

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 144

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

JANUARY 1998

Separation of School and State Alliance Holds Conference

ARLINGTON, VA—The Separation of School and State Alliance, headed by founder Marshall Fritz, held its third major conference in November entitled, "Is Public Schooling Beyond Repair?" The conference featured a wide variety of conservative speakers, including John Taylor Gatto, 1991 New York State Teacher of the Year and author of *Dumbing Us Down* and *The Exhausted School*; Sam Blumenfeld, author of *The Whole Language/OBE Fraud*; Steve Kossor, school psychologist and editor of *The Kossor Education Newsletter*; Dean Clancy, Education Policy Analyst for House Majority Leader Dick Armey; Joseph Sobran, syndicated newspaper columnist, plus many others. The well-attended, two-day forum covered topics supporting the Separation Alliance's basic premise—that in

order for real education reform to take place, the state must be removed from education altogether.

In promoting the conference, Fritz posed the rhetorical question, "Are you tired of shoveling goose feathers against the tide of ed-nonsense? . . . Join me in the only organization that works for the real solution—to get government completely out of education."



The Fresno, CA-based organization began as Fritz's concept in 1994, and has grown into a "full-fledged, non-profit, grassroots organization." The group has attracted supporters nationwide in its goal to build consensus for "the original public education system, privately operated, open to the public."

Before the state took over the job of

educating its citizens, effective schooling had already been in place for over 200 years. Literacy rates were higher before the start of public schools in the 1840s than they are today.

Well-intended reforms have not improved the situation; many have actually made matters worse. No reform, says Fritz, will fix the system because it is inherently flawed. As with state-established churches, state-backed slavery, and state-run farms, "there is no way to 'reform'

See Separation, page 4

Values Appraisal Called 'Alarming' and 'Dangerous'

A 100-question values appraisal is making the rounds at schools in at least five states, including Oregon, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, North Carolina and California, causing alarm among students, parents, and some educators. This questionnaire is being used at various grade levels and in classes as diverse as technology, home economics, and social studies.

Though the design and appearance of the questionnaires vary, the information they seek is consistent. The 100 statements probe children about their religious beliefs, relationships with parents, feelings about money, and attitudes toward health care, careers and other topics. Students are required to rank each of the statements as "Definitely True, Mostly True, Undecided, Mostly False, or Decidedly False."

The questionnaires include the following statements:

"I will regularly take my children to church services."

"I have taught a Sunday school class or otherwise taken an active part in my church."

"I have a close relationship with either my mother or my father."

"I believe in a God who answers prayers."

"I like to spend holidays with my family."

"I have a regular physical checkup by my doctor every year."

"I have a yearly dental checkup."

"When I am ill, I see or call a doctor."

"I believe that tithing (giving 1/10 of one's earnings to the church) is one's duty to God."

"I pray to God about my problems."

"It is important that grace be said before meals."

"I care what my parents think about what I do."

"I read the Bible or other religious writings regularly."

"I love my parents."

"I believe God created man in his own image."

The answers are scored and recorded under 10 categories: money, religion, fame, spirituality, humanism, family, health, aesthetics, creativity, and sociability. In at least some of the cases, the survey results become part of the students' portfolios.

Pamela Hobbs-Hoffecker, an expert on Outcome Based Education (OBE) and co-author of *Outcome Based Education, The State's Assault on Our Children's Values*, sees a danger in questionnaires of this type beyond the obvious invasion of students' privacy. "This survey is alarming," she says, "because in the 1995 school psychologists' *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, the category, 'religious disorder,' was added." She reports that when she was a guest on a program in California, a school psychologist called in to agree that the questionnaire is dangerous because of the new category.

In Cottage Grove, OR, parents were outraged when they found out that the questionnaire was being used at their high school, and took their concerns to the local board of education. None of the

board members was aware of the survey. After discussions with school administrators, the survey was pulled. Cottage Grove High School is one of several in Oregon that is piloting Outcome-Based Education, and parents are now questioning the state's educational reforms.

A mother in Sacramento, CA, opted her son out of participating in the survey after he refused to take it in his 9th grade technology class. The boy read the first few questions and realized it "was not right to take this test." He was eventually given an alternative assignment.

Later, in a written response to an inquiry from the Pacific Justice Institute, the school district's general counsel tied the survey to School-to-Work standards that the district had adopted.

Though the letter stated that the survey was intended "to provide students with the opportunity to learn self-awareness skills in order to make career choices," it added that the school district would use a written notice and release form allowing parents to opt their children out of the assignment.

Clinton Urges School Diversity Training

WASHINGTON, DC—All those who thought that the Federal Government was barred from deciding curriculum for the public schools should hear what Bill Clinton is saying. On Nov. 10, the Clinton Administration endorsed grade school "diversity" training to encourage students to be tolerant of minorities, homosexuals and the disabled, and announced that *the Federal Government will be specifying the materials to be used.*

"Children have to be taught hate," Clinton said at a White House conference on hate crimes. "We want to teach them a different way." Continuing, Clinton said: "The Education and the Justice Departments will distribute to every school district in the country a hate crimes resource guide. The guide will direct educators to the materials they can use to

teach tolerance and mutual respect. And also the Justice Department is launching a web site where younger students can learn about prejudice and the harm it causes."

Several top Cabinet officers then endorsed plans for colleges and schools from kindergarten through 12th grade to implement diversity programs in order to provide tolerance education. "Find out what your schools are doing in diversity programs," Atty. Gen. Janet Reno said.

"Diversity" has become a code word for implementing the homosexual agenda in the schools. The National Education Association (NEA) passes a resolution every year endorsing "diversity" education, and the text of the resolution makes clear that it means "acceptance" of differences in sexual orientation.

Fact or Opinion?

In addition to exploring students' religious beliefs, family relationships, and personal attitudes, surveys can be used to change students' world view.

The following statements are from a survey that has appeared in the elementary grades in Pennsylvania's Ligonier School District.

Students must decide whether each of ten statements is a fact or opinion. A note to teachers at the top of the survey suggests that "The statements on this page can be used as discussion questions to encourage critical thinking on the part of your students."

Ed. Note: The answers the school district considers to be correct are in parentheses.

1. No animal should ever be killed. (Opinion)
2. Poaching is illegal. (Fact)
3. A zoo is the best place for endangered animals. (Opinion)
4. Trees are sometimes cut down to build houses. (Fact)
5. The snow leopard is an endangered animal. (Fact)
6. It is more important to save elephants than pythons. (Opinion)
7. It is okay to kill an animal if you are going to eat it. (Opinion)
8. Water and air pollution have caused some animals to become endangered. (Fact)
9. People are more important than animals. (Opinion)
10. One reason Giant Pandas are endangered is their limited diet. (Fact)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

In the first major purchase of its kind, the State of Virginia has ordered 200,000 graphing calculators to be distributed to public school students in algebra and other upper level math classes. The \$20 million purchase was made through a fund approved by state legislators to help students meet Virginia's new curriculum standards. Graphing calculators, which perform some of the same functions as computers, have become popular in Washington, DC area schools. The Virginia purchase will provide enough calculators for every 9th and 10th grader in the state, as well as about 40% of 8th graders.

A new trend has public school students doing what private and parochial students have always done—wear uniforms. In cities like Miami, Chicago, Cleveland and Boston, more public school students are donning uniforms than jeans. Smaller towns like Greenville, MS, are also getting into the act. School officials have cited popular support for any measure that seems to promote law and order, and the desire for all children to be "equal," as reasons for the trend.

While Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) has yet to be scientifically proven to exist, prescriptions for Ritalin, the treatment of choice, increased 400% between 1990 and 1996. Studies have not shown any lasting benefits to children taking Ritalin. Side effects, such as "toxic psychosis," can produce hallucinations if the dosage of Ritalin is too high, or if parents fail to give children their prescribed "drug holidays" (days off of the drug). Many doctors are concerned that giving children Ritalin rather than discipline sends them the message that they are not responsible for their own conduct, that they are driven by "uncontrollable impulses," for which there are drugs.

The fine art of penmanship, or cursive handwriting, is becoming a lost art. Changes in educational theory and the use of computers are cited as reasons for the shift. Most teachers now say they are more concerned with content than writing ability.

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314)721-1213. Editor: Sue Kunstmann. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

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Clinton Announces 'National,' Not 'Federal,' Pilot Tests

But Will Federal Tests Arrive Through the Back Door?

WASHINGTON, DC—Despite the defeat of his national testing plan (See December 1997 *Education Reporter*), President Clinton has announced that elementary and math pilot tests for elementary school students will be developed by next fall.

The 25-member National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which includes governors and legislators of both parties, business leaders, parents and teachers, has presented Clinton with its plan for developing the tests. The NAGB makes policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the organization that tests students nationwide on various subjects.

The Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill that passed the 105th Congress denies funding for national tests throughout Fiscal Year 1998. This includes money to "field test, pilot test, implement, administer, or distribute in any way, any national tests." The NAGB is allowed by the law only to continue developing test questions, which must be evaluated by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The NAS is required to conduct a total of three studies on the testing issue, and submit written reports to Congress and the White House on its findings.

Clinton said the NAGB pilot tests represent a "landmark step toward putting

high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out." He announced the appointment of Diane Ravitch to the NAGB. Ravitch previously served on the Department of Education's (E.D.) National Testing Panel, and resigned when E.D. bureaucrats began dumbing down NAEP and Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests, in preparation for Clinton's national testing plan. Clinton hopes that Ravitch's

appointment to the NAGB will add credibility to his assertion that the new tests will be "a yardstick, not a harness," and "national" exams, not "federal."

Will the federal government sneak in through the back door to control the tests? In the closing hours of the 105th Congress, a bill (H.R. 2977) amending the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) passed both Houses. Enacted in 1972 to

require government advisory panels to be open to public scrutiny, FACA is the law that exposed the personnel and actions of Hillary Clinton's secret Health Care Task Force.

The new amendment exempts the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Public Administration from FACA's public disclosure requirements. It gives NAS the latitude to determine for itself which committee meetings it will hold open to the public, and uses language that shields officials, agents and employees of NAS from public disclosure of meetings or materials. This undoubtedly includes any meetings or materials on the subject of national testing.



U.S. Students Stumped by Science

WASHINGTON, DC—The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science test scores are in, and they show a proven lack of knowledge among American students in the earth, physical and life sciences. Students in grades 4, 8 and 12 were tested according to performance standards adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board.

Only 18% of 12th graders performed at the proficient level, while 26% of 4th and 8th grade students performed at that level. At the basic level, 38% of 4th graders, 32% of 8th graders, and 36% of 12th graders achieved a passing score.

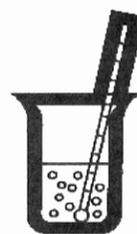
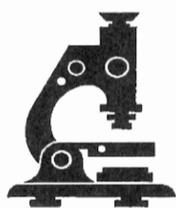
Only 3% of students at all three grade levels tested at the advanced level, while 43% of 12th graders—children who are about to enter college—did not reach even the basic level of achievement. Fully one-third of 4th graders tested below basic,

while 39% of 8th graders did so. (The basic level of performance indicates a partial mastery of subject prerequisites and skills.)

The scores reflected lower achievement levels for blacks and Hispanics, and for students in Title I programs and free or reduced school lunch programs.

Higher levels of parental education were associated with higher test scores at all three grade levels. At the 4th grade level, boys did better than girls in attaining the proficient level, with the differences disappearing at the 8th grade level, and reappearing at all achievement levels for 12th graders.

Students attending private and parochial schools performed better at all grade levels than their public school counterparts, with the differences more pronounced at the 4th grade level.



Book of the Month



Do Private Schools Serve Difficult-to-Educate Students? Janet R. Beales and Thomas F. Bertonneau, October 1997, Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 70 pps. \$5.00, paper.

This booklet is an in-depth research report on the institutions, programs and resources that are available to educate at-risk, disabled, and incarcerated youth.

Public school districts often rely on private sector providers

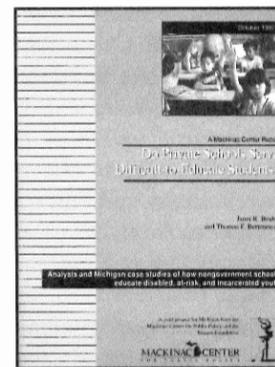
when they are unable to serve special-needs students. They refer these students to private schools that educate them under contract with government agencies.

Who are these special-needs children? They are the abused, the homeless, the disabled, the substance abusers. Often, they require teaching that also involves behavior modification, independent living skills, or skills to help them deal with a particular disability.

The providers featured in *Private Schools* are divided into three categories: nonpublic schools (which serve children at public expense), private-tuition schools (at parent expense), and homeschools. Boys Town USA is an example of a private institution serving children in the catchall category of "at risk." Nonpublic schools serving children in that category are available in at least 17 states, with at least seven states having formal, legislated programs enabling public schools to contract with non-public schools.

The report includes a number of case studies that provide a close-up look at the institutions and programs that are available. For example, at Father Flanagan's Boys Town in Nebraska, 83% of all residents graduate from high school or earn a GED, which compares to the 55% graduation rate for children placed in foster care. This success is even more impressive when one considers that Boys Town children had been abused, neglected, and abandoned.

Do Private Schools Serve Difficult-to-Educate Students? is an informative guide for parents, educators, social workers, and anyone dealing with special-needs children. Call (517) 631-0900, or send \$5.00 to Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 140 W. Main St., P.O. Box 568, Midland, MI 48640 (refer to #S9703). Fax (517) 631-0964, web site <http://www.mackinac.org>, e-mail mcpp@mackinac.org.



FOCUS: Why Alabama Rejected Goals 2000

*Text (slightly abridged) of speech presented at Goals 2000 Conference, Washington, DC, Feb. 12, 1997
By Dick Brewbaker (who was then Education Liaison for Alabama Governor Fob James).*

By Dick Brewbaker

Essentially, there was a three-part effort to sell Goals 2000 in the State of Alabama by its various supporters and by the U.S. Department of Education.

Their first argument was that "everybody else is already doing it." "If it's good enough for the 48 states that are involved in Goals 2000, then it's good enough for the U.S. Department of Education and it ought to be good enough for you."

Their second argument was, "Alabama is a poor state. There's \$14 million on the table and you ought to take it."

Third, and this is the line that was given to us most consistently by the

GOVERNOR
JAMES RECOGNIZED THAT GOALS 2000 WAS TERRIBLY UNPOPULAR IN OUR STATE.

United States Department of Education: "There are no strings attached to this money. This is not part of an intrusive federal agenda; just take the money. We just want to help you with your school reform."

If all this were true, then why did Governor James reject Goals 2000?

As the elected head of Alabama, he recognized that it was terribly unpopular in our state. Governor James, and the people who voted for him, did not like the agenda represented in the Goals 2000 Educate America Act of 1994. Both Houses of the Alabama Legislature passed resolutions calling for the repeal of Goals 2000. Not only is this act unpopular in Alabama, it's my view that it is unpopular nationally. So the first reason Governor James rejected it is that the people who elected him didn't want it.

Second, and probably the most compelling reason, was the way the document itself was written. Michael Cohen of the U.S. Department of Education came down to Alabama to pour oil on our troubled Goals 2000 waters. He met with the Governor's legal advisor and the Governor's chief financial officer. As a member of the Board of Education, I was at the meeting. He kept telling us that there are no mandates in the Act, but when you look at it, there are 63 places where the Act says that states who participate *will* do something, and 195 places where it says states *shall* do something. There are 33 requirements listed for participating states, and 13 things states *must* do if they participate. Whenever we would point these instances out to Assistant Secretary Cohen, he always told us the same thing: "Don't worry, we're not going to enforce those sections of the Act. You don't have to do it, just take the money." I thought the Governor's lawyer was going to have apoplexy when that sort of language was presented to him.

The problem is that in Alabama we have tried to ignore federal statutes before and it always lands us in exactly the same place—a federal courtroom with a federal judge telling us that we *will* comply with the law.

I have a letter from a special education advocacy group telling me, as Governor James' Education Liaison, that we are required by the Goals 2000 Act to set up parental assistance centers. I think I'm going to send this to Secretary Cohen and ask him if I have to do it. The point is, there are plain, clear mandates in the Act.

The mandate that most concerned the Governor was the creation of a National School Board with the authority to certify the state's contents standards, performance standards, and assessment standards. It's the same as saying you are going to have a national board to determine what you teach (your content standards), what you want students to be able to do (your performance standards), and how you assess them. What that means is, the federal government is now going to begin the process of controlling what is taught in the classroom. Governor James rejected this sort of intrusive federal agenda.

The Governor rejected Goals 2000 because of its potential impact on state funding. We were eligible for about \$14 to \$15 million under Goals 2000. If we were to begin to comply with all the mandates in the Act, the lowest projected cost figure that I saw was \$400 million. That's just in Alabama, in a small rural state.

The federal government has been eroding state control of education for a long time through the funding process. We get about 1/5 of the money to run our vocational technical programs from the federal government, and we have to run the entire program according to federal mandates. The same statistics would hold true, particularly in special education, because that is the fastest growing item in most local school system's budgets. About 1/5 of the money comes from Washington, but the whole dollar has got to be spent according to federal mandate.

That's a problem. Under Goals 2000, for 1/2 penny on the dollar, we would begin the process of vesting in the federal government control over content, performance and assessment standards. Governor James thinks that's a very bad idea.

Thirdly, we were wary of the impact on our state's school reform. Beware of the U.S. Department of Education bearing gifts. They said Goals 2000 money would help us with school reform. Well, we had already completed school reform in Alabama. The toughest high school graduation requirements in the United States are in Alabama. We have begun a process of comprehensive school reform that the people of Alabama support. Goals 2000 forces a specific kind of school reform which may or may not work in

individual states.

In Alabama, Goals 2000 was completely inappropriate for what the taxpayers wanted. It does not promote grassroots school reform. The Goals 2000 Educate America Act promotes a specific federal agenda which, in my view, and more importantly, in Governor James' view, is a bad one.



Dick Brewbaker

Federal Standards Are Bad, Too

Finally, there's a great deal of concern in our state over federal standards as opposed to federal goals. You've heard about the broad goals of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act, which do not really mean anything; the important part is the *federal standards*.

We have a problem in this country that Governor James calls "government by advocacy." Advocacy groups not only push an agenda, they create it. It usually doesn't result in good public policy. If there ever were a case where that's true, it's in the national standards promoted under the Goals 2000 Educate America Act. You've probably read about the U.S. History standards. They were so bad that the Senate denounced them by a vote of 99 to 1. Why? Because they had a lot more to do with "political correctness" than with historical truth.

If this is the best that we're going to be able to do, then national standards, as suggested in Clinton's State of the Union address and in the Goals 2000 Educate America Act, are a very bad idea.

If Congress wants to promote good school reform and high standards, Congress should return power to the states and encourage the states to return power to local school boards.

My last point is very important to

Governor James, and so obvious that I almost hesitate to mention it. It is this: people in government—and I've had the same thought myself since I started working for our Governor—see a problem, and then their impulse is to try to fix it. Because our motives are good and our plans are often well laid, we believe everything will work out all right. But that's not necessarily true, is it? That's why we're in the middle of a welfare reform debate, because people with good plans and motives tried to do a good thing and wound up hurting a lot of people. So now we have to do it over.

Children fundamentally and always belong to their parents. They *never* belong to the state. Nothing is more fundamental than how we educate our children. We need to have parents involved. President Clinton says he wants parental involvement. But if we take decision-making authority away from the local level and put it at the federal level, how are we going to get significant, meaningful involvement? We can't have it both ways. If government wants parents involved, then parents must be allowed to make an impact.

Millions of parents either homeschool their children or send them to private or parochial schools, because they know that their voices will be heard, their values respected, and their concerns addressed. They know that the traditional pursuit of academic knowledge will be the order of the day in homeschool classrooms, instead of a "politically correct" agenda mandated by the federal government.

It is an exceptionally bad step to move authority away from the local level, away from parents, and place it in Washington. We have to put the responsibility for educating our children where it belongs—on the parents and local communities that nurture them. This, more than any other reason, is why Governor James is unalterably opposed to the agenda contained in the Goals 2000 Educate America Act.



College Gets an F for X-Rated Conferences

NEW PALTZ, NY—The State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz created a storm of controversy when the Women's Studies Program sponsored back-to-back conferences called "Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom" and "Subject to Desire: Refiguring the Body." "Revolting Behavior" featured workshops on topics such as "How to Get What You Want in Bed," "Sex Toys for Women," and "Safe, Sane and Consensual S&M: An Alternate Way of Loving," plus "entertainment" that included simulated sex acts.

"Subject to Desire," held the following week, featured an adults-only display of "art" by X-rated "artist" Carolee Schneemann—36 close-up photographs of female genitalia. Ms. Schneemann also lectured at the conference, appearing in a red cape and horns and playing with hand puppets.

The conferences drew local opposition, which escalated with the appearance of an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* on Nov. 5, entitled *A Syllabus for Sickos*. The author, Roger Kimball, is managing editor of the *New Criterion*, a monthly arts and cultural magazine. Kimball attended "Revolting Behavior," and slammed the conference in his editorial, noting that it was "aptly named" and that, while it "posed as an academic event, it was in fact a celebration of perversity and sexual libertinage."

He quoted SUNY New Paltz President

Roger Bowen as saying that such conferences are "business as usual."

In the midst of the brouhaha, New York Governor George Pataki ordered an investigation, and is awaiting a report from SUNY Chancellor John Ryan before deciding his next step. "It's outrageous that the administration at SUNY New Paltz allowed the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars for the conference," Pataki said. In response to conference supporters' invocation of their First Amendment right to free speech, the Governor added, "This has nothing to do with freedom of speech and everything to do with the proper expenditure of tax dollars."

Several college council members and three state assemblymen have called on Bowen to resign for allowing the conferences to proceed. Council member George Morton criticized Bowen, saying that the council is required by law to supervise campus affairs. Bowen has refused to step down, insisting that "it is the right and responsibility of the academy to provide a free and open forum for people to express their views," and that the college council's role is "advisory, not supervisory."

Reaction from students and parents has been mixed. Some sources have stated that "the whole story is not being told in the press," and that "parents are calling in to local radio stations claiming that they are going to pull their children out of SUNY."



Separation (Continued from page 1)

state-run schooling."

Fritz gives three reasons why reform will not work. First, the wide diversity of Americans' beliefs and values often results in a "school war."

Second, public education reduces parental responsibility. Parents wishing to assert their rightful authority to determine their children's education must pay for it themselves and forgo using tax dollars. Public education has become an entitlement among American parents.

Third, government schools by nature employ socialism (government ownership and administration of the means of production of goods and services). Socialism is not subject to the preferences of consumers, so it produces low quality, high costs, and shortages or surpluses of goods and services. "Socialism," says Fritz, "cannot be improved. It must be replaced."

"Today's educators are not our opponents. When good people are in a bad system, the system wins," says Fritz. "Our opponent is an idea, held in the minds of the great majority, that state force is a necessary part of a good education."

"Separation" means "the elimination of local, state, national, and international governments from all aspects of education, including financing, determining curriculum, specifying outcomes, compeling

attendance, accrediting teachers, and accrediting and operating schools." Ultimate success will be measured by "the removal of all children from tax-funded schools and the refusal of families to accept government subsidies [including tax-funded vouchers] for their children's education."

Fritz says that separation will especially benefit poor children. He predicts that private scholarships will expand to \$20 billion per year to make sure that children in low-income families have access to better schools. Such charities already exist through organizations like the Washington, D.C.-based National Scholarship Center.

Separation supporters believe that declining values and increasing federal control over curriculum will motivate parents to flee tax-run schools. Advances in technology are increasingly lowering the cost of home and independent schooling, making the transition to separation easier and more affordable.

The "Separation Alliance" boasts a long list of supporters, a number of whom spoke at the conference in November. Many opinion leaders, clergy members, educators, political leaders, authors, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists agree with the Alliance's position. Members come from a wide range of political, eco-

'Censorship' Charges about 'Goosebumps' Intimidate Parents

MINNEAPOLIS, MN—Margaret Byron, mother of three, unknowingly stepped onto a battleground when she requested that books from R.L. Stine's "Goosebumps" fiction horror series be removed from Johnsville Elementary School library in the Anoka-Hennepin school district. There are 180 million "Goosebumps" books, aimed at children ages 8 through 12, in print.

Mrs. Byron said that her neighbor had forbidden her daughter to read the books, then discovered that she was reading them anyway in the school library. "So I started asking around," Byron said, "and I found a lot of parents who were alarmed that these books were scaring their kids." The books portray young children being "tormented and haunted by inanimate things coming to life." The characters typically keep their fears secret from their parents.

In April 1996, Byron submitted her concerns to the Anoka-Hennepin school district on a form provided her for that purpose. While the review process appeared to encourage parental input, Byron's action precipitated a torrent of accusations labeling her a "censor" and a "book burner."

"I went through the proper channels," Byron said. "I had a right to do this. But there's got to be a problem with a policy that asks you to participate and then condemns you if you do."

The controversy over "Goosebumps" is only one example of the ongoing battle over whether removing books constitutes "censorship" or a worthwhile effort to save children from wasting their time reading books that lack literary merit. Over the past 25 years, the Anoka-Hennepin district has censored eight books from library shelves for racial or cultural stereotyping. However, challenges to remove *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Catcher in the Rye* have failed, as did the "Goosebumps" challenge.

Defenders of the public school establishment have targeted individuals and groups that seek to limit the kind of information to which children should be exposed. People For the American Way used to publish an annual report attacking parents' so-called "efforts to impose ideological, political, or religious agendas on the nation's classrooms." The PAW reports were discontinued after an employee revealed that "the numbers that support this conclusion are 'cooked.'" (See *Education Reporter*, Nov. 1996.)

Brian K. Baker, writing for the New Jersey affiliate of the National Education Association (See *NJEA Review*, May 1997), blames the growing "Radical Right" network for increasing numbers

of challenges to library books, health and sex education curricula, counseling programs, environmental education, school drama, and student newspapers. Such individuals and organizations, said Baker, threaten to "disrupt the work of the public schools" and "ignite attacks on schoolbooks and programs that do not fit their sectarian ideology."

Baker defines censorship as "the removal or restriction of materials by a governmental entity (e.g., a school system) with the intent of suppressing ideas and information . . . due to, at least in part, ideological, religious, or other reasons not having to do with their educational suitability." The Supreme Court, he said, holds that the First Amendment requires that a book may not be removed from the schools merely because school officials or community members disagree with its ideas. School boards must base their decision to remove materials on educational criteria rather than on ideological, political, or religious grounds.

According to this definition, "Goosebumps" may well qualify as lacking educational value relative to other books available in the library. Librarians in the Anoka-Hennepin district described "Goosebumps" as "mediocre" and "pedestrian, formula fiction." Paradoxically, the school district insists that choosing which books to make available in the library is a "selection process," while a parent's opinion about which books belong on the shelves is called "censorship."

Baker warns that the buzzwords that reveal intentions to censor include "secular humanism," "new age," "globalism," "new world order," "invasion of privacy," and "values clarification." According to Baker, "Their use . . . is a sure sign of a sectarian, ideological challenge to the schools, not one sparked by a desire for educational excellence or community involvement." Baker assumes that the public schools do not have any ideological, political, or religious agenda.

Baker condemns what he called "the minority view" (i.e., the so-called "censors"), which "rejects teaching children critical thinking skills, self-reliance, and an appreciation for diversity. . . ."

Baker's view also holds that children "should be taught to respond to controversial ideas and different views with understanding and open talk, rather than with censorship and suppression."

Apparently, the criteria do not apply to parents, whom the schools often treat with hostility and name-calling rather than with "understanding and open talk."



nomie, theological, social, pedagogical, and ethnic backgrounds.

The Separation Alliance bills itself as strictly educational, and does not have any political or religious affiliations. Its newsletter, *The Education Liberator*, is published monthly. Literature, including "No

More 'Public School Reform': A Practical Plan for the Separation of School and State," may be obtained for \$10 by writing or calling The Separation of School and State Alliance, 4578 N. First #310, Fresno, CA 93726, 209/292-1776, web site - www.sepcon.org.

