

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## Christians Win Suit Against Pagan Curriculum *But satanic card game remains part of school's instruction*

WHITE PLAINS, NY — A federal district judge ruled on May 21<sup>st</sup> in *Altman et al. v. Bedford Central School District, et al.*, that the School District violated the First Amendment rights of three Catholic families by requiring their children to create paper images of a Hindu god, make toothpick and yarn "worry dolls" to ward off anxiety, and take part in Earth Day worship services. The judge failed to find the card game "Magic: The Gathering," which the plaintiffs contend "initiates children into satanism using the perversion of actual Bible verses," in violation of the students' religious rights.

Judge Charles Brieant upheld four of 12 claims by the plaintiffs, and ordered the school district to 1) "prevent school sponsorship of worship of the Earth" and North American Indian animism or nature worship; 2) "remove the worry dolls from the school system" and "refrain from suggesting that [such] tangibles have supernatural powers"; 3) prohibit "any direction to a student to make a likeness or graven image of a god or religious symbol"; and 4) "direct the adoption of a pub-

lished policy containing clear instructions to teachers and others" for implementing the Supreme Court's standards on the separation of church and state.

The case originated in 1995 when several Catholic parents became aware that the Bedford Central School District was promoting what they felt was satanic worship in the form of the "Magic" card game. Attorney Mary Ann DiBari, who originally represented the plaintiffs but later joined them in the suit on behalf of her two grandchildren, says the game is "totally religious," steeped in satanic imagery, signs, and rituals such as human sacrifice and the casting of spells. "One of the cards depicts a woman about to be sacrificed, others allude to real satanists," Mrs. DiBari explains. "The object of the game is to accumulate 'mana,' which is 'power that comes from the earth.'"



"The cards represent a billion dollar industry," she adds, "and our children are paying the price with indoctrination into the occult."

The plaintiffs charged that the card game is part of a New Age curriculum in the school district which includes yoga lessons, cult worship, and religious activities. In learning about the elephant-headed Hindu god, Ganesha, for example, 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were required to make clay and construction paper cutouts of the god. Judge Brieant agreed in his ruling that this activity amounted to being forced to make "graven images" of religious gods, in violation of the students' religious beliefs.

The school district was also charged with engaging in what the judge called "truly bizarre" Earth Day celebrations, which he said "take on [many] of the attributes of the ceremonies of worship by organized religions, including that of the plaintiffs."

Mrs. DiBari describes a typical ceremony: "Students and senior citizens,

who have also become part of earth worship services, sit in concentric circles around a giant inflated globe placed atop a bamboo tripod. The elderly people form the inside circle, symbolizing that they are closer to the earth and will return to it to nourish it. Teachers and school officials read speeches.

"A chorus of tom-tom drums plays throughout the proceedings. The earth is deified and students are urged to 'do something to make Mother Earth smile.'"

Evidence submitted in the case included "Exhibit 62," an audiotape entitled "Listening to Nature," which "intersperses prayers and invocations sonorously uttered along with background sounds of forest and ocean." The plaintiffs objected to the fact that the tape, which they characterized as "nature worship and guided imagery," was played in the school district's science classes.

A book of the same name contains a creed stating: "This is what we believe.

(See *Christians*, page 2)

## Tragedy at Columbine: *The Curriculum Connection*

LITTLETON, CO — Countless words have been written about the possible causes of the Columbine High School massacre, but few have focused on the role that public school curricula, particularly Values Clarification and Death and Suicide Education, may have played in the tragedy. These curricula teach children that there are no moral absolutes while fostering a morbid fixation on death.

### Values Clarification

For the past 25 years, the prevailing dogma in public school teaching has been *Values Clarification* (as in the popular and influential 1972 book of the same name by Sidney Simon). This curriculum teaches students to reject "the old moral and ethical standards," and instead "make their own choices" and "build their own value system."

The Columbine shooters, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, did "build their own value system," which allowed them to kill 12 of their classmates and a teacher before taking their own lives. Harris and Klebold were not underprivileged — both were raised in affluent, two-parent homes. An article in the April 23 *New York Times* quoted professionals who evaluated them as saying: "Eric is a very bright young

man who is likely to succeed in life," and "[Dylan] is intelligent enough to make any dream a reality."

Values Clarification teaches that, since there are absolutely no absolutes, students should engage in personal "decision making" about behavior instead of looking to God, the Ten Commandments, parents, church, or other authority which teaches that behavior should conform to traditional morality.

Simon's book contains 79 classroom dilemmas for teachers to present to students. The most frequently used dilemma is the "lifeboat game" and its numerous variations. (*Education Reporter* exposed this "game" in November 1986 and June 1990.) Students are told there are ten people in a sinking lifeboat and four must be thrown overboard to drown so that the other six may live. Students are given the authority to decide which four of the ten people live or die. Any answer is acceptable — whatever each student feels comfortable with is okay.

The students can all choose different drowning targets because there are no right or wrong answers. One student's mother reported, however, that her child received an F for the following "wrong"

(See *Columbine*, page 4)



"*Magic: The Gathering*," is introduced to children as young as 8-9 years old, often as part of a math curriculum.



## NAEP Test Results Questioned

NEW YORK, NY — Two states that claimed significant improvement in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores on the 1998 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) tests would have scored much lower had more special education students been tested as had traditionally been the practice. *Education Week* (May 19) noted that, had Maryland and Kentucky not excluded large numbers of special ed students during the time period 1994 - 1998, their NAEP test gains "would not have been statistically significant." A third state that posted modest gains may also have been helped by excluding lower-performing students.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) reviewed the NAEP scores and released its analysis on May 14 in a document en-

titled "A Summary of Initial Analysis of 1998 State Reading Results." The Associated Press reported on the same day that the chief of the Education Department's statistical branch, Pascal D. Forgione Jr., said that neither the states' test scores nor their rankings would be affected by the discovery of the exclusions, but that "the federal study of the 1998 test results could lead test-givers to change some policies." A few days after he announced the ETS study findings, Forgione resigned his post as statistics commissioner, despite the fact that he was both "popular and respected" (*Education Week*, May 26).

In February, Forgione had "sided with members of the NAEP governing board who said Vice President Al Gore had

(See *NAEP*, page 2)

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**New U.S. Department of Education guidelines could make college exams illegal based on minority performance.** According to an article in the May 16 *Wall Street Journal* by Edward Blum and Marc Levin of the Campaign for a Color-Blind America Legal Defense and Education Foundation, educators "have been put on notice that if minority applicants are admitted to their universities in smaller numbers because their SAT scores are too low, colleges must get rid of the SAT or, at best, minimize the weight it carries." Blum and Levin reference the "irrefutable" fact that standardized tests "are a reliable predictor of academic success." They write that the Clinton Administration is seeking to "destroy American universities' admissions standards," and that the new guidelines will "put the nation's finest universities on an escalator heading down."

**Homeschooled student wins National Geography Bee.** David Beihl, a 13-year-old from South Carolina, is the first homeschooled student to win the championship round of the 11<sup>th</sup> annual national competition. David received a \$25,000 scholarship from the National Geography Society and a seven-day trip to Australia from Bank One, this year's corporate sponsor. The competition initially involved 5 million 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Nearly four million American children are now taking Ritalin,** according to the April/May issue of *Policy Review*. Ritalin has been used for years to treat Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), the catchall syndrome for children who fidget, squirm, have difficulty concentrating, interrupt others, and lose things. A new study from the University of California at Berkeley finds that children on Ritalin are at increased risk of abusing other drugs. Professor Nadine Lambert followed nearly 500 children for 26 years, and contends that Ritalin makes children's brains more susceptible to addictive drugs such as cocaine, which doubles the risk of abuse. Syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher writes that teachers are "the chief pushers of Ritalin," because children "become more focused and compliant" while taking the stimulant drug.

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## Christians (Continued from page 1)

The Mother of us all is the Earth. The Father is the Sun. The Grandfather is the Creator who bathed us with his mind and gave life to all things. The Brother is the beasts and trees. The Sister is that with wings. We are children of the earth and do it no harm in any way, nor do we offend the Sun by not greeting it at dawn. . . ."

Page 65 of the book advises children that "[W]hen you need to cut down a tree or remove a plant from your garden, reflect on this prayer: 'We know that we all are children of the same Mother Earth, of our Father Sun. But, we also know that one life must sometimes give way to another, so that the one great life of all may continue unbroken. So we ask your permission, we obtain your consent for this killing.'"

Another Earth Day activity involved marking tombstones with the names of extinct birds and animals.

During at least one Earth Day ceremony, a school official told the assembly that there were "too many people on the earth and we need to do something about it." The court agreed that this statement was directly against the teaching of the Book of Genesis and in violation of the students' religious beliefs.

Mrs. DiBari says that she and the other plaintiffs are "very pleased" with Judge Brieant's decision, despite their disappointment with his ruling on Magic: The Gathering,



ering, which the school district sponsors as math classes.

"The court established four things that we hoped it would," she explains. "In declaring 'Thou shalt not make graven images,' the judge actually quoted scripture. We are relieved that schools will not be allowed to promote superstition or compel children to worship religious gods, and that the court labeled these activities violations of the First Amendment. We also welcome the court's acknowledgment that earth worship compels students to practice a world religion."

Mrs. DiBari is convinced that these dangerous activities and curricula are "coming from the United Nations and filtering down through the U.S. Department of Education." She says her conviction is based on the "volumes of documentation" she has received from researchers of U.N. speeches and documents, as well as from researchers of Goals 2000 documents. "We see the concept of Gaia being promoted in their own words, both written and spoken," she asserts, "and they are promoting satanism through blasphemous activities such as 'Magic: the Gathering.'"

Though spokesmen for the Bedford Central School District downplayed the outcome of the case, the attorney representing the district told the Associated Press that "the judge went further than any court in the country in directing the behavior of an individual school district."

The district is expected to appeal the decision.

## NAEP (Continued from page 1)

jeopardized the credibility of the NAEP by announcing the 1998 reading-test results at a campaign-style event." Board policy calls for the scores from the federal testing program to be released by the statistics commissioner (*Education Week*, May 26). Interestingly, the White House had refused to support Forgione's renomination to the post based on his "failure to meet income-tax deadlines for eight consecutive years," though there were no actual violations of federal tax law.

Of the more than 30 states participating in the NAEP tests, at least 18 "left out more special education students from the 1998 testing sample than from the 1994 group." Kentucky excluded 10% of these students in 1998, compared to 4% in 1994. Connecticut removed 10%, compared to 6% in 1994, and Louisiana removed 13%, compared with 6% in 1994 (Associated Press, May 14).

On May 17, *USA Today* reported that the Department of Education is planning "more investigations into the accuracy of recent national reading test scores." The article noted that the number of excluded students "becomes key as more [students] are being put in special-education programs. From 1994 to 1998, the special-education populations in Louisiana and South Carolina increased 8.5% and 21%, respectively. A Kentucky education ac-

tivist quoted in *USA Today* commented: "We are writing children off instead of teaching them how to read."

A total of 10 states posted large gains in average NAEP reading test scores from 1994 - 1998. After adjustments for the excluded students, eight of those states still showed statistically significant increases. Only Kentucky's gains would have disappeared completely, which is of interest to many in the education field because Kentucky is the home of the educational testing reform system known as KIRIS (Kentucky Instructional Results Information System), which was touted as a first-of-its-kind reform model for other states in 1990. The KIRIS test proved to be so flawed that many parents, teachers, and some legislators demanded it be scrapped altogether. It was revamped last year instead, and is now known as the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, or CATS (See *Education Reporter*, June 1998).

As Chester Finn, former chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), summed up the NAEP testing scandal: "It's a serious concern if we're trying to report progress and states are fiddling with numbers of special-education students that take the test. You cannot make fair comparisons [in that manner] over time."

## Book of the Month



**Shifting Roles, Education & Psychology, Psychology & Education**, Ann Landell, Ph.D., 1998, Commonwealth Education Organization, 47 pps., \$8

Dr. Landell has written an informative, easy-to-read booklet that demonstrates the serious consequences of mixing psychology and academics in the classroom. She writes that the "shifting roles" of teacher and psychologist have evolved over the past 25 years, and have reached the point where "academic teaching has been all but ousted" in favor of "psychologized education that turns students into patients who can neither control themselves nor learn."

Dr. Landell compares the very different professions of psychology and education, and points out that only *some* children need therapy while *all* children need education. She shows how the practice of psychology in the classroom can be harmful, putting at risk "the very personhood of the child."

*Shifting Roles* examines the pitfalls of six aspects of psychologized education, including:

**Confidentiality** — While classroom therapy sessions deal with major life issues such as suicide, sexual activity, death, etc., teachers and counselors often tell children not to talk about these sessions outside of class, "creating a mind-set that serious issues are discussed with classmates and teachers, not with parents."

**Decision Making** — Models used in many classrooms offer children both the pros and cons of undesirable actions, *i.e.*, taking drugs, having sex, committing suicide. Dr. Landell explains how the pros are "far more powerful as motivators," because the class discussions give them "reality and validity."

**Higher Order Thinking** — Children are asked to make serious moral decisions without being taught abstract moral principles.

**Bibliotherapy** — Classroom psychologists routinely conduct therapy through books such as Elie Wiesel's *Night*, about Nazi concentration camps.

**Self-Esteem Education** — How it fails to teach children to manage "the give and take of everyday life."

**Dual Roles** — The ethics code of psychologists cautions against wearing two hats with patients because of the potential for harm to the patient or the therapy process.

*Shifting Roles* can be a powerful tool for parents, teachers, school board members, and education activists. Contact the Commonwealth Education Organization, 1330 Freeport Rd., Suite 1A, Pittsburgh, PA 15238 (412) 967-9691, fax (412) 967-9694.



# FOCUS: New Jersey Legislature Adopts Resolutions Against STW

The following resolution opposing School-to-Work passed the New Jersey Senate on May 10. An identical resolution (AR 146) is pending in the General Assembly, where it was introduced by Assemblymen E. Scott Garrett and Guy F. Talarico. AR 146 has more than half the Assembly members as cosponsors. This resolution represents a significant accomplishment by the grass roots (led by NJ Eagle Forum), who worked hard to educate citizens throughout the state.

Though New Jersey's plan to make on-the-job training mandatory for every high school junior and senior has been derailed, School-to-Work or "Workplace Readiness" retains strong support from Governor Christine Todd Whitman and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

In a related development, the state's largest teachers union, the NJEA, and two school districts have filed suit to force the NJDOE to ensure that public debate is allowed before any rules are imposed on public schools. STW policies have been implemented in New Jersey and other states without such debate.

According to many parents and education activists, "the battle lines have been drawn, with Governor Whitman and the NJDOE on one side, and just about everyone else in the state on the other side."

## SENATE RESOLUTION No. 73

State of New Jersey  
March 18, 1999

The Senate Education Committee reports favorably Senate Resolution Bill No. 73.

This resolution expresses the objection of the Senate to the school-to-work

provisions incorporated into the new chapter of administrative code being developed by the Department of Education to implement the core curriculum content standards and the statewide assessment system. The resolution also urges that school-to-work provisions be eliminated and that local boards of education be permitted to determine the necessity and nature of any career program for their own school districts. According to the department's timetable, the new chapter of administrative code is not scheduled to be formally proposed until August, 1999.

The school-to-work provisions being developed by the department represent a fundamental shift in the way the children of New Jersey will be educated. The school-to-work provisions emphasize career education and include three phases: career awareness in kindergarten through grade 4; career exploration in grades 5 through 8, with the development of individual career plans during this phase; and career preparation in grades 9 through 12, with students being required to identify a career major, from a list of 14 majors, prior to the start of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Eleventh and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students would be required to participate in a structured learning experience which could include volunteer activities, community service, paid or unpaid employment opportunities, school-based enterprises, or participation in an apprenticeship program. The structured learning experience would be linked to the student's career plan and would be required of every student for a minimum of one day per week or the equivalent thereof, resulting in a 20% loss of academic instructional time.

The school-to-work proposal would limit students' choices too early in their

lives and impose job specific skills training on the educational system at the expense of instructional time in academic subjects.

**Whereas**, The Department of Education is developing a new chapter of administrative code to implement the core curriculum content standards and the statewide assessment system which will fundamentally reform public education in New Jersey; and

**Whereas**, A number of the proposals incorporated in the code represent new graduation requirements for public school students and since the current requirements for graduation were initially established by the Legislature under chapter 7C of Title 18A of the New Jersey statutes, a revision of those standards of the magnitude incorporated within the proposed code and which represent a fundamental change in the educational requirements for secondary school students should undergo legislative review; and

**Whereas**, The new code provisions will not be formally proposed, according to the timetable set forth by the Department of Education, until August, 1999; and

**Whereas**, The new code provisions emphasize career education and include three phases in this area: career awareness in kindergarten through grade 4; career exploration in grades 5 through 8, with the development of individual career plans during this phase; and career preparation in grades 9 through 12, with students being required to identify a career major, from a list of fourteen majors, prior to the start of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade; and

**Whereas**, The new code provisions require that 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, for a minimum of one day per week or the equivalent thereof, participate in a

structured learning experience which is linked to the student's career plan and which could include volunteer activities, community service, paid or unpaid employment opportunities, school-based enterprises, or participation in an apprenticeship program; and

**Whereas**, The new code provisions will make school-to-work a requirement for all students in the state, and will result in the loss of 20% of academic instructional time, putting students at a competitive disadvantage in collegiate academic programs; and

**Whereas**, The school-to-work component of the new code provisions will result in limiting students' choices far too early in their lives and imposing job specific skills training on the educational system at the expense of instructional time in academic subjects; now, therefore,

**Be It Resolved** by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey that

1. This House objects to the school-to-work provisions incorporated into the new chapter of administrative code being developed by the Department of Education to implement the core curriculum content standards and the statewide assessment system. This House urges that school-to-work provisions be eliminated and that local boards of education be allowed to determine the necessity and nature of any career program for their own school districts.

2. The Clerk of the General Assembly shall transmit a duly authenticated copy of this resolution to the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education.

*Editor's Note: The New Jersey School Boards Association has also adopted a resolution opposing mandatory School-to-Work.*

## Pushing Universal Preschool: Officials Hop on Bandwagon

SACRAMENTO, CA — State superintendent of public instruction, Delaine Eastin, has called for "universal preschool" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 17). The article urged California legislators to support S.B. 277, sponsored by Sen. Deborah Ortiz (D-Sacramento), which calls for "a commission to develop a master plan for universal preschool."

Eastin admits that such an ambitious program would be costly, but insists that the return on investment would be high, because "studies show that children from low-income families who attended high-quality preschool programs as 4-year-olds had fewer criminal arrests and higher success at landing stable jobs than those who did not."

Sen. Ortiz's legislation is based on recommendations released by Eastin's Universal Preschool Task Force last year. The 53-member group purportedly studied the feasibility of universal preschool in California.

Eastin stresses that her preschool concept is "voluntary," and that "parents would decide whether or not to place their children in preschool." She adds how-

ever, that "universal preschool is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity for our children and our society."

Vice President Al Gore has also declared his intention that all American children should attend universal preschool. According to the CATO Institute, Gore's declaration "means that the public school system would be expanded downward to include all three- and four-year-olds in every family, in every community."

### Universal Preschool and HFA

While Georgia, New Jersey and New York already have state-funded universal preschool programs, some legislators and many parents worry that these initiatives will not only become mandatory, but will dovetail with Healthy Families America (HFA) programs that are being promoted nationwide by Prevent Child Abuse

America (PCAA). Currently operating in 40 states, HFA programs place "home visitors" into the homes of first-time parents (see *Education Reporter*, March 1999) to instruct them in parenting skills for the stated purpose of preventing child abuse. These programs target "at risk" families — those with single parents, low incomes, drug or alcohol abuse, or a host of other "risk factors" — but indicate an intention to include all families.

The Physician's Resource Council (the medical division of the Alabama Family Alliance) conducted an in-depth, year-long study of HFA, and has released a 70-page report on its findings entitled *The Parent Trainers: A Nationwide Study of Home Visitation Programs*. The report concludes that "the concept of universal home visitation for new parents is a costly, one-size-fits-all solution to the complex problem of child abuse — one shown to be a failure in scientific studies."



*Universal preschool could become mandatory for all American children.*

### Preschool Programs Offer No Benefit

With the documented failure of Head Start (see *Education Reporter*, May 1999), it is difficult to imagine that universal preschool will be of benefit to the nation's children. In its *Policy Analysis* entitled "Universal Preschool is No Golden Ticket," the CATO Institute notes: "For nearly 40 years, local, state, and federal governments and diverse private sources have funded early intervention programs for low-income children, and benefits to the children have been few and fleeting. There is also evidence that middle-class children gain little, if anything, from preschool."

### Tucker's 'Seamless Web'

HFA programs and the push for universal preschool raise the specter of Marc Tucker's "seamless web," which envisions drawing all Americans into the government system "from cradle to grave," which is "the same [system] for everyone." HFA and universal preschool appear to cover the "cradle" portion of Tucker's "vision." (Tucker's famous 18-page "Dear Hillary" letter is available at [www.eagleforum.org](http://www.eagleforum.org))

# Columbine

(Continued from page 1)

answer: "Jesus brought another boat and nobody had to drown."

As in the "lifeboat game," Harris and Klebold had already decided that it was their right to decide who would live and who would die that day at Columbine. The world view of Cassie Bernall, who looked into the barrel of a gun and said, "Yes, I believe in God," is not acceptable within the rubric of Values Clarification. She was killed by a fellow student who had built his own value system. Harris' Internet website included the statement: "My belief is that if I say something, it goes. I am the law, and if you don't like it, you die . . . Feel no remorse, no sense of shame" (*Washington Post*, April 29).

## Death Education

In 1987, Eagle Forum of Colorado produced a two-hour video in which student Tara Becker spoke at length about the relentless focus on death, dying and suicide in her junior class at Columbine High School. Recalls Colorado Eagle Forum state president Jayne Schindler: "Newspapers in Jefferson County, where Columbine is located, were lamenting the increase in teen suicides, reporting that 18 youths had killed themselves between January 1985 and June 1986 — that's 18 deaths in 18 months! Tara and several of her classmates also attempted suicide as a result of this depressing curriculum."

As death education classes in public schools increased and teenage suicides escalated, the ABC-TV program *20/20* obtained Colorado Eagle Forum's video and aired Tara Becker's story in 1990. Tara told reporter Tom Jarriel, "I had thought about [suicide] as a possible option for a lot of years, but I never would have gone through with it, never, because I wasn't brave enough. The things that we learned in the [death ed] class taught us how to be brave enough to face death." She added, "We talked about what we wanted to look like in our caskets."

The *20/20* segment showed morbid visuals of student visits to cemeteries, to embalming labs where they were encouraged to touch "still warm human remains," and to crematoriums where they were told about picking bones out of the ashes. ABC stated that one out of 10 schools teaches death education, that there is no approved curriculum, and that the teachers' training often consists only of a one-day workshop.

In 1988, the *Atlantic Monthly* published an investigative article entitled "Mortal Fears," which confirmed that death and dying courses are taught in "thousands of schools," often sneaked into health, social studies, literature or home economics courses without parents' knowledge. The article described how these courses require students to visit cemeteries and funeral homes, write their own epitaphs to be put on tombstones made out of construction paper, write obituaries, wills or suicide notes, decide how they would prefer to die, and plan their own funerals, body disposal and pallbearers.

In his Creative Writing class, Eric Harris wrote his will as one of his assignments, apparently indicating that death

education is still alive at Columbine. A classmate told the Associated Press on April 22 that Harris and Klebold's writings were filled with gore and profanity. They had also made a video for a Government and Economics class in which they portrayed themselves as hit men hired out to do violence to athletes. According to the *Washington Post* (April 29), it culminated with the two "bludgeoning the head of a dummy amid much fake blood."

While the teacher has refused to comment on the video, another student admitted that "everybody's video involved fighting," and that her own "contained sexual scenes."

## Schools' Changing Mission

Most parents are unaware that the mission of the public schools has dramatically changed in the last 20 years by downgrading basic academics and instead using teachers as pseudo-psychologists conducting group therapy. This change was best described by the late U.S. Senator (and former university president) Sam Hayakawa, who — in successfully persuading Congress to pass the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) in 1978 — said that the public schools have adopted "an educational heresy . . . that rejects the idea of education as the acquisition of knowledge and skills . . . and regards the fundamental task in education as therapy."

This "heresy" opened the floodgates to many psychological courses and surveys in sexuality, drugs, incest, death, suicide, stress, and self-esteem. Some of these courses incorporate guided imagery or New Age or occult practices.

Littleton, Colorado is an area where public schools for many years have adopted all the trendy "edufads" including Outcome Based Education (OBE), death education, and sex education. A high school in nearby Commerce City was one of the nation's first to dispense condoms, and was rewarded with a birth rate that climbed 31% above the national average in the early 1990s (see *Education Reporter*, June 1992).

In 1993, at the high school in the district adjacent to Columbine, parents rebelled against the dumbing-down process of OBE and elected a "back to basics" school board by a two-to-one margin (see *Education Reporter*, Nov. 1993). The teachers union struck back in the following election and re-established control. The union was supported by People for the American Way, and used the usual negative tactic of hanging the "religious right" label on all those opposed to OBE and favoring basic skills.

## Pushing Gun Control

Some politicians are using the Columbine tragedy to push their liberal political

agenda, which includes gun control. But as Professor J.D. Crouch of Southern Methodist University and a law enforcement officer in Missouri points out, "President Clinton's Justice Department prosecuted only six people in 1998 under the 'urgently needed' juvenile gun transfer provisions of the last crime bill," and "only four people under the 'desperately needed' ban on certain semi-automatic weapons."

Killers Harris and Klebold violated at least 17 federal and state gun control laws that, had they lived, would have incarcerated them for the rest of their lives. It is doubtful whether mandatory gun locks or

three-day waiting periods would have deterred them from their mission, since Harris' own journal reveals that he had been planning the attack for a year.

In the aftermath of these tragedies at American schools, many educators and pro-family activists are demanding that not only the role of obscene rock lyrics, violent movies and video games be investigated, but also the value system that is taught in public schools. We are paying a terrible price for allowing public school curricula to teach students to create "their own value system" instead of respecting moral laws such as "Thou shalt not kill." 



Colorado Eagle Forum President Jayne Schindler produced video on death education in 1987.

## Is There a Drug Connection?

The role of powerful legal drugs that are routinely prescribed for children to treat depression and "disease conditions" such as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) are also being questioned with regard to school violence.

Eric Harris was reportedly thrilled with Bill Clinton's decision to bomb Yugoslavia. A classmate who sat next to him remembers him saying, "I hope we do go to war. I'll be the first one there." The classmate recalls that Harris wanted to "shoot everyone."

Harris tried to enlist, but Marine recruiters turned him down when they discovered he had taken a powerful anti-depressant drug called Luvox (*Washington Post*, April 29). Luvox is in the same class of drugs as Prozac, which in the past has been linked with violent behavior in some patients.

The May 30 *Rocky Mountain News* reported that Salt Lake City bio-psychologist Ann Tracy believes Harris "was in a psychotic state caused by Luvox withdrawal" at the time of the Columbine massacre. The article states that there are indications Harris stopped taking Luvox after being turned down by the Marines. Though a number of psychologists and psychiatrists say there is no proven connection between anti-depressant drugs and violent behavior, Dr. Tracy maintains that withdrawal from Luvox could have sent Harris "into a dreamlike state."

Investigative reporter John Rappaport, in his position paper entitled "Why Did They Do It: An Inquiry into the School Shootings in America" (published by the Truth Seeker Foundation, San Diego, CA), quotes author and psychiatrist Dr. Peter Breggin as saying: "With Luvox there is some evidence of a four-percent rate for mania in adolescents. Mania, for

certain individuals, could be a component in grandiose plans to destroy large numbers of other people. Mania can go over the hill to psychosis." Dr. Breggin appeared on a Fox News TV program on June 5 describing these findings.

In her May 6 Internet column, journalist Arianna Huffington quoted Dr. Leon Eisenberg of the Harvard Medical School as calling the Prozac/Luvox family of antidepressants "potent medications that change nerve transmission." She observed that, "while there is saturation coverage about the dangers of guns and media violence, there is no debate about the dangers of antidepressants on our most vulnerable children's growing brains."

Huffington also reported that Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), who sits on the Government Oversight Committee, sent a letter to the FDA calling for "comprehensive clinical trials by the pharmaceutical companies" to establish "the behavioral effects of antidepressants on our youth."

The popular drug Ritalin, which is often prescribed for children diagnosed with ADD or ADHD, carries a number of negative side effects as well, according to physician Lawrence H. Diller in his 1998 book *Running on Ritalin: A Physician Reflects on Children, Society and Performance in a Pill*.

Three of the perpetrators in the recent rash of school shootings took legal prescription drugs: Kip Kinkel, 15, who killed his parents, two classmates and wounded 20 students in Springfield, OR, in May 1998, was on Ritalin, then Prozac; Thomas Solomon, 15, who wounded six students in Conyers, GA on May 20, 1999, was taking Ritalin; and Eric Harris had Luvox in his system when he joined Dylan Klebold in the massacre at Columbine on April 20 (*Time Magazine*, May 31). 

