

Schools Must Teach Drug Use Is "Wrong"



North Dakota Parents Start Recall of Supt.

North Dakota parents are leading a drive to recall Dr. Wayne Sanstead, state superintendent of public instruction, because of his persistent advocacy of a controversial sex education program, which was rejected in a statewide referendum last December 5.

Sanstead received funding from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) by using passage by the legislature of the state's Comprehensive Health Education Act, which made sex education mandatory, in order to show community acceptance of the program. However, North Dakota voters overturned the law by a 60 percent majority December 5 in a referendum election. The parents allege that Sanstead has not notified the CDC about the law's defeat, and didn't attempt to change the program to comply with the wishes of North Dakotans. Instead, Sanstead is still receiving CDC money and still promoting the sex education program which is known as the Edna Mortenson Curriculum (EMC).

Debi Biffert, chairperson of Citizens Organization for Reform and Responsibility in Education (CORRE), said that Sanstead "acted imprudently, inappropriately, and arrogantly to impose his personal beliefs on the school children of the state of North Dakota without regard for the clear wishes of the majority of North Dakotans."

Biffert said that the EMC sex ed program "promotes condom use for children and does not unequivocally teach children to abstain from illicit sexual activity and illicit drug use." Instead, she suggested that the state use grant money from the CDC to fund abstinence-based sex education programs such as *Sex Respect* or *Teen Aid*.

Advocates of the EMC comprehensive sex ed curriculum assert that its use by local school districts is voluntary. However, Biffert charged that the state superintendent is using "persuasion" techniques to get the schools to adopt it by giving tax-funded grants to school personnel to attend "Roughrider Conferences," at which they are given a sales talk to implement the EMC curriculum.

CORRE must gather 74,770 signatures, which is 25 percent of the vote in the last gubernatorial election, in order to hold a recall election for Sanstead. ■

A little-noticed new federal law requires every public school district receiving federal funds to teach students that "the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol is wrong and harmful."

This strong message is to be included as part of a "program to prevent the use of illicit drugs and alcohol by students or employees" which every public school district must adopt as a condition of receiving federal funds. No later than October 1, 1990, acceptable drug prevention programs must be taught in all grades ("from early childhood level through grade 12") of every school in every federally-assisted district.

In addition to teaching that drug use is "wrong and harmful," the required classroom programs must address the "legal, social and health consequences of drug and alcohol use." Also, the courses must "provide information about effective techniques for resisting peer pressure to use illicit drugs or alcohol."

The new provisions are contained in Section 5145 of the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986, as amended by Public Law 101-226, which President Bush signed into law on December 12, 1989. The new law is classified in the United States Code at Title 20, Section 3224a. It applies to all public schools since all receive some federal money.

Some kind of so-called "drug education" is commonly taught in public schools. Few of these curricula would comply with the new law, however, because they are typically non-judgmental about drug use. In other words, most currently used drug education courses are

not drug prevention courses.

Most currently used drug education curricula (such as QUEST) are non-directive and consist of lessons in "self-esteem," "decision making," or values clarification. These courses lead the student to construct his own value system concerning drug use independent of family, religion, the law, or other rule givers. Some drug curricula used in public schools do not even mention the fact that use or possession of certain drugs is subject to criminal penalties.



Some drug education teaches that only the "abuse" of drugs is harmful, thus implying that moderate or occasional use of cocaine, marijuana or alcohol might be an acceptable choice for students. In order to comply with the new law, such courses must be revised to state clearly that the use — not just the abuse — of

illegal drugs is "wrong and harmful."

Another provision of the new law requires that every local school district "shall, upon request, make available . . . to the public full information about the elements of its program required by" the new law.

Parents frequently complain that they are denied an adequate opportunity to review school curricula in detail. This new public disclosure law, which applies only to drug prevention courses, gives parents and others the right to review all teaching materials.

The new law also requires all tax-supported schools and colleges to adopt standards of conduct for both students and employees (that would include teachers and faculty). In addition to criminal penalties already provided by law, schools and colleges must impose their own sanctions — "up to and including expulsion or termination of employment and referral for prosecution." This will overturn the practice of many colleges and universities of serving as a sanctuary from enforcement of the law regarding drug use or underage drinking.

Regulations to implement the law are now pending before the Education Department (34 CFR Part 86). The compliance period closed on June 8. The regulations make it clear that schools and colleges that violate the law will suffer the cutoff of "any form of Federal financial assistance" (not just Education Department grants), and in addition, may be required to pay back all funds received during any period after October 1, 1990 in which the district was not in compliance. ■

See text of law on page 2

Parents Attack Death Education

A suburban Chicago father and mother, whose son was a victim of a death education course given without prior parental knowledge or consent, recently went public with their story in order to alert other parents to the danger posed by these courses.

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Garvey are convinced that a death and dying course given at Schaumburg High School triggered the suicide of their 15-year-old son Scott Garvey. The high school sophomore, who was a good student, a football player and had no known problems, took his life last year just three days after his teacher in a mandatory Health class distributed a book called *Coping With Death and Dying* by Russell and Purdy (Scott, Foresman Publishers).

Coping asks students how they would like to die. The section on euthanasia states: "Committing suicide may represent a last attempt to make an independent, personal decision." Another "health" textbook used in the same class tells students to role-play a telephone call in which one teenager threatens suicide.

The school denies that the two-week course had anything to do with the suicide, but the "timing is chilling," according to the local newspaper which just published a series of three feature articles on the case. The parents found the book *Coping* neatly placed in Scott's room in such a special way that they believe it was Scott's last message to his parents.

The Garveys' repeated attempts to deal with the school after the tragedy were met with stonewalling, delays, and prevarications. Neither the principal nor the death course

teacher has ever told the Garveys what was actually taught in Scott's class, and school officials have declined to talk to the press at all.

The school claimed that the compositions Scott wrote for his English class on immortality and death were subjects "of his own choosing." Actually, the list of topics provided by the teacher included "Active euthanasia for deformed infants — right or wrong?" "Death — do the hopelessly ill have the right to die?" "End of the world — coming soon or not?" "Reincarnation — can we come back from the dead?" and "Infanticide — right or wrong?"

It took the school a year to set up a committee to study the case. The committee concluded that the death course and its textbooks should be retained, conceding only that, henceforth, parents should be notified what topics are included in the Health course.

Death courses have become rather common in public schools, and the variations of activities are macabre. The suburban Chicago newspaper that broke the Garvey story checked with other area high schools and found the following activities: a school director took cremated remains to class to show the students; students were assigned to write a paper on "What I Would Do On My Last Day"; and tours to funeral homes to learn how bodies are embalmed and cremated. Students plan their funerals, write their own epitaphs, make their wills, and sometimes lie in a coffin.

Most schools teach death and dying as a one- to two-week unit in a required health class. It can also be presented in elective psychology,

sociology or family living courses. Sometimes it crops up in English composition (as it also did with Scott) or in literature, such as classroom discussions of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*.

In March this year, a first grade boy in Canton Township, Michigan killed himself the day after watching a film about suicide in his class. The teacher had not even previewed the film before showing it to her class. (See *Education Reporter*, March 1990.) In 1987 a 17-year-old girl and an 18-year-old boy at O'Hara High School in Kansas City, Missouri, killed themselves while they were taking a nine-week death education course.

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Coping with Death and Dying

Russell • Purdy

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Officials at a Culver City, California elementary school removed the classic fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* from the school because they said it contained an implied endorsement of alcohol. In the version of the book by Trina Schart Hyman used in the school, Red Riding Hood carries wine to her grandmother because it "would do her a world of good." Illustrations show a red-nosed Grandma drinking wine. Vera Jashi, a spokeswoman for the school, said that they banned this version of the book because "we have a very strong alcohol- and drug-abuse program in the district. This book gives us a double message."

According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education, the average 8th-grader spends 21 hours a week watching television but only five hours doing homework. One out of five 8th-graders could not do simple arithmetic, and nearly one in six children were not competent in basic writing skills. Over 25 percent of the students were home without supervision more than two hours a day. The Education Department's report studied nearly 25,000 8th graders.

Education Enterprises of America, a for-profit company "whose sole goal and purpose is the privatization of the American public education system," is seeking to run individual schools and districts using corporate management techniques. Sam H. Ingram, former Tennessee education commissioner and the company's president, said: "It's time we answered the question that private businessmen are continuing to ask, and that is, why don't we run schools like a business?" The firm expects soon to sign its first contract—to run a Tennessee school district.

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled June 5 that the state's school finance system is unconstitutional. The court's unanimous decision eliminates minimum state aid to wealthy districts and forces the state to come up with a school finance plan whereby all school districts have equal per-pupil funding. Converting to the new plan is expected to cost at least \$450 million.

Two Des Plaines, Illinois schoolteachers have been punished for showing an R-rated movie, *A Boy and His Dog*, to their students in the fourth and fifth grades. The film contained scenes of violence and nudity. Paul Jung, the school superintendent, blasted the teachers for not previewing the film before showing it in class. He called the movie "inappropriate for that age group."

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Supreme Court Upholds Equal Access

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 4 in an 8-1 decision that public high school students have the right to hold religious club meetings on school grounds. The *Westside v. Mergens* decision upheld the Equal Access Act of 1984, a bill passed by Congress which said that schools may not discriminate against groups because of "the religious, political, philosophical or other content of the speech at such meetings." School officials at Westside High School in Omaha, Nebraska had refused in 1985 to allow a Bible study group to have meetings in a classroom after school.

Bridget Mergens Mayhew, one of the plaintiffs in the case, said, "Today the Supreme Court sent a strong message to public schools: Religious students are not second class citizens. Kids don't give up their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate."

"Religious students are not second class citizens."

Writing for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor ruled that "a school that permits a student-initiated and student-led religious club to meet after school, just as it permits any other student group to do, does not convey a message of state approval or endorsement of the particular religion." O'Connor cited the three-part test established by the Court in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) to ensure separation of church and state.

She wrote that the Equal Access Act passes the test because it does not discriminate between secular and religious speech, it does not primarily advance religion, and it does not cause an entanglement between church and state. A school recognizing a religious club "evinces neutrality toward, rather than endorsement of,

Parents Defeat Mastery Learning

Parents and teachers in Pennsylvania's Brownsville school district have succeeded in getting outcome-based education, also known as Mastery Learning, removed from the classroom. The Brownsville School Board voted in April to discontinue the across-the-board outcome-based-education program.

Mastery Learning is a technique of classroom behavior modification which requires every child to endure regimented repetition until every one responds in exactly the same way, and at the same time, to predetermined goals. It does not encourage each child to reach his own potential of academic achievement.

Outcome-based education was introduced in the Brownsville district for the 1989-90 school year by school administrators. Complaints about the program began from the time it was implemented.

Teachers in the Brownsville school district objected to Mastery Learning because the program removed much of their autonomy and gave them more paperwork. Some of the district's teachers placed a full-page ad in the local newspaper last December announcing their opposition to the program. A survey taken before the school board voted out Mastery Learning showed that 83% of the teachers in the district opposed it.

Parents in the Brownsville school district disliked outcome-based education because they felt that their children were learning less. One parent, the Reverend Robert Shipman, helped organize a petition drive and gathered 2,100



Bridget Mergens Mayhew discusses the case with her lawyer.

religious speech."

The Court ruled that a school can ban religious groups from meeting on school grounds only by banning all clubs not directly related to the school curriculum.

Justice John Paul Stevens, the lone dissenter in *Westside v. Mergens*, wrote that schools should have the right to forbid extremist groups from meeting on school grounds. He commented that, "if a high school administration continues to believe that it is sound policy to exclude controversial groups, such as political clubs, the Ku Klux Klan, and perhaps gay rights advocacy groups, from its facilities, it now must also close its doors to traditional extracurricular activities that are noncontroversial but not directly related to any course being offered in the school."

signatures against Mastery Learning. He said that the program "slowed down radically the educational process."

Parents also objected to their children being tested on attitudes and behavior. Rev. Shipman said that much of the program consisted of behavior modification techniques.

Mastery Learning was rejected in Chicago after being used there for several years. Former Secretary of Education William Bennett said Chicago had the "worst" schools in the nation. Mastery Learning has also been rejected by school districts in Montana, Tennessee, Michigan, and New Mexico. (See *Education Reporter*, May 1990, p.1) Outcome-based education is being currently popularized by TheodoreSizer in his book *Horace's Compromise*.

Controversy in Missouri

Sizer's outcome-based experimental plan has stirred up a tremendous controversy in Parkway South School District in suburban St. Louis, Missouri. The school, which has a small, pilot program based on Sizer's ideas, is considering extending the program to the entire school. The school has requested a \$75,000 grant from the Danforth Foundation in order to explore creating an "outcome-based diploma."

Many parents are upset with the program. Richard Fruland, a Parkway South parent, said, "we're just not about to let our children be experimented upon." Other parents are worried that outcome-based high school diplomas will not be accepted by most colleges.

In *Widmar v. Vincent* (1981), the Court had upheld an "equal access" policy in state universities, ruling that a state university regulation prohibiting student use of college facilities "for purposes of religious worship or religious teaching" does not violate the Establishment Clause. *Westside v. Mergens* extended this principle to public high schools.

Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989 (Public Law 101-226 — December 12, 1989):

"No local educational agency shall be eligible to receive funds or any other form of financial assistance under any Federal program unless it certifies to the State educational agency that it has adopted and has implemented a program to prevent the use of illicit drugs and alcohol by students or employees that, at a minimum, includes —

"(1) age-appropriate, developmentally based drug and alcohol education and prevention programs (which address the legal, social, and health consequences of drug and alcohol use and which provide information about effective techniques for resisting peer pressure to use illicit drugs or alcohol) for students in all grades of the schools operated or served by the applicant, from early childhood level through grade 12;

"(2) conveying to students that the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol is wrong and harmful;

"(3) standards of conduct that are applicable to students and employees in all the applicant's schools and that clearly prohibit, at a minimum, the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol by students and employees on school premises or as part of any of its activities;

"(4) a clear statement that sanctions (consistent with local, State, and Federal law), up to and including expulsion or termination of employment and referral for prosecution, will be imposed on students and employees who violate the standards of conduct required by paragraph (3) and a description of those sanctions."

FOCUS: Does the First Amendment Apply to Parents?

By Nat Hentoff

Recently, in a small town in Idaho, I spent some time with several parents of public school children. One was a minister who also had a day job. They were disturbed because the reading program was now based on a series of books that contained, they said, selections approving of — or not disapproving of — Satanism, the occult and scenes of violence.

We went over the passages, and I told them that compared to the books of vintage fairy tales I took out of the public library when I was a child — some of which were also discussed in school — these readers were quite mild. Nor could I find Satan, in any of his disguises, in the books.

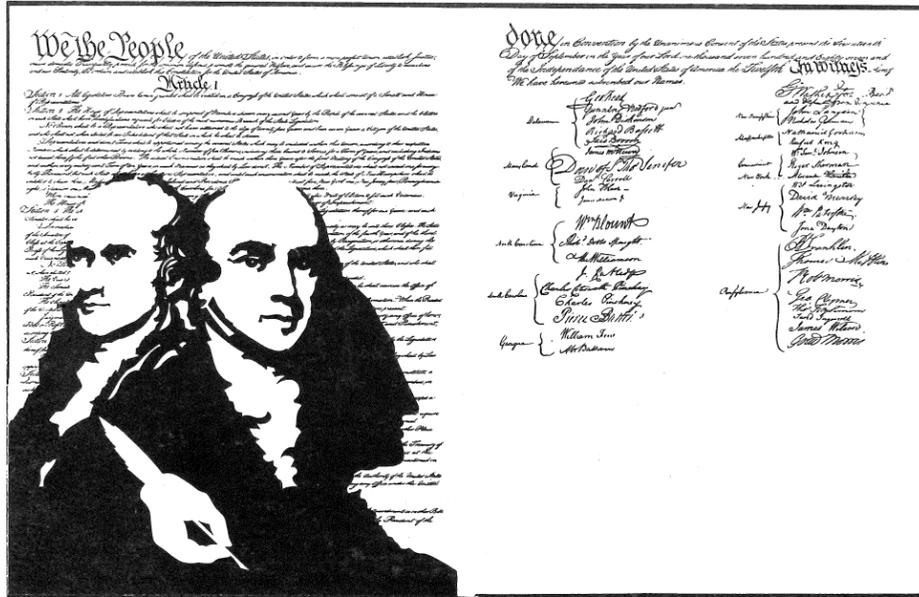
I failed to entirely persuade the parents that the new books would not damage their children, but as we talked, it became clear that something else was gnawing at them. They felt mocked by an angry group of their neighbors, including some educators, who called them censors, among other things.

Indeed, civil libertarians in town — not all of them — told me that these parents and others like them were kooks, troublemakers — insistent on imposing their values on the rest of the community.

"Surely," the minister said to me, "we have a right to protest. The First Amendment does not exclude us." I assured him that James Madison also had him in mind.

But many who profess to believe in the First Amendment would exclude from its protections those whose beliefs are clashing counter to their own. A good many liberals consider parents such as the ones I met in Idaho to be enemies of the First Amendment.

I wonder if those dissident parents in Idaho



saw a full-page ad that ran last month in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and 28 other papers. It was signed by, among others, a number of large-scale paladins of free expression. They included the American Booksellers Association, the American Library Association, the Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers. All in white hats.

The text of the ad accurately noted a rise in efforts to remove books and magazines from school libraries and stores. These attempts at what the ad inaccurately called "censorship" — only the state can censor — "are part of a growing pattern of increasing intolerance, which is changing the fabric of America."

Listed among the germinators of intolerance

were people who "challenged textbooks which don't fit their view of the world." In its climax, the ad — suggesting the accompanying sounds of tympany and trombone — declared: "We believe Americans have the right to buy, stores have the right to sell, authors have the right to write and publishers have the right to publish constitutionally protected material. Period."

If the Idaho parents did see that ad, it would have reinforced their perception that they themselves are not constitutionally protected in that, according to all these virtuous familiars of the First Amendment, protesters against certain books and magazines apparently do not belong in the company of decent constitutionalists.

Nowhere in the ad is the right to dissent

against published materials mentioned. Yet, for instance, there is a First Amendment right to picket and boycott bookstores — even if the targeted books are fully protected by the Constitution. When the Constitution fully protected racial segregation, other kinds of stores were vigorously and lawfully picketed and boycotted.

The good guys' ad also rebukes and scorns those who boycott advertisers on certain television shows they don't like. In my household, for some time, the kids kept an up-to-date list of stores carrying products Cesar Chavez told us not to buy.

What makes the ad worth further examining in high school civics classes is that some of its most powerful sponsors — Waldenbooks, The American Booksellers Association and The Council for Periodical Distributors Associations — are using RICO (a statute that mercilessly mows down First Amendment rights) against the American Family Association in Florida, which wants *Playboy* and *Penthouse* out of chain stores. The association is being accused of "racketeering."

The national office of the American Civil Liberties Union has been trimming on the Florida case, but Robyn Blummer, executive director of the Florida affiliate of the ACLU, tells me that as soon as the lawsuit reaches the appellate stage, she will file a friend-of-the-court brief on the side of the American Family Association. Maybe all the good guys will run an ad explaining why the First Amendment made her do that.

Hentoff is a columnist for the *Village Voice* and the *Washington Post*. Reprinted by permission.

NBC Study Guide Tries to Rewrite History

A teacher's companion study guide distributed by NBC in conjunction with its docudrama *Last Flight Out* is under fire for being politically biased. The brochure, entitled "AT&T Presents *Last Flight Out*," tells little about the recent NBC movie about the last American flight to leave Vietnam, but instead discusses the politics and motives of war.

The guide, written by English teacher Dominic Kinsley who had also authored a study guide for Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*, claims that there are only five motives for war: expansionism, imperialism, neocolonialism, nationalism and factionalism. All sides are presented as equally at fault. Fighting for freedom is not mentioned as a possible motive for war. Mr. Kinsley admitted to the press that the study guide "is pacifist in orientation in that it argues for the prevention of war at all costs. But it also, to some extent, points out the inevitability of war."

The study guide says that the conflict in Vietnam reached a turning point in 1954 when, rather than let Ho Chi Minh and the Communists win in North Vietnam, "the United States intervened to prevent the election and preserve the anti-communist government of South Vietnam." The Tet Offensive is said to have "turned the tides of battle" in favor of the North Vietnamese. The fact that the North Vietnamese actually lost the 1968 military action is not mentioned. Nor does the study guide discuss the tremendous destruction and casualties in both Vietnam and Cambodia after the Americans left in 1975.

The guide asks students to identify the motives, using the guide's list of five reasons for war, of each nation's role in the American Revolution, the Vietnam War, the Six Day War, the Afghanistan War, and the Falklands War. The "correct" answers are listed in the guide. "Neocolonialism" was given as the motive for both the Soviet and American roles in Afghanistan, as well as France's role in the American Revolution. Both George Washington and Ho Chi Minh were motivated by "nationalism" in their respective wars according to the guide, while the South Vietnamese were fighting because of "factionalism."

"Aftermath and Survival," another activity listed in the study guide, contains an activity similar to the "Lifeboat" technique used in so many values clarification programs (see box). Students are asked to imagine that they are Americans asked to leave Saigon at the end of the war. They are given a list of 24 people who want to leave Vietnam on the "Last Flight Out," but only ten can be taken. This activity asks students to decide which ten persons they would save.

The back of the four-page guide lists "Topics for Discussion" in the classroom. It uses the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as an example of when a nation is "justified in intervening in a foreign war." Students are asked if Americans "are more accepting of war because we have rarely experienced it directly," and "to what extent have limitations on press coverage of more recent American military

actions (e.g., Grenada, Libya, Panama) influenced American attitudes toward those conflicts."

Last Flight Out was aired over NBC-TV on May 20, but the study guide may be in the hands of teachers for a long time.

NBC's 'Lifeboat' Game

(In the classic "Lifeboat Game," students are told that 10 persons are in a sinking lifeboat and five must be thrown out to drown, so that the other five can be saved. The child is required to choose which lives are worth saving and who should be killed.)

Imagine that you are one of the Americans portrayed in AT&T Presents *Last Flight Out*, about to rescue 10 people trapped in Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War. Which of the people listed here would you save? Check off your choices and be prepared to explain them in a class discussion.

- An 8-year-old orphan hospitalized with shrapnel wounds.
- A 4-year-old Amerasian girl abandoned by her Vietnamese mother.
- A 42-year-old man who has been your closest colleague at work for three years.
- Your colleague's wife.
- Your colleague's 20-year-old daughter, who is pregnant.
- Her husband, who is a colonel in South Vietnam's army.
- His mother, a middle-class widow in her fifties who lives alone.
- Your secretary at work, a young woman

- who moved to Saigon from the country.
- Your secretary's sister, who fled to Saigon when North Vietnamese troops occupied her village.
- Your secretary's grandmother, who came to Saigon with her granddaughter.
- An infant whose mother refuses to go but pleads with you to save her son.
- A doctor who offers you \$1000 to save him and the four other members of his family. (Counts as five people.)
- A former spy who helped you eliminate a ring of Communist saboteurs.
- A police captain whose ruthless interrogation of suspected Communist agents provided you with invaluable information.
- The police captain's wife.
- The police captain's 16-year-old son, a promising pianist.
- The police captain's 14-year-old daughter, who wants to become a nun.
- The police captain's mother-in-law, who lives with him.
- A 28-year-old engineer who sent his family to the U.S. three months ago and has no other way to join them.
- The mistress of a friend at the American embassy who once saved your life.



Book of the Month

Nash, Ronald H. *The Closing of the American Heart* — What's Really Wrong with America's Schools (Probe Books).

The Closing of the American Heart is the latest in a slew of recent books decrying the state of academia, especially higher education. The author, Dr. Ronald Nash, a professor at Western Kentucky University for more than 25 years, is an evangelical Christian. Unlike most other current books about education, this one is written from a religious viewpoint.

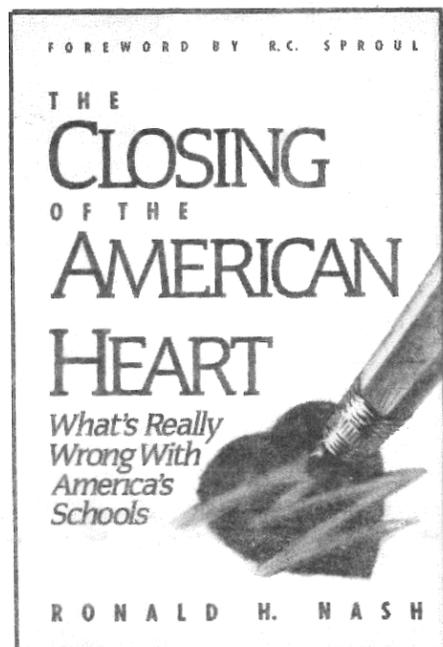
The book blames the education establishment, led by the National Education Association, for causing this academic and moral crisis in the nation's schools. Nash suggests allowing parental choice, including allowing government tuition vouchers to be used at religious schools, as the best way to combat the public schools' monopoly on education.

Nash also criticizes some Christian schools for having a too narrow focus in their teachings. "Too many Christian schools still offer a curriculum that stresses simple memorization of information presented in less than adequate teaching material." Instead, "the Christian church needs young people who have been exposed to the best of Western culture and who are able to interact thoughtfully and reflectively with the literature, history, philosophy, and science of that culture." The appendix includes an extensive curriculum plan for use in Christian schools.

Nash sharply criticizes the presence of Marxist thought in the nation's colleges and universities. He is especially harsh on the Christian schools which have retreated from their religious roots and adopted liberation theology and Marxism as their new dogmas.

How should we improve education? Nash suggests a return to traditional values and character as the key to reforming the educational system. Both the mind and the heart need to be nourished, he says, and the current educational system is doing neither.

The Closing of the American Heart contains some good ideas for improving the nation's educational system. Although written from a Christian perspective, it has something to say to every one, not just Christians.



The title stems from both Allan Bloom's seminal book *The Closing of the American Mind* and the meaning of the term "heart" as the center of one's moral being. Dr. Nash believes that the collapse of moral and religious standards over the past 25 years has contributed to the collapse of the nation's educational standards. "The sophists of our age," he writes, "also severed the link between reason and virtue, between the mind and the heart. No real progress towards improving American education can occur until all concerned realize that an education that ignores moral and religious values cannot qualify as a quality education."

While Nash sees three forms of illiteracy — functional, cultural, and moral — as threatening the nation's youth, he is most concerned with the last. Moral illiteracy, he says, is reflected and taught in academia through relativism, positivism, and humanism. "The refusal to recognize the necessity of ethical absolutes and moral values," he notes, "much less teach such (lest it be considered propaganda) has left our culture loosed from its most important moorings."

Parents Attack Death Ed. *Continued from page 1*

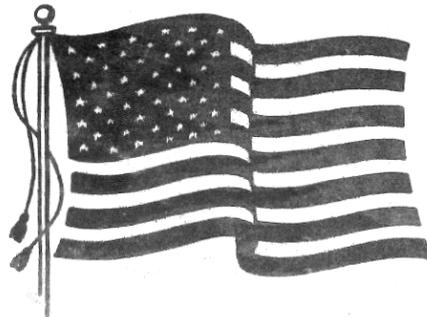
Those who defend death and dying classes say you don't commit suicide because you talk about it. Others dispute that, and several "cluster suicides" are a matter of record.

Dr. David Shaffer, professor of child psychology at Columbia University in New York, warns that "suicide can be subject to imitation" and that since, in any group, an unknown number of teens is pre-suicidal, talking about suicide could be "playing with fire." Telling them that "almost everyone has thought about

suicide" tends to legitimize it.

Like most psychological and values courses in the public schools, the death and dying courses are non-judgmental. They do not say "suicide is wrong." They tell the student he can decide questions of life and death.

The teachers assigned to teach death courses seldom have any more training for this task than a one-day or even a half-day seminar. Some critics charge that these courses are really group therapy by unlicensed psychologists.



Americans and Soviets Exchange Textbook Ideas

Academics in the United States and the Soviet Union have just completed a controversial 12-year joint project to correct factual errors and distortions in their countries' respective textbooks. A report is due this summer. Dozens of scholars from both countries analyzed each other's textbooks for bias and accuracy.

Soviets have long complained that American textbooks have been too negative in their portrayal of the Soviet Union, focusing on only the totalitarian aspects of the society and giving little credit to the Soviets for their role in conquering the Nazis in World War II. Soviet textbooks, on the other hand, have painted American society as based on racism and intolerance. One Soviet textbook said that "a characteristic trait of American society, founded as it is on social inequality, is violence and terror. The very system of all-powerful monopolies gives them birth."

Barbara Flynn, an editorial vice president at Scott, Foresman, said that "there have been very significant changes" in both countries' textbooks. She said that the books had previously "made fairly serious exaggerations of the weaknesses of the economy of the other country. They tended to focus heavily on the sore spots."

An example of the kind of changes being made as a result of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Textbook Study Project is the deletion of the following paragraph about the Soviet Union from the 1990 edition of a history text called *This Is America's Story*: "But as it has worked out, everything in the Soviet Union is actually controlled by a small group, the leaders of the government, who are also the leaders of the Communist Party. The people of the Soviet Union are not free to own and operate businesses or to select their own jobs. Nor do the Soviet people have the freedoms — such as freedom of speech and the press — that mean so much to

Americans and the people of other free nations. The Soviet leaders call their system a 'people's republic' and claim that they have a 'democratic system,' but that is not what we think of as democracy. There are elections but the people can vote only for candidates of the Communist Party."

The fact this paragraph not only was true but still is true has apparently not deterred the professors from plowing ahead with their joint endeavor.

Although no Soviet textbooks have yet been published with any revisions, Vladimir Maksakovsky, a professor at the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute, said that things are changing. While traditional Soviet textbooks "portrayed the U.S.A. as having 'instability of economy, growth of taxes, increasing inflation,' the new generation of geography textbooks in the Soviet Union is removing such stereotypes."

However, history classes have a long way to go to catch up. Teachers for those classes have been working without textbooks since the government declared two years ago that the books were filled with "lies." Soviet schools are now in an upheaval about the teaching of their own history.

Two joint books have indirectly resulted from the textbook project. Scott, Foresman is printing a collection of essays, suitable for high school classes, written by academicians from both countries about their respective lands. McDougal Littell is publishing a text on World War II which was written jointly by U.S. and Soviet scholars. The book will be published both in English and in Russian. Howard Mehlinger, dean of education at Indiana University and head of the textbook project's American delegation, called the publication of the latter book, where both countries will be using the same text in their classes, "remarkable."

We've Been Asked— Must Sex Ed Classes Be Coed?

The answer is NO. School personnel who say otherwise should be referred to the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Section 106.34(e):

"Portions of classes in elementary and secondary schools which deal exclusively with human sexuality may be conducted in separate sessions for boys and girls."