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Promoting the 'Power of Abstinence' Beauty pageant contestants join Project Reality

GOLF, IL — The abstinence-centered education organization Project Reality has welcomed as spokewomen two successful competitors in the Miss Illinois beauty pageant. Both competed on platforms promoting sexual abstinence until marriage.



Erika Harold, the reigning Miss East Central Illinois 1999, was 4th runner-up at the 1999 Miss Illinois Scholarship Pageant and received the state's community service award for her work with her platform, "Teenage Sexual Abstinence: 'Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself.' " Miss Harold is an honor student and Chancellor's Scholar at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she is a pre-law student majoring in political science.

Maggie Johnson, who won the Miss Mississippi Crown for the Illinois region near the Mississippi River, is a recent graduate of Millikin University in Decatur and holds a degree in sociology. Her platform for the pageant was "You're Worth Waiting For: Promoting Self Esteem and Sexual Abstinence."

These young women will continue speaking out to youth on the importance of remaining a virgin until marriage. They will assist in planning Project Reality's next abstinence youth rally, called "Reality Check 2000," to be held at the University of Chicago Pavilion next spring. Project Reality's first "Reality Check" in 1998, featuring celebrity guest speakers, attracted 8,000 Chicago-area youth. (See *Education Reporter*, Jan. 1999.)

Miss Harold believes strongly in her message because "it empowers youth to

make beneficial life decisions. Our culture is doing youth a disservice in making them think that premarital sex is advantageous," she explains. "I like to give kids a positive message from someone who is practicing the abstinence lifestyle."

Maggie Johnson takes a similar approach. "A lot of teens have sex because they think it will give them self esteem or make them popular," she notes, "But the opposite is true. Abstaining from sex prior to entering a loving marriage gives a young person the freedom to experience true self esteem, while freeing him or her from sexual diseases, a pregnancy too early in life, or a broken heart."

Project Reality Director

Maggie Johnson

Kathleen Sullivan believes Erika and Maggie are the wave of the future. "Role models are emerging among young people at the start of the new millennium who may spark a new type of sexual revolution," she observes, "one that encourages respect, responsibility, and genuine romance. The fact that these lovely, confident young women not only know the importance of reserving the marital act until marriage, but were willing to make abstinence their platform in the Miss Illinois Pageant, is very refreshing."

A third pageant contestant, Tara Bollinger of Belleville, also chose abstinence as her platform for the competition.

Tara, Erika and Maggie all finished in the top 10 in Illinois. Nationally, 19 contestants for statewide beauty pageant titles competed on platforms promoting sexual abstinence.

Responses

Before P.R. Course	After P.R. Course
71% "Strongly Agree"	84% "Strongly Agree"
58% "Agree"	71% "Agree"
65% "Agree"	73% "Agree"

Project Reality Curriculum Evaluation Results

Earlier this year, Project Reality conducted before-and-after evaluations of its abstinence education course, surveying 10,495 7th to 9th graders in 141 schools throughout Illinois. Student responses to several of the survey questions were found to be statistically significant.

Survey Question

"The best way for me to keep from getting AIDS or some sexually transmitted disease is to wait until I am married before having sex."

"A teen who has had sex outside of marriage would be better off to stop having sex and wait until they are married."

"In our world today, movies, TV, videos, music and advertising influence our sexual behavior."

Riled Parents Rally to Victory California Governor vetoes school clinic bill

SACRAMENTO, CA — On October 6, California Governor Gray Davis (D) vetoed AB 1363, a controversial school health clinic bill that has raised the ire of thousands of parents in the state. More than 2,000 angry parents stormed the state capitol on September 27 in response to the legislature's passage of the bill, some traveling from as far away as San Diego. They came to protest and to demand a veto from the Governor.

"The veto is a definite victory for all those parents and grandparents who let Governor Davis know their feelings about this bill," says Karen Holgate, president of southern California-based Parents National Network (PNN). "Every one of them deserves our congratulations. Their voices were indeed heard!"

Mrs. Holgate cautions, however, that the issue is not yet dead. "This is a tremendous victory, and we have definitely slowed the momentum for clinic expansion, but we can't rule it out altogether," she explains. "It has become apparent that the bill's author, Assemblywoman Susan Davis, and the Governor have been talking, and that some 'behind the scenes' maneuvering has been going on."

She cited Ms. Davis' commentary in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* following the veto, which states: "It may be possible that Governor Davis will decide to

implement these [AB1363] guidelines administratively for access to Healthy Families insurance coverage." The Healthy Families program is available for children from birth through age 19 in families earning more than the allowable income to qualify for Medi-Cal (the low-income state insurance program).

In his veto letter, the Governor directed the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, which will decide whether or not to include school-based clinics in its programs, to report to him by Dec. 31, 1999 if the agency has any "programmatic or health plan contracting barriers" to including such clinics in the Healthy Families program.

If passed, AB 1363 would have significantly expanded the number and scope of California's school-based clinics to provide students with "comprehensive" primary care and mental health services, possibly without parental consent. Services would have included prescribing and dispensing drugs, mental health assessments, pelvic exams, diagnosis and treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases,

(See *Victory*, page 2)



Karen Holgate

'Killer' Assignment Upsets Parents

FRANKLIN, OH — A teacher of freshman and sophomore English at Franklin High School gave her students a writing assignment posing this question: "If you had to assassinate one famous person who is alive right now, who would it be and how would you do it?" The question was included in a writing "prompt" or list of topics for the students to write about in their daily journals.

The question provoked an outcry from parents, who wonder how such an issue could be raised in the wake of last year's tragedy at Columbine High School. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* (October 25) quoted one unhappy parent as saying: "You get them [the students] thinking about how to 'off' somebody. I hate to think that kids have to think about these kinds of things." Another parent said the question "was in poor taste considering what's happened [with school violence]."

Angry parents also point to the obvious double standard inherent in the assignment — while students at many schools are suspended for any suggestion of violent acts, a teacher can compel her students to think and write about murder.

Franklin officials said they informed

the teacher that her assassination question was "inappropriate," but that no further measures would be taken. At least one parent thought the school should have taken more action sooner. "I think the school just brushed it under the carpet," she told the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

The writing prompt also contained questions such as: "If you had to lose everyone you know in a tragic accident except one person, who would you save?" and, "If you could keep only one of your five senses, which would you save?" These questions are reminiscent of the classic "Lifeboat Game," in which children are told that of 10 people in a sinking lifeboat, only five can be saved. They are asked to decide which lives are worth saving and who should be thrown overboard. For 15 years, parents and education activists have blasted the "Lifeboat Game," and similar "situation ethics" exercises conducted in the public schools.

While officials at Franklin have indicated that the writing assignment wasn't mandatory, parents say their children were given a calendar with due dates for each of the questions listed on the writing prompt.



EDUCATION BRIEFS

A spacecraft orbiting Mars is lost due to a mathematical error. The \$125 million Mars Climate Orbiter apparently crashed on the far side of the planet due to human (in this case mathematical) error. Two teams of engineers plotted the craft's course, one using English measurements — the standard for spacecraft building — the other using the metric system. The probe was to have furnished the most detailed information ever about Mars' climate and atmospheric conditions. The mishap is under investigation.

Class size reduction is a failure. A major state-sponsored study in California shows that the \$4 billion the state has spent since 1996 to shrink class sizes from 30 to 20 students in grades K-3 has resulted in at best "marginal gains." Conducted by the Class Size Reduction Research Consortium, the study also found that the corresponding increase in teacher hiring resulted in "a disturbing overall decline in teacher qualifications."

Parents are suing a guidance counselor for his role in their daughter's abortion. The couple filed a federal lawsuit against the counselor and the Hatboro-Horsham School District in Pennsylvania for advising the girl to get an abortion without their knowledge and in violation of state law, which requires the consent of a parent or guardian for a minor to have an abortion. The counselor purportedly cashed checks from the student's boyfriend to pay for the procedure, and even drew the girl a map to a New Jersey abortion clinic.

Chicago-area parents protest the use of 'vulgar' novel in freshman English class. Spokesparent Douglas Carr says the Downers Grove South High School is in violation of its own handbook, which mandates disciplinary action against students or teachers who use profanity on school premises or on the school's computers. Carr says the novel, *Blue Star Rapture*, contains obscenities, references to suicide, and criticism of "the Religious Right." He noted that obscene materials forced on minors is "violative of the law."

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Victory (Continued from page 1)

prescribing and dispensing birth control, and treatment for substance abuse, weight control, and acne.

"You name it, the clinics would offer it," notes Mrs. Holgate. "The bill also allowed each health care provider, meaning clinic, to establish its own 'parental consent policy in accordance with state law.'" She stresses that the "parental consent" provision in the bill was misleading.

According to Sue Stokka, former school board member for 12 years, current California law allows students aged 12 and older to sign themselves up for mental health counseling and to apply for Medi-Cal to pay for the services. Once students are signed up, parents no longer have the right to review their medical records, which means parents are not given any information about the treatment their children are receiving or about any progress they are making.

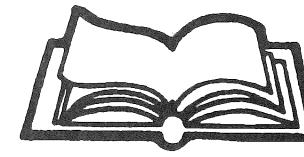
California kids can also sign themselves up for "confidential" medical services, and the only state requirement is that school districts must notify parents of the policy once each academic year. For example, included with the many forms students bring home at the start of the school year might be a statement that reads: "You have the right as a parent to be informed that school authorities may excuse your child from school for the purpose of obtaining confidential medical services without your consent."

Mrs. Holgate explains that the danger posed by AB 1363 was that it would have "drastically expanded the possibilities and opportunities for trampling on parents' rights," in that it would have superseded all existing laws. "The bill's language actually stated that *clinics*, not parents, would give permission to school nurses to perform various procedures."

In a press release dated Sept. 28, PNN quoted California pediatrician Dr. Jane Anderson as saying: "This bill allows children to consent to medical care and depends on children to provide accurate medical information to the school. Although the child's doctor may be informed or asked to supply information, there are many loopholes which would allow schools to treat children without obtaining past medical information."

Assemblywoman Davis insisted that her bill would provide health care for California's many uninsured children, and that it would not force them to use the clinics' services. Critics countered that the legislation would in fact encourage students to avail themselves of these services, and that the clinics would be "user friendly" and open throughout the school day to accommodate students. Adds Mrs. Holgate: "This bill would have allowed children to participate in unlimited medical and/or mental health services during classroom hours without mom or dad finding out."

Book of the Month



The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America, Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt, Conscience Press, 1999, 458 pps., \$29.95

Sam Blumenfeld's foreword to this monumental work succinctly sums up its substance: "[Charlotte Iserbyt has] put together the most formidable and practical compilation of documentation

describing the 'deliberate dumbing down' of American children by their education system."

While the sheer size of the book appears daunting — it resembles a telephone book — it was designed this

way and is quite user-friendly. Author Iserbyt makes it easy for readers to take pages out and copy them for use at hearings or for sharing with others, including the media. "These are verbatim quotes from the 'change agents' themselves," she says. "This book documents what the education establishment has really been doing to our children, not what they've proclaimed publicly that they are doing."

The documentation is presented chronologically, beginning with "the sowing of the seeds" of change in the late 17th and 18th centuries, and ending with what Iserbyt terms the "Noxious Nineties." The book also contains a list of resources, a 49-page glossary, and 176 pages of appendices.

For 25 years, Mrs. Iserbyt has collected information from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Department of Education, international and state agencies, educators, the media, parents, legislators, and fellow education researchers. She refers to many of her sources as "resisters" — those "talented and respected activists" who over the years have opposed and documented the "weird" activities and curricula of the "change agents."

Iserbyt traces "the deliberate dumbing down" to the redefining of the word "education" from its original meaning — the imparting of knowledge by drawing out a person's innate talents and abilities — to "the new, dehumanizing definition used by the experimental psychologists" found in "An Outline of Educational Psychology," by Rudolph Pintener, et al., 1934. It reads: "[L]earning is the result of modifiability in the paths of neural conduction. Explanations of even such forms of learning as abstraction and generalization demand of the neurones only growth, excitability, conductivity, and modifiability." Enter Pavlov, B.F. Skinner, and "operant conditioning."

Another concern voiced by many parents is that, in order for students to pass standardized tests designed to measure their knowledge of state content standards, teachers will have to teach to the tests. The May 26 *New York Times* noted that the state's new 4th-grade English test "was preceded by months of worry and feverish cramming," and that "schools virtually suspended their normal curriculums to brush up on [test] concepts."

Write 3D Research Co., 1062 Washington St., Bath, ME 04530, phone (207) 442-0543. Add \$6 for shipping.

FOCUS: Goals 2000's New Life — There They Go Again!

By Donna Hearne

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) called the "Students Results Act of 1999" (H.R. 2). A companion bill, the Straight A's Act (H.R. 2300/S.1266) has also passed the full House. These bad bills were made worse by amendments and additional mandates. For example, the final version of H.R. 2 includes a \$1.5 billion increase in Title I funding, and adds science to the disciplines that require state standards and assessments. It includes the Mink (D-HI) amendment, which restores funding for "gender equity" to the tune of \$5 million. H.R. 2300 has been watered down to a 10-state pilot program, and the final version includes additional government mandates.

H.R. 2 masquerades as an effort to return America to a nation of knowledgeable, independent thinkers, but it falls dangerously short of this goal. Although the phrase "Goals 2000, Educate America Act" has been removed under Section 1113, the essence of this unpopular 1994 legislation remains intact.

The first indication that H.R. 2 is the same old Goals 2000 appears in Title I, Section 1001(c)(5), which states that the purpose of "Federal education assistance is . . . to help ensure that all pupils, especially the disadvantaged, meet challenging standards for curriculum content and pupil performance." (emphasis added.)

"Challenging standards" are defined under Section 1111(b)(1)(A-D) as "content" and "performance standards" that are "the same" for "all schools and children in the state." These standards "shall include the same knowledge, skills and levels of performance expected of all children" (emphasis added), and are to "specify what children are expected to know and be able to do." The aligned state performance assessments will enable the state to label students "below basic, basic, proficient or advanced, [as the assessments] determine how well children are mastering the material in the state content standards."

What's wrong with standards and assessments? The answer is, plenty! Some state standards and performance assessment questions are **ideological**. The uproar that took place in Kansas when the locally-elected members of the state school board removed evolution from the state standards and aligned performance assessments is a good illustration. The resulting firestorm emphasized the little-known fact that most states have similar ideological standards and assessments that include controversial topics such as evolution, overpopulation, global warming, endangered species, and feminism.

What's wrong with standards and assessments? The answer is, plenty!

Goals 2000

A state-by-state review of education reform reveals the powerful influence of the three 1994 federal laws: Goals 2000, School-to-Work, and the ESEA reauthorization (then H.R. 6). As these laws worked their way through state education departments to the local level, schools moved away from knowledge-based academics that were objectively tested, and towards ideological curricula aligned with subjective assessments based on attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors.

During the following five years, controversy boiled around the terms "Goals 2000" and "Outcome Based Education." However, few Congressmen and Senators looked beyond the verbiage to discover that Goals 2000 sets up a system of state standards (or outcomes) based on attitudes and beliefs, not on academics, and that the resulting state assessments are subjective and often ideological. The teaching of knowledge-based, objective truths found in traditional mathematics, classical literature, original historic documents, etc., is becoming increasingly rare.

Performance Assessments

Children are no longer required to prove by objective examinations that they have acquired certain basic facts in the traditional disciplines of science, English, mathematics, and history. Instead, the key word is "performance" e.g., how a child behaves (performs) so as to reveal the substance of his worldview on an open-ended test. Students' answers are subjectively assessed by paid graders who are not necessarily teachers and whose pay is often determined by how many tests they grade per hour.

A majority of states are using identical "embedded test questions," which allows them to compare their students to those in other states, a subtle form of national testing. Local options do not exist. In fact, Section 1111(b)(4)(A) of H.R. 2 notes that all states must have "yearly student assessments" that shall "be aligned with the state's challenging content and student performance standards . . . [and that] the same assessments [are to be] used to measure the performance of all children." Additionally, the state is allowed to mandate local "curriculum content" per Section 1111(b)(3)(B). If local schools fail to meet the state's many demands, Section 1116(b)(9) legalizes the takeover of those schools by the state.

Federal Data Collection

H.R. 2 falls into the political trap of separating students into categories of race, gender, ethnicity, income, and disabilities [Section 1111(h)(2)(A)], based on the false assumption that members of these groups cannot make it on their own, but need the help of the "Government Nanny."

The government is collecting data on each student according to the parents' or guardian's income level. A fair question to ask is: How are they getting this information? By asking the students? By comparing data from state revenue depart-

ments or the IRS? Isolating low-income students means that the state must have information about the income level of every student's family. One must have the whole pie in order to carve out one piece.

The Straight A's Act

H.R. 2300 purports to give local communities control of education and academics. Section

2(2) reads ". . . give states and communities maximum freedom in determining how to boost academic achievement . . ." Yet the very next line, which reads "to hold states and communities accountable for boosting the academic

Government agents take our money for their projects and, under force of law, use it to force us to do something we may not want to do.

achievement of all students . . .," negates local control. Additionally, a reality check of state and federal assessments reveals that students are not being tested for academic achievement. The stumbling block to "freedom" is accountability, which is spelled out in Section 3(c)(5).

Everyone wants accountability, but to whom are students and schools ultimately accountable? The Straight A's Act implies that education can be locally controlled and at the same time must be accountable to the state or federal government. How can this be? The answer is, it can't. At the moment we hand over our hard-earned wages via taxes to the government, a shift in power and control occurs. Government agents take our money for their projects and, under force of law, use it to force us to do something we may not want to do.

For example, if mandatory state assessment tests written in collusion with federal agents demand answers to questions that assess a student's worldview and reveal how he acts and feels, the student becomes accountable to the federal agents for his feelings and actions, instead of to mom, dad, and teachers.

Straight A's requires that the state certify to federal agents under Section 3(c)(5)(A)(i) that local schools are using the "state content standards, state student performance standards, and aligned assessments" a 'la Goals 2000, or at least are using the "aligned assessments" to measure the "degree of change from one school year to the next . . ." In the same section, item (C)(i) requires that the state, not the local school, decide what is a "satisfactory" assessment, and that the state set "performance objectives for all students . . ." (emphasis added.)

Section 3(D) mandates that each state must have "developed and implemented a statewide system for holding its local educational agencies [schools] accountable for student performance." This eliminates local choice and mandates that

each school use and improve each year on the state/federal government's choice of assessment tests.

Federal Control

Because of funding, the federal mandate that every child master the "state content and student performance standards and assessments" becomes the primary focus of education. To demand mastery of ideological state standards is to demand "state speech." It is interesting that Section 1120(a)(2) of H.R. 2, as it refers to private and religious schools, requires that all state and federal materials and services be "neutral, secular and nonideological."

Although H.R. 2 exempts home schools and private and religious schools from state mandates, the use of uniform state tests and the move toward Certificates of Mastery and other state-authorized stamps of approval for entrance into college and the job market belie that exemption.

"Teach the Test?"

The 400-page bill (H.R. 2) gets worse. Section 1119 provides funding for teacher training to ensure that all students master state standards. In other words, funds will be provided to teach teachers how to teach the tests. Because local schools are dependent on state and federal dollars (our tax dollars), they must demonstrate improvement each year or risk having the state take over the school.

The following three scenarios are already occurring: (1) Teachers are forsaking intellectual, in-depth teaching in favor of test content. State education bureaucrats are instructing teachers across the U.S. how to raise student test scores. Teachers report that they are being told to forget everything else and, "Just teach the test!" (2) Some teachers are advising "intellectually challenged" (i.e. slower) students to stay home on test days. After all, if their pay is tied to an increase in test scores, they will be motivated to find ways to increase the scores. (3) Teachers are using the eraser to change answers. There are currently a number of cases where teachers have been caught doing this and are under indictment.

Add to this mix the fact that funds are tied to assessment test scores that are not objective, but are subjective, and you have the potential for gross injustice. Is it fair that the test scorer's opinion can make or break the future of a child, a teacher, or a school? Particularly onerous is the Straight A's mandate (6)(A)(v) that "all students in the state . . . make substantial gains in achievement." (emphasis added.) Who defines "substantial"?

Section 1118(b) of H.R. 2 provides funds to "assist" parents to "understand the state's content standards and state student performance standards . . . [and] state and local assessments." But parents are forbidden to see the tests their children are taking, and the U.S. Department of Education is still the ultimate education authority. It's the "same ol'- same ol' federal control. To paraphrase President Reagan's famous quote: "There they go again!"

(See *Goals 2000*, page 4)

Wizards, Witchcraft, Gloom & Doom

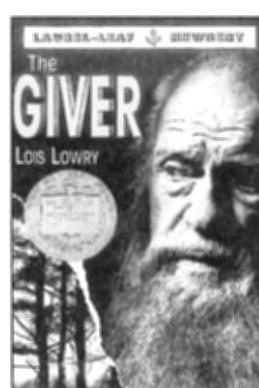
The world of children's fiction lacks heroes, morals

HOLT, MI — When grandmother Caroline Stiefel heard a teacher reading *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry, to 5th-grade students at her grandchildren's Christian school in western Michigan several years ago, she was horrified to discover that the book's main theme was death. Characters in the book are "released" (killed) if they are criminals, infants, the elderly, or if they request "release" (assisted suicide). Last spring, a friend urged Mrs. Stiefel to put her research on *The Giver* in writing, which she did.

The Giver's pages are filled with death — the death of a young soldier in battle, graphically described; death due to overpopulation, starvation, and war; death of an elephant; and death of those who don't fit in. One passage describes infanticide performed on a "less than adequate" baby: "He pushed the plunger very slowly, injecting the liquid into the scalp vein until

the syringe was empty. . . . As he continued to watch, the newchild [sic], no longer crying, moved his arms and legs in a jerking motion. Then he went limp. He [sic] head fell to the side, his eyes half open. Then he was still." (pp. 149-150)

One concerned father voiced his fears about the effect that passage and others in the book could have on his daughter, who has a limb deficiency. He told Focus on the Family: "There's no way I want my daughter, or any child who is struggling with self-confidence, to think that might happen to them."



The Giver's families are permitted only two children, one boy and one girl. Motherhood is disparaged. "There's very little honor in that Assignment," a mother tells her daughter (p. 21).

"This book immerses young readers in doom, gloom, distrust, anxiety and despair," explains Caroline Stiefel. "The story line doesn't make sense — there's no reason or rationale to it. The effect is emotional in a negative way, without taking any moral view."

She asks: "When considering books for children, isn't it wise to discern between those with some flawed details versus books with fundamentally flawed visions? Does adding a moral component to a basically amoral book automatically negate the potentially harmful effects of that book?"

Also controversial is the best-selling "Harry Potter" series of children's books, which focuses on sorcery and witchcraft. Some parents want these books removed from the classroom because they glorify the occult.

In South Carolina, parents are urging the state and local school boards to get rid of Harry Potter. In California, news accounts claimed that two California par-

ents transferred their son to another elementary school after learning that his teacher was reading one of the books in class. "We weren't trying to transfer him," the mother explained to *Education Reporter*. "Our son was ostracized by his teacher after we objected to the book. What it boils down to is that he was kicked out of the school."

The Sept. 20 issue of *Time Magazine* featured a story on Harry Potter, where author J.K. Rowling was quoted as saying that her four remaining books "will turn darker" than the first three. "There will be deaths," she predicted.

Also under fire is so-called "children's" book *We All Fall Down*, by Robert Cormier, which contains a graphic description of an attempted gang rape, and has been read or assigned to students as young as 11.

Parents wonder whether children need to be exposed to all this evil and darkness. "These books are used to get children to address ethical issues," observes Mrs. Stiefel, "to which they are already overexposed in our society. We risk desensitizing them and diluting the positive, godly messages many parents are striving to impart, thereby sending a mixed or contrary message."

"When horrific images are shockingly described by an author," she adds, "they will be firmly implanted in the minds of children."

Goals 2000

(Continued from page 3)

Summary

Our nation is, was, and will continue to be free only when our government is based on the following forgotten principle in our Declaration of Independence: Men are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights . . . That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The forgotten principle that government is accountable to the citizen, and that the citizen is accountable to God, not government, must be reintroduced. We should make our Congressmen and Senators aware that the Straight A's Act and the ESEA reauthorization not only violate this crucial premise of freedom, but also the wisdom of traditional education. Parents and classroom teachers, not government agents, are the best judges of whether Johnny is learning academics. Accountability must be to them.

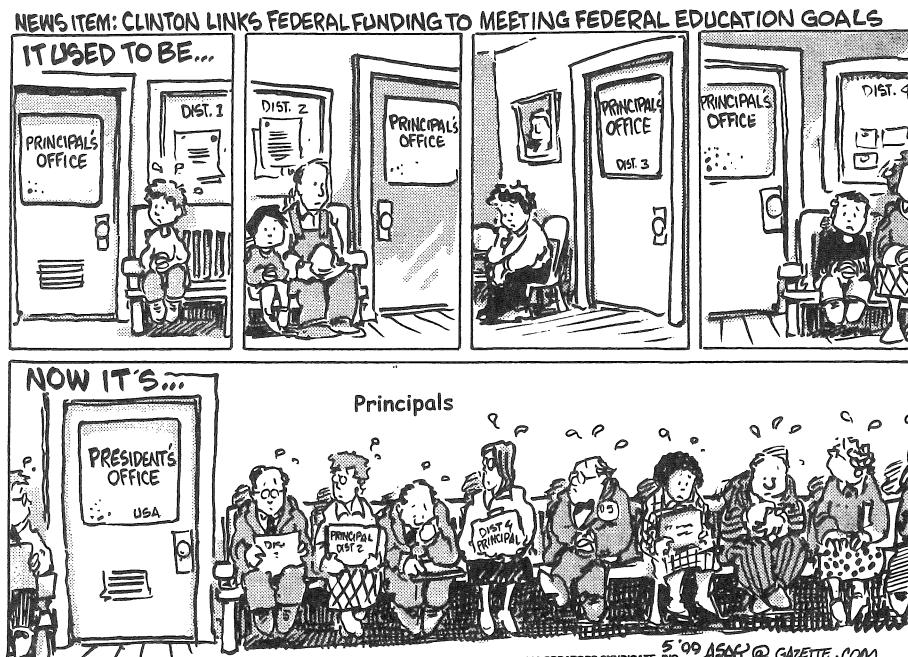
The House and Senate Education Committees would be true to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution if they would replace all sections of the Straight A's Act which say "account-

ability to state and federal agents" with "accountability to parents, guardians and the local school." The only requirement for receiving state and federal money should be a "full disclosure to parents and citizens by the local schools of the results of locally-selected, academic, objectively-measured, intellectual, knowledge-based achievement tests."

Why have we allowed government agents the power to demand that we be accountable to them, using our money as the enforcement stick? *Accountability of government to its citizens preserves freedom; accountability of citizens to government leads them into slavery.* The Straight A's Act is a perversion of the word "accountability." For our children's sake, we must define accountability the way the Declaration and Constitution do, and thereby preserve our freedom.

Donna Hearne is president of the Constitutional Coalition and a former official in the U.S. Department of Education.

Editor's note: Bill section numbers may have changed in the final versions, which were not posted as we went to press.



Testing Takes the Low Road

High school students undergo depression screenings

BOSTON, MA — On October 7, students at Holliston High School and about 10 other high schools across the country were subjected to a different type of test — an exam to find out if they are depressed. School administrators said the survey's purpose was to determine the prevalence of depression among the students.

The depression exam was developed by the National Mental Illness Screening Project, and has been given annually on "National Depression Screening Day" since 1991, mostly to college students. Holliston officials said they made the decision to administer the test last year when a state behavior survey showed that 25% of Holliston students had contemplated suicide and 12% claimed to have actually made an attempt. (*MetroWest Daily News* 10-7-99)

The test consists of 27 questions about personal habits, sleeping patterns, and feelings. Questions include: Do you feel hopeless? Do you have trouble concentrating? Do you contemplate suicide? Students must rate their responses on a scale of 0 to 2 and tally their own scores because survey results are anonymous. They are told that a score of 20 or higher could indicate a problem and are given a list of resources to contact for help.

Not everyone agrees with the premise that young people should be tested for depression in the public school classroom. One citizens group held a protest at Holliston on the day of the screening. They contend that the underlying purpose of such tests is to place more children on

anti-depressant drugs including Prozac, which they say "induce psychosis and make people violent."

Profiling

A related concern is student profiling, a violence-prevention technique that has been introduced at some U.S. high schools in the wake of the Columbine tragedy. Student profiling is similar to FBI criminal profiling — it uses a checklist of characteristics believed to be common among potentially violent students including abusive language, cruelty to animals, and fascination with weapons.

Critics say that profiling violates students' civil rights, and represents an over-reaction to recent school violence. A spokeswoman for the ACLU was quoted by ABC News Web as saying: "Not only are students being unfairly targeted, but in some cases there's not a whole lot of thought going into it."

Excerpts from the National School Safety Center's Checklist for Characteristics of Violent Youth — Source: ABCNEWS.com

- ◆ Has a background of serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community.
- ◆ Is on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends.
- ◆ Has witnessed or been a victim of abuse or neglect in the home.
- ◆ Consistently prefers TV shows, movies or music expressing violent themes and acts.
- ◆ Prefers reading materials dealing with violent themes, rituals and abuse.
- ◆ Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects.
- ◆ Has threatened or attempted suicide.