white, brown, gay, lesbian, male, female, young, old, rich and poor work together productively and appreciate their differences, according to James F. Bonilla, whose official title is "organizational development specialist" with the Amherst, Massachusetts firm.

"Our goal is to show how oppression exists so students, faculty, staff can start to see it and how they participate in it unwittingly, and not blame themselves, but take responsibility and put some effort into changing it," Mr. Bonilla said.

Practicing what it preaches, the firm draws on a 15-member pool of consultants that includes Jews, gentiles, ethnic minorities and homosexuals to conduct its sensitivity sessions.

“**Managing the feelings of people and pushing something through for a reason that's not totally academic**”

"I try not to prescribe remedies, but . . . my experience is you have to do both — sensitivity training and required study of Third World culture," Mr. Bonilla concluded. "You may have a campus with a wonderful Third World culture curriculum, but if you haven't trained your staff and administrators to welcome diversity — or if you don't have any students of color around — it won't work."

The institutional rationale for mandated sensitivity training and ethnic studies is the promotion of tolerance among students who increasingly represent diverse cultural backgrounds and lifestyles.

The reason the students need such indoctrination, said Michael Jackson, associate dean of student affairs at Stanford, is that they "missed out" on critical incidents in the country's recent history that would have "helped them understand better why people push for

civil rights for women, for gay and lesbian people. . . .

"We want them to go beyond tolerance and easy surface acceptance of differences," Mr. Jackson said. "We're all one big family. . . . We need to teach white students to understand students of color and to get students of color to understand white students. And my pet goal is to get students of a politically conservative nature to understand those who are more liberal."

William Kristol, former chief of staff to education Secretary William J. Bennett, said colleges would be better off paying serious attention to old-fashioned character building and simply telling students that certain behavior is wrong.

A Berkeley campus organization calling itself the Coalition of Minority Student Groups has been pushing for an ethnic studies requirement, and faculty members in favor of the idea have argued that the frustrations of minority students will increase if the school doesn't respond by exposing white students to ethnic studies.

But the Berkeley faculty so far has resisted attempts to try to fix social problems by tampering with the curriculum. The faculty, Mr. Covig said, is "opposed to the idea of managing the feelings of people and pushing something through for a reason that's not totally academic. . . ."

Berkeley went into sensitivity training five or six years ago.

Administrators also hope that doses of such training combined with mandated ethnic studies will help cool rising racial tensions among their increasingly diverse student bodies.

Critics, however, are not satisfied with any of the reasons given for the new emphasis on sensitizing students and faculty.

Former St. John's College President Edwin J. Delattre, in a recent appearance at the Heritage Foundation, accused some colleges and universities of "totalitarian behavior" and "bullying" students in the guise of promoting tolerance.

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Gay Testimony

The report was based in part on hearings held at different times and locations in Seattle. Educators, students, health professionals and other citizens testified.

At the Gay and Lesbian Youth Hearing on April 19, 1988, Speaker 2-L said, "My name is xxxxx and I want to speak to you as a gay male, as a health educator, and as a gay foster parent. . . . As a health educator, I work for the Northwest AIDS Foundation and I teach all of the workshops that come through that organization, particularly about safe sex education and healthy lifestyles education, and how to be safe. One of the aspects of my job is that I work at the Orion Center for street youth. I have over and over and over answered questions that kids had, who were lesbian and who were gay, about specific activities. . . ."

"Another point that I would like to make as an educator, as a sex educator — I've been a sex educator for about 10, 12 years now — One time I was speaking to an audience and when my speech was over, an 8 year old boy come up to me, and he said, 'I have a question for you.' I said, 'Yes, what is that question?' He looked like he could play football on his little league team, and he said, 'I don't know how to ask this question, but what's it like to make love with another guy in bed?' And I said, 'What's your question?' He said, 'I have to hide under the porch.' He said, 'I'm gay and I don't know who

to ask about this.' . . ."

"What we are doing here is going to have radical effects on this community. It's going to have radical effects on this culture and I'm really proud of you guys for being such pioneers.

"There's one more thing I'd really like for you to include in your plan and that is some provision for working with foster parenting for kids who need help, who need to be somewhere where they . . . because they're gay." ■

Commission's Recommendations For Seattle Public Schools

- Incorporate accurate, objective, and relevant information about sexual orientation and the experience of being gay or lesbian into the curriculum of existing health and family life courses. Consider including information on such topics as the nature and origins of sexual orientation, the attitudes of our society towards homosexuality, and the special problems and needs of gay and lesbian youth. Consider following the recommendations of the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health which outline appropriate information for various grade levels. Include information about the contributions of gay and lesbian people in science, history, art, and literature courses.

- Provide regular training for all school staff about issues facing gay and lesbian youth. Offer additional specialized training for counselors, nurses, peer counselors, and key teaching staff. Ensure that sexual orientation is an acceptable topic of discussion in both the counseling and classroom setting.

- Establish and implement written policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, including recruiting, hiring, disciplinary actions, and promotions.

- Develop and enforce policies prohibiting verbal and physical harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

- Identify male and female staff members in each middle and high school who are well-trained and sensitive to the needs of gay and lesbian youth. Use appropriate written materials and other opportunities to publicize these individuals as resources for students with problems or concerns about their sexual orientation.

- Establish a task force to guide the School District's efforts to examine and improve the school environment for gay and lesbian students.

- Ensure that accurate, objective, and relevant information about sexual orientation is available and accessible to students in all middle and high school libraries.

Town Torn Over Book Controversy

The SAD 28 School Board in Camden, Maine, voted 1-6 on September 20 *not* to remove the contested library book, *Birdy* by William Wharton (Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), from the school library shelf. This reversed the board's 6-1 decision of September 6 to remove the book from the Mary E. Taylor Middle School library, which serves 4th to 8th graders.

Chairman David Cox, who cast the lone vote to remove the book, said his review of library lists found no support for *Birdy*, and that it was "more appropriate for the high school, not the middle school." The initial complaint, presented at the September 6 meeting by Russell Spera of Camden, whose son had brought the book home on his librarian's recommendation, centered around the book's profanity.

The controversy attracted a standing-room-only crowd at the September 20 school board meeting and posters all over Camden. At that meeting, former board member Dave Jackson said, "if we start removing books because of a few dirty words we're going to have an empty library."

In a letter-to-the-editor on September 22, Spera blasted the local newspaper for making false statements and "a total distortion" about the issue. He denied that he "demanded" that the book be removed and challenged anyone to listen to the tape recording of the board meeting.

Spera said he just raised specific questions about the "appropriateness of *Birdy* in the middle school." He added, "A few people have said to me, 'You seem to have opened up a can of worms.' I say, 'The can of worms was placed on my kitchen table—I'm just passing it around and inviting comment.'"

Following are excerpts from the many letters-to-the-editor published in the *Camden Herald*.

Charlotte T. Iserbyt of Camden wrote: "Why is a parent's objection to a certain library book in his child's school called 'censorship' while the local newspaper's refusal to publish excerpts from the same library book *not* called 'censorship'?"

"Why do the school board, administration and media seem more concerned about a parent not adhering to a school book complaint policy than they are about Superintendent Marx's not adhering to the *same* policy (section requiring him to give lists of library books to school board members for their information)? This question is especially important since the school board,

school superintendent, school staff, and students, *not* parents, are required to adhere to school policies. . . .

"Since Supt. Marx illegally discontinued making book lists available to the school board a number of years ago, I have today requested the school board to provide me with a list of all library books selected since the practice was discontinued. As a taxpayer I have also requested the school board to inform me regarding its plans to reinstitute this sensible practice."

Becky Richards of Lincolnville wrote: "Parents are always needed to be 'censors' in the life of a child. We concern ourselves that too much 'junk' does not go into their mouths; are their minds no less important? . . . I do not believe that censorship belongs in our American society, but choosing quality for our children is not censorship—it is common sense."

Eleanor Dorr of Camden wrote: "I have agonized over school library books for years. When teaching, I had my own private boycott of a particular company because of their recommended reading lists. Selecting books for a school library is not censorship, but guidance. . . . About 20 years ago there was a book praised on a college campus by a representative from the Office of Education in Washington. I couldn't get through the first three pages because of the language. I spoke to a superintendent about it. He said, 'Oh no, I haven't read it, and I just ordered 14 copies for our school library.'"

Sharon Goodspeed of Camden wrote: "This fall it is the unsuspecting MET librarian who is the villain for suggesting a book containing obscene language (much of which can probably be heard in the hallways between classes or seen etched in perpetuity on a lone lavatory door or wall) to Spera's son for free reading. . . . Spera does not speak for me or any of the hundreds of other taxpaying SAD 28 parents who expect their children to be exposed by teachers to the world of ideas—good, bad, half-baked, or ugly—that have broadened minds since the monks first took reeds to parchment."

Parents are not the only members of the community who are interested in this debate. Students spoke out on both sides of the controversy. Edward R. Glover, age 22, concluded his letter-to-the-editor with a portion of the dialogue between Socrates and Adeimantus from Plato's *Republic*. Socrates spoke first:

"Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and

New Evidences of Illiteracy in U.S.

• The Working Group on Adult Literacy proposes that the next United States President create a Cabinet Council on Adult Literacy to coordinate federal efforts. The Group reports that more than 23 million Americans lack basic literacy skills and millions of others are functionally illiterate. The Group recommends increased funding for literacy campaigns at all levels, including \$20 million for a National Institute for Adult Literacy.

• Edwin Newman, author of several books on language, said illiteracy is "one significant reason" why our nation's representative system of government "is not healthy." In a *New York Times* article, he argued that illiterates will not vote because of embarrassment. "There are more than 23 million functionally illiterate people in this country. We seem to accept this as a fact of life. We shouldn't." After citing the costs of illiteracy in crime and unemployment, he notes that, while there are ways for coping with illiteracy, such as a picture of a man in

trousers on the doors of men's restrooms, "these methods *are* limited. Language is still the method we use for the formulation and communication of most ideas."

• Literacy programs which serve 4 to 5 million adults are not enough to deal with the problem of young people leaving schools today who are functionally illiterate, according to two University of Wisconsin researchers. Continuing adult and vocational education professor Alan Knox says that, while 95% of those educated in U.S. schools can read simple words, 20 to 50 percent of adults are functionally illiterate. Carl Kaestle says literacy programs do not often attract those who read a little, but not well.

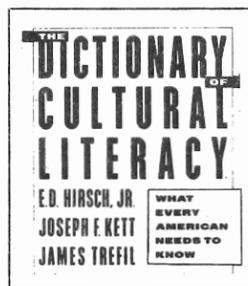
• In September, 400 people attended a statewide literacy conference in Virginia. Keynote speaker Dr. Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, said that schools should give every child proficiency in English by the 4th grade by emphasizing speaking, writing, reading, and



Book of the Month

The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, and James Trefil, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988, 586 pp., \$19.95.

The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, called the book which provides the answers to the questions raised in the book *Cultural Literacy*,



by Dr. Hirsch, is here—and it is exceptional!

This reference guide has 23 sections and more than 250 maps, charts, and illustrations. Each of its hundreds of individual entries is placed firmly in context, with its significance in our culture explained.

The 23 sections include the following: the Bible; Mythology and Folklore; Proverbs; Idioms; World Literature, Philosophy, and Religion; Literature in English; Conventions of Written English; Fine Arts; History, World and American; Politics, World and American; Geography, World and American; Social Sciences; Business and Economics; Physical

tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it."

"Quite so."

"Then shall we so easily let the children hear just any tales fashioned by just anyone and take into their souls opinions for the most part opposite to those we'll suppose they must have when they are grown up?"

"In no event will we permit it."

"First, as it seems, we must supervise the makers of tales; and if they make a fine tale, it must be approved, but if it's not, it must be rejected. We'll persuade nurses and mothers to tell the approved tales to their children and to shape their souls with tales more than their bodies with hands. Many of those they now tell must be thrown out."

Sciences and Mathematics; Earth Sciences; Life Sciences; Medicine and Health; and Technology.

Under "Punic Wars" in the "World History to 1550" section, the entry reads, "Three wars between ancient CARTHAGE and ROME in the third and second centuries B.C. HANNIBAL led the forces of Carthage in the second Punic War. Carthage was destroyed after the third Punic War." Words printed in capital letters indicate cross-references and refer to words included in the index.

Directly below this entry is a picture of the Pyramids at Giza, Egypt. The facing page is covered by a map of the Roman Empire before the Barbarian Invasions.

In the "Medicine and Health" section, the entry for "autonomic nervous system" reads, "The part of the NERVOUS SYSTEM that controls involuntary functions of the body (those not controlled consciously), such as DIGESTION, the beating of the HEART, and the operation of GLANDS in the ENDOCRINE SYSTEM."

"More than a book for teachers, this book belongs in every home in America," the book's jacket boasts. Indeed, it does. It provides a good check list for parents to evaluate whether or not their high school and college students are becoming culturally literate. This remarkable book would also provide an endless source of family question games to test each other and thereby improve the educational level of both adults and children. ■

Excerpt from *The Witches*

The *Witches* (Avon Books, 1983) begins with the following "Note about Witches":

In fairy-tales, witches always wear silly black hats and black cloaks, and they ride on broomsticks.

But this is not a fairy-tale. This is about REAL WITCHES.

The most important thing you should know about REAL WITCHES is this. Listen very carefully. Never forget what is coming next.

REAL WITCHES dress in ordinary clothes and look very much like ordinary women. They live in ordinary houses and they work in ORDINARY JOBS.

That is why they are so hard to catch.

A REAL WITCH hates children with a red-hot sizzling hatred that is more sizzling and red-hot than any hatred you could possibly imagine.

A REAL WITCH spends all her time plotting to get rid of the children in her particular territory. Her passion is to do away with them, one by one. It is all she thinks about the whole day long. Even if she is working as a cashier in a supermarket or typing letters for a businessman or driving round in a fancy car (and she could be doing any of these things), her mind will always be plotting and scheming and churning and burning and whizzing and phizzing with murderous bloodthirsty thoughts.

"Which child," she says to herself all day long "exactly which child shall I choose for my next squelching?"

A REAL WITCH gets the same pleasure from squelching a child as *you* get from eating a plateful of strawberries and thick cream.

She reckons on doing away with one child a week. Anything less than that and she becomes grumpy.

One child a week is fifty-two a year.

Squish them and squiggle them and make them disappear.

That is the motto of all witches. ■