

## Evolution Warning Labels for Alabama Texts

MONTGOMERY, AL – The Alabama State Board of Education has voted to insert a message in biology textbooks that states that evolution is a theory and not fact. The board made that decision as part of the approval of new science textbooks and materials for kindergarten through grade 12.

Students will find pasted on the inside cover of all new biology texts a one-page insert that begins, "This textbook discusses evolution, a controversial theory some scientists present as a scientific explanation for the origin of living things, such as plants, animals, and humans."

"No one was present when life first appeared on earth. Therefore, any statement about life's origins should be considered as theory, not fact." (See *A Message from the Alabama State Board of Education* on page 4 for full text.)

The message was written by scientists,

and a statement of endorsement from 65 members of the Alabama scientific community was submitted to the Board of Education at its public hearing. Presented by two of the board's conservative members, Stephanie Bell and David Byers, it was chosen on a 6 to 1 vote over the one prepared by State Superintendent Ed Richardson.

Alabama Eagle Forum led the way in objecting to the way evolution has been

presented in the biology books. The organization sent to each board member and all major state media outlets 26 pages of documentation to show that the books did not conform with the science course of study passed in March, which says that evolution should be taught as theory and not fact.

As a result of testimony given by Eagle Forum Education Chairman Joan Kendall, one of the best known evolutionary books, the BSCS green version (*Biological Sci-*

*ence: An Ecological Approach*) was rejected by the textbook committee. Another significant and unprecedented action by the state board was the adoption on the supplemental list of a video tape entitled "Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy," a vigorous debate at Stanford University between William Provine and Phillip Johnson. It contrasts the naturalistic and theistic ways of understanding our existence and is expected to be promoted for use in the high schools.



Sticker worn in favor of insert at the hearing on Nov. 9.

## Decision-Making for Kids, Not Parents

ANTIOCH, CA – The Antioch Unified School District refused the request of parents Pam and Dennis Angelo to remove their son Vinnie from a class called "Decision Making." The school district maintains that the class, which contains subjects such as Problem Solving, Dating, Drinking, and Stress Management is re-

quired for graduation.

This led the Angelos to file suit against the district so another son, Mikel, an incoming sophomore, won't have to take the class.

"My wife and I do not wish to add to, delete from or change, in any way, shape or form this class," claims Mr. Angelo. "We do not wish to stop students from taking this class should they and their parents feel it would be advantageous. We merely wish to exercise our constitutionally guaranteed parental rights to direct the education of our children." He adds that Decision Making is not required by any federal, state or county agency, nor is it recognized or required by any college. In addition, Mr. Angelo discovered that there was never a curriculum task force for this class, nor was it ever approved by the Board of Education.

Superior Court Judge John Van DePoel declined to allow the Angelos to pull their son out of the class. Instead, he ordered the high school to switch the 10th grader to the spring session of the required "Decision Making" class, giving the parents time to review the curriculum and formally state their objections to school administrators before asking the courts to intervene. Previously, the school had maintained that there was just "too much material" to give the Angelos to review.

But the Rutherford Institute and attorney Steve Wood, who are representing the



The Angelo Family

Angelos, believe the state education code is clear: If a parent wants to opt a child out of a values-oriented class, their written request should be honored.

The Decision Making course that is sparking so much controversy covers topics such as Sex Education, Career Planning, Values Clarification, and Identification of Values and Goal Setting. Only the sex-education part of the class is optional.

"Daily, I felt I had to deprogram Vinnie and reinstate our religious values," Pam Angelo stated in the court records. "I strongly objected on my religious beliefs to the portions which discussed sex, dating, mature relationships, and other non-academic topics."

In an interview, Pam Angelo said she was troubled by a question that asked students whether they had ever been de-

See Decision Making, page 3

The following questionnaire is part of a Health and Human Services Grant received by the schools listed on the IPFI. The program is called "Growing Up Well" and is supposed to reduce the risk factors for ATOD (alcohol, tobacco and other drug) use.

### Individual Protective Factors Index (IPFI)

Directions: Think about the way you act and feel when you read each sentence. Then, circle the letter that shows how much you agree or disagree with each sentence. If you strongly agree with a sentence, circle A. If you agree but not strongly, circle B. If you disagree, circle C, and if you strongly disagree with a sentence, circle D.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I can tell my parents the way I feel about things.	A	B	C	D
2. I will probably die before I am thirty.	A	B	C	D
3. I get along well with other people.	A	B	C	D
4. One of my problems is I can't get down to work when I should.	A	B	C	D
5. I can be trusted.	A	B	C	D
6. I am afraid my life will be unhappy.	A	B	C	D
7. School is a waste of time.	A	B	C	D
8. Bad things happen to people like me.	A	B	C	D
9. If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.	A	B	C	D
10. Helping others makes me feel good.	A	B	C	D
11. It is hard for me to make friends.	A	B	C	D
12. I try hard to do well in school.	A	B	C	D
13. I give up things before completing them.	A	B	C	D
14. I like to do things with my family.	A	B	C	D
15. I can do most things I try.	A	B	C	D
16. When I am mad, I yell at people.	A	B	C	D
17. When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.	A	B	C	D
18. My friends respect me.	A	B	C	D
19. Sometimes I break things on purpose.	A	B	C	D
20. It is important to do your part in helping at home.	A	B	C	D
21. When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.	A	B	C	D
22. I would like to quit school as soon as I can.	A	B	C	D
23. I enjoy talking with my family.	A	B	C	D
24. Helping others is very satisfying.	A	B	C	D
25. I like the way I look.	A	B	C	D
26. If I feel like it, I hit people.	A	B	C	D
27. When I try to learn something new, I soon give up if I don't succeed right away.	A	B	C	D



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## EDUCATION BRIEFS

When the Federal Government shut down for a week before Thanksgiving because of the budget impasse between Congress and the President, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) determined that 89% of the staff at the Department of Education was "non-essential" and could stay home. This appeared to make the case for conservative proposals to dismantle or cut back the Education Department, but no bill has yet been introduced in Congress to accomplish that.

Lawyer David Glass, who filed suit under the Americans with Disabilities Act, got twice as much time to take his New York Bar Exam in July because he is a slow reader and writer. He claims he can compensate for his writing problems by using his computer's spell-check. According to the Justice Department, nearly 20 complaints and six lawsuits have been filed against the New York board of examiners. One applicant, who failed the bar exam five times and claims she suffers from dyslexia, was finally allowed to use an assistant to read the exam questions aloud and to write answers that she dictated.

The decision to require students in Long Beach, California to wear uniforms to school is proving to be a possible answer to gang-related problems, truancy, and even racial polarization. A comparison of the 1993-94 school year, before most Long Beach schools required the uniforms, to last year reveals assault and battery cases in district schools are down by 34%. Fighting dropped 51%. Drug cases fell by 69% and sex offenses are down 74%.

More than 100 teenagers and young adults signed their names to a pledge of purity at a rally near the White House. The "Pure Love Rally" offers a "Purity Pledge," in which young men and women promise to refrain from all sexual relationships before marriage. "You don't need the stresses of sexual relationships as a teen," said Carey Yasutake, a senior at Irvington High School in New York, who was carrying a sign saying, "Condoms don't protect your heart."

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## 13-Year-Old Tells What It's Really Like in Public School

The following letter was written by a 13-year-old girl from Grant's Pass, Oregon. It is reprinted here with her mother's permission.

I am a 7th grader at Fleming Middle School. I transferred from a private school about three months before the end of the school year.

I expected a school where I could go and learn something, but I got a big surprise. Everyone was nice at first, but after a few weeks, I quickly found out that everything is not always as it seems.

First of all, the education level there is very low. My math work is similar to work I did in 5th grade, yet no one moved me to a more challenging class. I feel that I have fallen behind tremendously in the level of work that I was doing at private school.

The teaching methods are counterproductive to the way that I am used to learning. We are frequently asked to pick what we want to learn, then are sometimes expected to teach ourselves. A teacher's aide is sometimes supposed to help us, but often they just talk and disturb our work. The noise level gets out of control a lot which makes it hard to study or to get any of our work done.

One of my teachers is frequently late or absent due to "site-council" meetings. My class is so used to having a substitute, it is a shock to see our teacher back in class.

Group learning is used in all of my classes. It does not work because the smart kid in the group ends up doing all the work while the rest of the kids sit around and talk. When the work is finished, the kids who sat around and talked snatch up the paper like hungry wolves. Group learning also means that the individual student loses control over the quality of the work that she will be graded on.

In English class, we are reading and performing "Driving Miss Daisy." My group decided to call it "Driving Over Miss Daisy." In their version, Miss Daisy goes to bars, gets drunk, smokes and plays poker. The Piggly Wiggly store is a bar in their version. When Miss Daisy's chauffeur gets sick of her, he runs her over. I totally disagree

with this because it adulterates the original play. But, to go against my group would make me "uncool." Our teacher has allowed this version as a "variation," and my group will be performing it the way they want.

Most kids use filthy language at school. The "F" word is the word that is used the most. Students who are heard using bad language are barely disciplined at all. Students also write filthy words in notes and on school property. Some students have pictures of barely-dressed women in their lockers, and one boy has his locker "wallpapered" with condoms. Feminine hygiene products can be found lying around by the locker rooms and on the nature trail.

I experienced sexual harassment every day. Both male and female students behave and speak very suggestively. Not only is this tolerated, it is expected in order to be "cool." Both male and female students grab each other in inappropriate places on their bodies. Sex is talked about all the time, and in nasty ways, such as "household pets and family members you might have had sex with." If a person has any values or morals at all, they are considered a "geek."

Some students spend time out of class to get counseling. They never seem to have to make up their work. We are asked all the time, "How are you feeling?" I am tired of all the self-evaluation and self-esteem building. My personal life is my business, and if I want to talk about something, I'll talk to God or my parents. I would rather talk to people who know me and love me than teachers and students that I am unfamiliar with. I have been made to feel stupid for telling my mom what's going on in my life. According to some of the students, that's not a good thing to do.

I tried to think of anything good about my experience at Fleming Middle School. I did like some of my teachers, but overall, I feel very disappointed. I would rather do real schoolwork than the unchallenging things we are asked to

do. I feel a little confused because there didn't seem to be a clear line between right and wrong; everything got all lumped together.

I am looking forward to being homeschooled next year.



## Book of the Month



**Reclaiming a Nation at Risk: The Battle for Your Faith, Family and Freedoms**, by Brannon Howse, 1995. Bridgestone Multimedia Group, Chandler AZ, 291 pps, \$12.00.

Are America's cultural elite and governmental bureaucrats out to sabotage our faith, family, and freedoms? That is the question Brannon Howse addresses in his new book *Reclaiming A Nation At Risk*. In this book Howse documents in shocking detail how the government is threatening our basic freedoms.

"We are faced with a government who wants absolute control," he writes, "a political system that is amuck with impropriety, and an educational system that has decided it no longer wants to teach, but rather wants to tell us how to raise our children." He adds, "There is still time to reclaim America, but we must act now."

Howse points out in *Reclaiming A Nation At Risk* that the November 1994 elections indicated that many Americans are not happy with where we are headed as a nation. He explains that many Americans want change - but they want change back to what made America great, and that is individual responsibility and freedom. "The American people in November 1994 were calling for a *smaller* federal government - not more government."

*Reclaiming A Nation At Risk* addresses many concerns of the American people and answers many questions:

- Who really controls America's schools?
- Why can't Johnny read or spell or even think for himself?
- What is OBE, and how will it affect my child?
- Are American students being "trained" to become a socialized work force?
- How did the National Education Association (NEA), become so powerful, and what is their agenda?
- Whatever happened to "parents' rights"?
- Is the federal government tracking America's children through a national database?
- What will happen if America's economy collapses?
- Are our religious freedoms in jeopardy?
- How can I help reclaim our nation from the agents of change?

As president of the American Family Policy Institute, Brannon Howse spends countless hours each year reading legislation and writing issue briefs in an effort to inform the American people about policies that affect the family - either positively or negatively. His extensive research and knowledge on family and educational issues have been compiled in *Cradle to College: An Educational Abduction*.

*Reclaiming A Nation At Risk* is useful for any parent, teacher, or concerned citizen who wants to learn more about important education issues and how they affect our faith, family and freedoms.

To order *Reclaiming A Nation At Risk*, call 1(800)954-1122, ext. 500.

# FOCUS: Education Today: Politics, Profits, Position, Power, and Prejudice

by Sharman Burson Ramsey

The time has passed when rhetoric and "current wisdom" will suffice for research and results in judging the validity of an educational program. Too many Alabama school children have fallen victim to the tragedy of compassionate child-centered education and the agendas of high-priced consultants with costly solutions for the problems produced by the last wave of high-priced consultants. We are now beset with a new batch of consultants riding the high tech wave into those states with large numbers of disadvantaged children who translate into more federal dollars.

One such high tech panacea is the IBM Writing to Read programs that Dr. Robert Slavin of Johns Hopkins University reviewed in an article for *Phi Delta Kappan* entitled "IBM's Writing to Read: Is it Right for Reading?"<sup>1</sup> Slavin reports that the first year cost is between \$20,000 and \$24,000 per lab. This does not include aides to manage the lab, or costs of maintenance, security, insurance, or consumable materials. Despite the cost, the program is being adopted by those that seem least able to afford the program, such as: Atlanta, Baltimore, Tulsa, Nashville, Dallas, Fort Worth, Washington, D.C., Mississippi, and now Alabama.

Unfortunately, the test results continue to prove that high expenditures do not translate into high academic performance. There has not been a perceptible increase in the reading scores of those localities since publication of the article in 1990. My own school district, Dothan City Schools, installed IBM computers two years ago when 27 percent of second graders could make only a minimal or no measurable response on the Reading Comprehension portion of the Alabama Integrated Reading and Writing Assessment. Now after two years using the IBM Writing to Read, 30 percent can make only a minimal or no measurable response, a continuing increase in illiteracy and an expensive mistake as our board now faces over a \$1 million expected shortfall in funds.

While the IBM Writing to Read program claims to be a phonics program, its lack of direct, systematic instruction in phonics and follow-up of the rules of our language, as well as its use of inventive spelling betray its Whole Language reality. The teacher's instructional manual for the IBM Writing to Read program dispels any doubt as to its being Whole Language. Blatantly spouting the Whole Language philosophy, it reads: "The transition to standard spelling does not need to be specifically 'taught.' Rather, it is a natural process similar to the speech refinement we observe in children as they progress from babbling to speaking with correct pronunciation."<sup>2</sup>

With IBM's Writing to Read, children are encouraged to spell the word "face" as "fas." Children are not taught that the "e" at the end of the word turns on the long sound of the "a," and the c uses its second sound (s) because when "c" comes before

e, i, or y it sounds like an "s." Rather, the IBM manual states, "Premature insistence that students use standard or correct spelling inhibits their desires and abilities to write."<sup>3</sup> Contrary to that assumption, when Dr. Sylvia Farnham-Diggory reviewed direct instructional, phonics intensive Spalding Writing Road to Reading, she found eager students who developed early analytical skills through phonetic analysis. She discovered they applied those skills to math and scored higher in math as well as reading.<sup>4</sup>

California has acknowledged the devastating effects of Whole Language on their state. They recently tied for last in the nation in reading on the NAEP. "And the NAEP found that at least 30% of students who have spent from four to 13 years in school aren't even semiliterate."<sup>5</sup> Yet, Alabama continues to use its own scarce education dollars for another expensive educational gadget based on failed theory.

Slavin's evaluation of the IBM program states that while an effect size of .25 is considered significant, the IBM Writing to Read produces only a .00 effect. The same study shows the systematic, intensive, and direct phonics program, Alphaphonics (now Kite), scoring consistently with a .89 effect and costing only \$130 per classroom to train the teacher and equip the class. One wonders at administrators' eagerness to spend great sums on an ineffective gimmick. But, grants and federal funding make this tempting technology accessible to impoverished school districts. Then, in spite of gleaming new computer labs, they are no better off academically than before. In fact, with the high cost of upkeep putting demands on scarce local funds, the new technology actually prevents districts from contracting with those companies with successful methods to produce literate children. As one principal put it, "We've got too much invested in this to change."

The tragedy is we have known for years what works. While Secretary of Education, William Bennett reported on a comprehensive study of what works in elementary education, *First Lessons*. But, as John Stossel reported recently on "20/20," only one percent of America's schools use the method supported by research.<sup>6</sup>

Slavin's exposition of the IBM Writing to Read program reinforces the research findings of Project Follow Through, a competition of methodologies involving 70,000 low IQ, disadvantaged children over a four year period. The results are reported in *Making Schools More Effective: New Directions from Follow Through*.<sup>7</sup> The

most effective program entered in the competition by far is Distar, developed by Siegfried Englemann, who was featured in the "20/20" segment done by John Stossel.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, as we face skyrocketing juvenile crime, Distar is reported in *Advances in Clinical Child Psychology* to be "distinctively prevention oriented." Its authors go on to report that it "minimizes the possibility of individual problems arising in the first place" by displacing "the reading performance of disadvantaged children from the lowest percentiles to the norm on standardized reading test."<sup>10</sup> This is confirmed by studies conducted by the Justice Department.<sup>11</sup>

"60 Minutes" revisited Marva Collins' West End Preparatory School after 16 years to follow up on the 34 students they had originally featured.<sup>12</sup> Those methods considered preventive for potential psychological problems in Distar have brought Marva Collins' "at risk," "disadvantaged" students academic success and personal fulfillment. . . and have confirmed their usefulness as a preventive for juvenile crime. Her students score consistently in the 99th percentile, police have never been called to her school, and there has not been one teenage pregnancy.<sup>13</sup> The Justice Department acknowledges the effectiveness of this type of education as a deterrent to crime by supporting Marva Collins' School.

Yet, in spite of the amazing results of Distar in Project Follow Through, in 1984 the Department of Education ignored its own study and gave sociologist William Spady a mandate to put Outcome Based Education in schools across the nation. Since that time our colleges of education have promoted self-directed learning, individualized instruction, and social intervention, building blocks of Outcome Based Education. These concepts are the basis for the current politically correct, but factually incorrect, assumption that children are illiterate because they are victims of society and therefore society must be fixed so that "all children can begin school ready to learn," a basic premise of Goals 2000. In fact, Project Follow

Through proved that "good will, people, material, the Hawthorne effect, health programs, dental programs, and hot lunch programs do not cause gains in achievement. All Follow Through sponsored programs had these components, but all models did not achieve similar levels of success in basic instruction."<sup>14</sup>

It is little wonder the results of Project Follow Through have been ignored by the NEA and its alter ego, the Department of Education. It does not fit their agenda as set forth in the 1995 NEA Resolutions.

We must not continue selling our children out for the paltry federal funds that bind us to experimental educational theory and destructive social engineering. We must confine the mission of schools to academics, look to what research tells us works, and demand accountability from our schools in producing what parents expect: children who graduate culturally literate and able to read, write, and calculate.

Politics, profits, position, power and prejudice must no longer manipulate this dialogue. Our future is too much "at risk" for another ten-year education mistake.

*Sharman Burson Ramsey has been a teacher in public and private schools.* ■

<sup>1</sup>Robert Slavin. "IBM's Writing to Read: Is it Right for Reading?" *Phi Delta Kappan*. November, 1990. Vol. 72, No. 3. Pp. 214-216.

<sup>2</sup>The Writing to Read Teacher's Manual, 1986, p. 11-8.

<sup>3</sup>Id. at p. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup>Dr. S. Farnham-Diggory is H. Rodney Sharp Professor of Educational Studies and Psychology, and Director of the Reading Study Center, and of the Academic Study and Assistance Program, University of Delaware.

<sup>5</sup>Mathew Robinson. "Last Rites for an Education Fad? California Blasts Progressive Reading Methods. Is Whole Language Dead?" *Investor's Business Daily*. Vol. 12, No. 119, September, 28, 1995.

<sup>6</sup>"20/20". An ABC presentation. October 13, 1995.

<sup>7</sup>W.C. Becker, S. Englemann, D.W. Carnine, and W. R. Rhine. *Direct Instruction Model*. *Making Schools More Effective: New Directions from Follow Through*. W. Ray Rhine (Ed.). Academic Press: New York, 1981.

<sup>8</sup>"20/20". An ABC presentation. October 13, 1995.

<sup>9</sup>Benjamin B. Lahey and Alan E. Kazdin. *Advances in Child Psychology*. Plenum Press: New York. Vol. 4, p. 271.

<sup>10</sup>Id. at p. 251.

<sup>11</sup>Michael S. Brunner. *Retarding America: the Imprisonment of Potential*. Halcyon House: Portland, 1993.

<sup>12</sup>"60 Minutes". A CBS presentation. October 8, 1995.

<sup>13</sup>The Marva Collins Chicago Training Institute, 4146 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60651. (312) 227-5995. See also: "Spreading the Paradigm of a Master Teacher: The Great Expectations Initiative in Oklahoma" a paper presented at the Annual Research Conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, in Washington D.C., October, 1993.

<sup>14</sup>W.C. Becker, et al, p. 144.

## Decision-Making

*continued from page 1*

pressed. Her son Vinnie was bringing home such papers as "Identifying Your Passions," which asks students when their "heart pounds with excitement." Other items asked the students to describe "your most romantic experience," or "Sex is \_\_\_\_." One assignment asked to list "family members I can trust."

Court records show one class assignment on dilemmas that posed different scenarios. In one, the student is asked, "Who's right - Carol or her mother?" In another scenario, the student is asked what to do in a certain situation in which

"you resent your parents' attempt to control you."

In the exercise called "Interview Questions and Starters," questions are posed such as, "How do you want to be remembered after you die?", "What might make a fitting epitaph on your gravestone?" and "What is something no one knows about you?"

Debra Saunders, columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* comments, "Savor the irony. The district says it wants to teach decision-making to kids, but won't allow it to their parents." ■

# U.S. Dept. of Education Statement on Religious Freedom

The U.S. Department of Education on July 12, 1995 issued the following statement regarding the application of the First Amendment and the Equal Access Act to public schools.

**Student prayer and religious discussion:** The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment does not prohibit purely private religious speech by students. Students therefore have the same right to engage in individual or group prayer and religious discussion during the school day as they do to engage in other comparable activity. For example, students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray before tests to the same extent they may engage in comparable non-disruptive activities. Local school authorities possess substantial discretion to impose rules of order and other pedagogical restrictions on student activities, but they may not structure or administer such rules to discriminate against religious activity or speech.

Generally, students may pray in a nondisruptive manner when not engaged in school activities or instruction, and subject to the rules that normally pertain in the applicable setting. Specifically, students in informal settings, such as cafeterias and hallways, may pray and discuss their religious views with each other, subject to the same rules of order as apply to other student activities and speech. Students may also speak to, and attempt to persuade, their peers about religious topics just as they do with regard to political topics. School officials, however, should intercede to stop student speech that constitutes harassment aimed at a student or a group of students.

Students may also participate in before or after school events with religious content, such as "see you at the flag pole" gatherings, on the same terms as they may participate in other noncurriculum activities on school premises. School officials may neither discourage nor encourage participation in such an event.

The right to engage in voluntary prayer or religious discussion free from discrimination does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, or to compel other students to participate. Teachers and school administrators should ensure that no student is in any way coerced to participate in religious activity.

**Graduation prayer and baccalaureates:** Under current Supreme Court decisions, school officials may not mandate or organize prayer at graduation, nor organize religious baccalaureate ceremonies. If a school generally opens its facilities to private groups, it must make its facilities available on the same terms to organizers of privately sponsored religious baccalaureate services. A school may not extend preferential treatment to baccalaureate ceremonies and may in some instances be obliged to disclaim official endorsement of such ceremonies.

**Official neutrality regarding religious activity:** Teachers and school administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state and are prohibited by the establishment clause from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students. Teachers and administrators also are prohibited from discouraging activity because of its religious content, and from soliciting or encouraging antireligious activity.

**Teaching about religion:** Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion,



including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observance by students.

**Student assignments:** Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free of discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.

**Religious literature:** Students have a right to distribute religious literature to their schoolmates on the same terms as they are permitted to distribute other literature that is unrelated to school curriculum or activities. Schools may impose the same reasonable time, place, and manner or other constitutional restrictions on distribution of religious literature as they do on nonschool literature generally, but they may not single out religious literature for special regulation.

**Religious excusals:** Subject to applicable State laws, schools enjoy substantial discretion to excuse individual students from lessons that are objectionable to the student or the students' parents on religious or other conscientious grounds. School officials may neither encourage nor discourage students from availing themselves of an excusal option. Under

the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, if it is proved that particular lessons substantially burden a student's free exercise of religion and if the school cannot prove a compelling interest in requiring attendance, the school would be legally required to excuse the student.

**Released time:** Subject to applicable State laws, schools have the discretion to dismiss students to off-premises religious instruction, provided that schools do not encourage or discourage participation or penalize those who do not attend. Schools may not allow religious instruction by outsiders on school premises during the school day.

**Teaching values:** Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are held also by religions does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.

**Student garb:** Students may display religious messages on items of clothing to the same extent that they are permitted to display other comparable messages. Religious messages may not be singled out for suppression, but rather are subject to the same rules as generally apply to comparable messages. When wearing particular attire, such as yarmulkes and head scarves, during the school day is part of students' religious practice, under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act schools generally may not prohibit the wearing of such items.

## THE EQUAL ACCESS ACT

The Equal Access Act is designed to ensure that, consistent with the First Amendment, student religious activities are accorded the same access to public school

facilities as are the student secular activities. Based on decisions of the Federal courts, as well as its interpretations of the Act, the Department of Justice has advised that the Act should be interpreted as providing, among other things, that:

**General provisions:** Student religious groups at public secondary schools have the same right of access to school facilities as is enjoyed by other comparable student groups. Under the Equal Access Act, a school receiving Federal funds that allows one or more student non-curriculum-related clubs to meet on its premises during noninstructional time may not refuse access to student religious groups.

**Prayer services and worship exercises covered:** A meeting, as defined and protected by the Equal Access Act, may include a prayer service, Bible reading, or other worship exercise.

**Equal access to means of publicizing meetings:** A school receiving Federal funds must allow student groups meeting under the Act to use the school media – including the public address system, the school newspaper, and the school bulletin board – to announce their meetings on the same terms as other noncurriculum-related student groups are allowed to use the school media. Any policy concerning the use of school media must be applied to all noncurriculum-related student groups in a nondiscriminatory manner. Schools, however, may inform students that certain groups are not school sponsored.

**Lunch-time and recess covered:** A school creates a limited open forum under the Equal Access Act, triggering equal access rights for religious groups, when it allows students to meet during their lunch periods or other noninstructional time during the school day, as well as when it allows students to meet before and after the school day.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION [to be pasted in all biology textbooks]

This textbook discusses evolution, a controversial theory some scientists present as a scientific explanation for the origin of living things, such as plants, animals and humans.

No one was present when life first appeared on earth. Therefore, any statement about life's origins should be considered as theory, not fact.

The word "evolution" may refer to many types of change. Evolution describes changes that occur within a species. (White moths, for example, may "evolve" into gray moths.) This process is microevolution, which can be observed and described as fact. Evolution may also refer to the change of one living thing to another, such as reptiles into birds. This process, called macroevolution, has never been observed and should be considered a theory. Evolution also refers to the unproven belief that random, undirected forces produced a world of living things.

There are many unanswered questions about the origin of life which are not mentioned in your textbooks, including:

- Why did the major groups of animals suddenly appear in the fossil record (known as the Cambrian Explosion)?
- Why have no new major groups of living things appeared in the fossil record in a long time?
- Why do major groups of plants and animals have no transitional forms in the fossil record?
- How did you and all living things come to possess such a complete and complex set of "instructions" for building a living body?

Study hard and keep an open mind. Someday you may contribute to the theories of how living things appeared on earth.