

STW In Chains

New Illinois law prohibits mandatory requirements

SPRINGFIELD, IL — On July 16, Governor George Ryan signed into law SB 1133, a bill prohibiting the Illinois Board of Education from requiring a public school district or student to participate in a school-to-work (STW) or job training program.

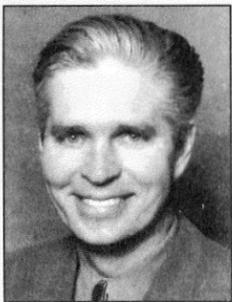
Introduced earlier this year by state Sen. Patrick O'Malley (R), the bill also prohibits a school board from requiring a student to meet occupational standards for grade level promotion or graduation unless that student is voluntarily enrolled in a job training program. (See Sidebar, page 2 for bill text.)

"Thanks to SB 1133, students will not be required to participate in STW programs in Illinois," Fran Eaton of Illinois Eagle Forum said in a statement. "We congratulate all those who worked so hard to make this bill a state law."

Karen Hayes of Concerned Women for America noted: "The Illinois General Assembly has called the education establishment's bluff regarding the 'voluntary' nature of school-to-work. There was virtually no opposition to the bill from the Illinois Board of Education or any other pro-STW group, because to oppose it would have been to acknowledge that STW is a new system of education that is eventually intended for all students. The bill sailed through the legislature with unanimous approval."

One concern that Mrs. Hayes and other education activists have is whether SB 1133 will be enforced. "Our fear is that it doesn't have enough enforcement teeth," she explains. "If it can be enforced, this law will give students and school districts a genuine choice of options, instead of forcing them into a system in which academics takes a back seat to job training."

Despite their caution, pro-family leaders are excited about the successful passage of the legislation and are hopeful that it will provide an example for other states grappling with "voluntary" STW mandates. "We want good laws like this to be enforced," Mrs. Hayes emphasizes, "so we recommend that, when state legislatures draft similar bills, they incorporate definite enforcement procedures."



Sen. Patrick O'Malley

Connecticut Mother Wins Battle With State Education Department

Five-year struggle brings victory for parents' rights

EAST HARTFORD, CT — Debra Gaudette has triumphed in her long battle with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) over the results of her daughter's Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). On June 1, 1999, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) agreed that the CSDE violated Mrs. Gaudette's parental rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in denying her access to the test information.

In its investigation, the USDE found that the CMT answer booklet, answer guide, and the criteria used to score the test do fall under the definition of "education record" as contained in the FERPA statute (which was amended in 1994), because the information is directly related to students. While the USDE determined that FERPA does not require the CSDE to "show Mrs. Gaudette its answer guide or any written scoring criteria," it must honor her request to review "those questions that her daughter answered incorrectly and explain to her how this was determined."

The test was administered during the fall of 1993 when Victoria Gaudette was in 6th grade at Norris School in the East Hartford School District. The results showed that she had scored "two points below gifted," which prompted her mother to wonder what questions she had missed and how the test was scored.

"The tests may be filled with leading, privacy-invading, and even ridiculous questions," Mrs. Gaudette says, "yet the results can determine a child's future.

Kids are placed in remedial classes, gifted classes, and otherwise evaluated based on these test scores, so I wanted to find out exactly what questions she'd missed."

Mrs. Gaudette says she "begged the school" to share her daughter's answers, along with an explanation of which ones were wrong and why. Her request was denied. The CSDE claimed that "the CMT is not an education record under FERPA, because the test itself does not contain information directly related to students and because it has been copy-righted."

In May of 1994, the CSDE sent Mrs. Gaudette the writing prompt for the writing portion of the test (which was approved for release anyway) and a copy of her daughter's responses to the prompt. She also received the resume of an associate commissioner, details of the budget components of the 1993-94 CMT, and an analysis of the statewide 6th grade test results. Undeterred by these tactics, she filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education under FERPA in December 1995. She finally received copies of the 1993 6th grade CMT and her

daughter's answer sheet in January 1996.

In reviewing the test documents, Mrs. Gaudette realized that she could not determine how her daughter's score was reached without the answer guide and the criteria used to grade the test. She wrote another letter to the CSDE in February 1996 requesting the relevant explanatory documents. Although FERPA requires that parental requests for education records be satisfactorily addressed within 45 days, the matter dragged on for five years until June 1999 when the USDE issued its findings. The CSDE was finally forced to share the test information Mrs. Gaudette had requested.

A former city councilwoman whose husband retired after 27 years as head custodian with the East Hartford School District, Debra Gaudette has been nominated for a seat on the East Hartford Board of Education. She is currently challenging a state exam given to her daughter in May of this year when the girl was in the 11th grade, and has received word that the USDE will consider her complaint.

"Some of us object to the state taking over our job as parents," she explains. The teachers are teaching to the tests, and parents have no idea what is in them. Yet we, as taxpayers, are paying the bill for all of this nonsense."

"I will continue to stand up for parental rights when it comes to the education of our children," she continues. "No one, not even the state of Connecticut, has the right to test our children in secret." ❁



Debra Gaudette

Darwin Facing Competition In Kansas

Board of Education eliminates evolution from science curriculum

TOPEKA, KS — In a landmark move, the Kansas state Board of Education voted on August 11 to remove the teaching of

evolution from the K-12 public school science curriculum. The 10-member board voted 6-4 to eliminate "macroevolution," i.e., the theory that human beings evolved from fish over millions of years, from the state's education standards. "Microevolution," or genetic changes within species (natural selection), will remain. While the teaching of mac-



roevolution will not be prevented, the subject will not appear in state assessment tests.

According to the Aug. 12 *New York Times*, "the Kansas decision is significant because the new curriculum not only deletes most references to biological evolution, it also deletes references to ideas like the big bang theory, which holds that the universe was born from a vast explosion." The new curriculum will also offer case studies that seriously question the concept of evolution.

Kansas is not the only state debating evolution. Alabama, Illinois and Nebraska have changed their standards to dilute the teaching of evolution without

eliminating it altogether. Alabama's biology textbooks are marked with a sticker that calls evolution "a controversial theory some scientists present as a scientific explanation for the origin of living things." It adds: "No one was present when life first appeared on earth. Therefore, any statement about life's origins should be considered as theory, not fact." Several other state boards of education have fought the evolution battle and lost, including Georgia, New Hampshire, Ohio, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia.

Most religious groups and other creationists object to the teaching of evolu-

(See Darwin, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

University of Chicago President resigns after failing to 'dumb down' curriculum. President Hugo Sonnenschein attempted to alter the university's strict undergraduate core curriculum standards in order to increase enrollment and market the school to a wider, less academically-inclined audience. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni coordinated a protest of Sonnenschein's efforts with friends and alumnae of the college, including Nobel Laureate Saul Bellow, and students and faculty members. The protestors pronounced Sonnenschein's resignation "a victory for the university's educational integrity."

Beauty pageant winners promote abstinence education. The new Miss Wisconsin, Mary Louise Kurey, stood on an abstinence education platform throughout the competition, despite warnings from pageant officials not to do so. At least 19 other beauty pageant contestants, including three young women competing for the title of Miss Illinois, promoted sexual abstinence as the best lifestyle choice for young people until marriage.

Colleges across the country are offering "porn studies" courses. Classes featuring pornographic movies are being offered at New York University, Northwestern, and Columbia, among others. Porn stars and promoters, including Larry Flynt, lecture on college campuses. Writing in the *American Family Association Journal*, July 1999, Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship Ministries says the reason for this development "lies with the postmodernist assumption that the purpose of art is to subvert social and moral norms." Colson suggests that "if we live in a universe without God, then nature is all there is, and morality is reduced to whatever culture constructs it to be."

Louisiana passes law requiring students to address teachers as "ma'am" or "sir." Students may also use the titles of Mr., Miss, Mrs., or Ms. No punishment is included in the law, and school districts may decide how to enforce it. Louisiana is the first state to pass a statute requiring respect and politeness in the public schools.

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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Illinois' Education-to-Careers

Background

Illinois' school-to-work program is known as "Education to Careers." It was authorized by former Governor Jim Edgar through an Executive Order in 1994, which bypassed the Illinois General Assembly.

After initial approval, legislative leaders became aware of the implications of the program and removed legislative authorization. Nevertheless, STW continues to be implemented through state bureaucracies, including the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Human Resource Investment (IHRI), which determines the future needs of the workforce and links educational opportunities with those needs. Businesses are encouraged to form "partnerships" with schools to accomplish the apprenticeship/mentoring part of students' training.

Hyde Endorses SB 1133

Last March, Illinois Congressman Henry Hyde sent the state's Senate Education Committee a letter supporting SB 1133. Hyde warned committee members that "The purpose of School-to-Work is to train schoolchildren to be entry level workers for the national and global business community, with minimum academic requirements. It is a top-down, planned program for the workers, funded and/or supported by the government. [STW] is administered by educators, the NEA, and business councils appointed by the governors of each state."

Text of SB 1133

91st GENERAL ASSEMBLY
State of Illinois
1999 and 2000
SB 1133

AN ACT to amend the School Code by adding Sections 2-3.126, 10-20.31, and 34-18.18.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:

Section 5. The School Code is amended by adding Sections 2-3.126, 10-20.31, 34-18.18 as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/2-3.126 new)

Sec. 2-3.126. Job training program; prohibition. The State Board of Education shall not require a school district or a student of any district to participate in any school-to-work or job training program.

(105 ILCS 5/10-20.31 new)

Sec. 10-20.31 Occupational standards. A school board shall not require a student to meet occupational standards for grade level promotion or graduation unless that student is voluntarily enrolled in a job training program.

(105 ILCS 5/34-18.18. new)

Sec. 34-18.18. Occupational standards. The Board shall not require a student to meet occupational standards for grade level promotion or graduation unless that student is voluntarily enrolled in a job training program.

Makes No Difference If Kids DARE

LEXINGTON, KY — Another new study has been released indicating that the ever popular anti-drug program DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) has little or no impact on drug use among young people. Last month, the University of Kentucky (UK) released the results of a 10-year follow-up study that shows DARE graduates are as likely to use drugs in high school as those who have not gone through the program.

Published in the August 1999 issue of *Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, the UK study followed 1,002 students who had either taken DARE instruction or "a standard drug education curriculum" in the 6th grade, and reevaluated them at age 20. Researchers noted few differences between the two groups in terms of actual drug use, attitudes toward drugs, or self esteem. "In no case did the DARE group have a more successful outcome than the comparison group," they wrote.

A 1998 study by the University of Illinois at Chicago showed a slight increase in drug and alcohol use among suburban students who had gone through DARE. (See *Education Reporter*, May 1998.) Sponsored by the Illinois State Police, the study tracked students in various economic groups for six years, and included urban, suburban and rural youth.

About 80% of elementary schools in the U.S. sponsor DARE, which is taught by local police officers who provide information that, in theory, should discourage students from trying drugs and help

bolster their resistance to peer pressure. Some schools include students as young as the first grade in the program.

An op-ed piece in the August 12 *Chicago Tribune* stated: "The [DARE] program, which includes lessons on self-esteem, assertiveness and stress management, uses everything from free T-shirts to 'graduation' certificates to a trendy web site in order to appeal to youngsters. If success were measured in the number of T-shirts given away or certificates handed out, DARE would indeed be successful. But it's not."

An editorial in the August 28, 1998 *Houston Chronicle* called upon that city's schools to "just say no to DARE." The editorial cited independent research by University of Houston social science professor, Bruce Gay, which showed that Houston's DARE program "actually increased negative feelings toward law enforcement," and was only "marginally successful" at its goal of reducing drug abuse.

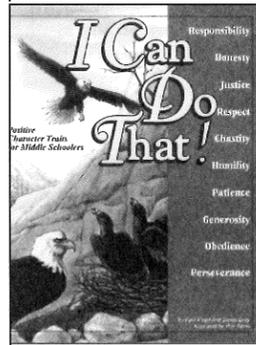
The *Chicago Tribune* opined that DARE remains popular because it's economical — most of the program's funding comes from local sources and federal grants — and because "it makes teachers and administrators feel they're doing something to address a very real problem." As long as this "high-profile pseudo-solution" is available, the editorial states, "there is little incentive to find out what might really work" to help keep kids off drugs.

Book of the Month



I Can Do That! Positive Character Traits for Middle Schoolers, Pam Reed and Daniel Gray, 1998, Project Reality, 107 pp., \$14.95

Free lance writer Pam Reed and Chicago public school teacher Daniel Gray have teamed up to develop a character education curriculum that intro-



duces concepts and behaviors which have traditionally been considered virtues in our society. Many of these concepts have been lost, as

"self-esteem" and "moral relativism" have taken over in America's classrooms.

The textbook contains original short stories and poems, with activity pages and charts accompanying each of the reading selections. Beautiful watercolor pictures illustrate each of the book's ten units. Students examine the positive character traits of responsibility, honesty, justice, respect, chastity, humility, patience, generosity, obedience, and perseverance. The text begins with an index of applied virtues, which the authors include to ensure that students and parents will extract and use every available lesson.

The readings are designed to help increase students' vocabularies, and the activity and discussion pages draw attention to lessons they can apply to their own lives.

I Can Do That! was created for use in middle school (6th through 8th grades) but some of the lessons are also appropriate for 5th graders. The curriculum can be incorporated into advisory, guidance, and/or English and reading classes, and the self-contained text can easily be adapted for home use.

In his endorsement of the curriculum, retired Navy Admiral and former Vietnam prisoner of war Jeremiah Denton writes: "This book will certainly take its place in the rebuilding of a foundation of character for America. The stories and poems are set in a modern landscape, while illustrating so beautifully how a virtuous life can once again be rewarding for our young people."

Pam Reed holds a bachelor of arts degree in communications from the University of Illinois/Chicago. Daniel Gray holds a master of science degree in curriculum and instruction from Chicago State University.

Project Reality, a leader in abstinence education since 1985, produced the curriculum. Write P.O. Box 97, Golf, IL 60029, phone (847) 729-3298, fax (412) 967-9694.

FOCUS: 'Situation Ethics' standard led to morally sick nation

By Dennis L. Cuddy

Television commentator Ted Koppel, on a recent *Nightline* segment, noted President Clinton's high job approval ratings, and then said: "But ask about his honesty, moral and ethical standards or the president as a role model for young people and Mr. Clinton's approval ratings are down around 20 percent."

Koppel then asked several U.S. senators, "What does this say about our country and our values? What's the bottom line? Show me the money? If you're making money for me, what kind of a human being you are is sort of irrelevant?"

Translated, this means as long as the situation (a good economy) is acceptable, you won't be held accountable for misbehavior. This is classic "situation ethics," which has become the new national morality. But from where did this come?

In the 1960s, when God was removed from public schools, values continued to be taught. The student became the new authority for determining what is right and wrong — the autonomous moral decisionmaker — and decisions were made based upon particular situations.

Leading educator Ted Sizer in 1970 wrote: "Christian sermonizing denies individual autonomy, which lies at the heart

"IF IT FEELS GOOD, DO IT" WAS THE PHILOSOPHY OF MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN IT CAME TO ILLICIT SEX AND ILLEGAL DRUGS.

of a new morality . . . toward which we are to guide ourselves and other people." During the 1970s, one kept hearing the mantra, "Don't impose your morality on me." And in 1979, a CBS News poll found 66% of those surveyed would support a leader who would bend the rules to get things done.

In the 1980s, there was a conservative backlash against this humanistic moral relativism, but a co-founder of a four-million member humanist and ethical group, H.J. Blackham, wrote that if schools teach dependence (e.g., morals) upon one's self, they are "more revolutionary than any conspiracy to overthrow the government."

He was right! "If it feels good, do it"

was the philosophy of many young people when it came to illicit sex and illegal drugs.

Tipper Gore wrote in the Jan. 8, 1990 *Washington Post*: "A majority of children surveyed by a Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center thought rape was acceptable. In New York City, rape arrests of 13-year-old boys have increased 200% in the past two years."

The Day America Told the Truth — What People Really Believe About Everything That Really Matters was published the next year. In that book, authors James Patterson and Peter Kim detail poll results showing Americans "are making up their own moral codes," with 9 out of 10 citizens reporting they lie regularly, one-third of all married Americans indicating they've had an affair, and 7% saying that for \$10 million they would kill a stranger.

The problem with situation ethics is that nearly all our laws are based on the imposition of a particular morality (e.g., the biblical admonition "Thou shalt not bear false witness . . .") with which some will disagree on occasion. For example, because some people want to lie under oath about sexual matters, society has

"imposed its morality" against perjury in those situations. That is why some people in government positions have been impeached or even jailed for having committed perjury.

Concerning allegations of perjury against Clinton, there should not be one law for the powerful and another for the poor. If courts cannot compel witnesses to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, then our government will have been "overthrown," as Blackham was quoted above.

We can already see what situation ethics is doing to our teenagers today. According to a recent national poll of more than 20,000 middle and high school students conducted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics: 70% of high school students admitted cheated on an exam at least once in the last year, 78% said they had lied two or more times, and an amazing 47% acknowledged having stolen something from a store in the last 12 months.

Dennis L. Cuddy is a former senior associate with the U.S. Department of Education and the author of *Secret Records Revealed (about Bill Clinton and others)*. Call 1-888-891-3300 for more information.

From our Mail Bag — Letters to the Editor of *Education Reporter*

Death Education

Dear Editor:

It was interesting to read your report regarding "death education" at Columbine High School. It reminded me of the curriculum I endured almost 15 years ago at Centerville High School in Dayton, Ohio.

Our senior English course included trips to cemeteries, funeral homes, etc. We were able to see first-hand how a body is embalmed or incinerated into ashes. We explored tombstones, wrote epitaphs.

I remember being required to read the incredibly awful and depressing novel, *Ordinary People*, among other books that dealt with the subject of suicide, specifically teen suicide. We were even treated to the movie version of *Ordinary People* starring the pro-death Mary Tyler More and Taxi's Judd Hirsch.

To top off the course, we were shown a video of the congressman who shot his head off on national television during a congressional session. I forget who he was, but I believe he was from Pennsylvania.

Watching this gruesome horror was supposedly "optional" — the tape was played just as the bell to end class was ringing. I was the only student in the class who chose not to watch the video. And although I did not see the horror show, I was unable to flee the room quickly enough, and heard the shot that the congressman fired into his mouth.

Now that's death education!

— Michael S. Rose, Editor
St. Catherine Review

More Horror

Dear Editor:

I want to tell you about an incident that happened to me while substituting in a public high school in Knoxville, TN.

It was an English class where the teacher, first of all, obviously had no discipline in the classroom. When I read the plans for the day, I nearly passed out.

Stating that Edgar Allan Poe was the "father of all mysteries" was questionable enough, but the assignment was this:

"Write a 'mystery' in which you (the students) assume the role of the 'insane killer.' We will read them out loud to the class when I return."

I regret not taking a strong Christian stand by tossing the assignment in the garbage and creating my own. I have often thought of this since the incident happened, but it's too late now to go back and correct it. I can only imagine the other assignments that this particular teacher has thought up since I was there that day.

Needless to say, I vowed then never to go back into that classroom. Consequently, I now homeschool my children. We are all quite satisfied with the results.

God bless your quest to stand up for morals and decency in our decaying country!

Sincerely,
— Lesa Thomas



A Special Teacher

Dear Editor:

When my son Chris was 11, he entered the 5th grade at a U.S. Air Force school for military dependents located at our base (RAF Alconbury) in England. There were two 5th grade teachers, Mr. Meecham and Ms. Johnson. Parents were given a choice of teachers — either Mr. Meecham, who was a "traditionalist," or Ms. Johnson, who was a "progressive." My wife and I chose Mr. Meecham, and thank heavens we did.

The result of that one special year with that one special teacher had a lasting impact on the education of Chris. He graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1990, has been flying F-16s for years, and is a good all-around human being. (I am partial, of course.)

When I see the present education system being torn apart by those you mention in your many articles, I cannot help but wonder why all parents couldn't have the same simple choices we had. If all parents (or even a few for test purposes) could select either the Meecham method or the Johnson method, we would soon put to rest which method the parents prefer and see which method works best.

But no, the educational elite know best. The Republicans want to write off public education in favor of privatization and the Democrats want to repair what ails education with a few more dollars and a few less standards.

Thanks for your many fine articles.

— Dave Morgan
Snohomish, WA

ACTing Better

Homeschool students score higher than peers on college admissions test

Homeschoolers have another feather in their caps — they posted higher scores on the this year's American College Testing (ACT) national assessment exam than their peers in public and private schools.

The 1999 report issued by ACT administrators shows that homeschooled students scored an average of 22.7 out of a possible 36, tying them with high school students in Rhode Island, who ranked highest of teens in any state.

Michael Farris, president of the Home School Legal Defense Association, commenting on the test results in the August 18 *Washington Times*, said: "Once again, we can clearly and undeniably tell you that home schooling works. We're doing quite well as a movement. We should be rewarded with more freedom and not more regulation."

In recent years, some critics have charged that both the ACT and the SAT have been "dumbed down." Others claim that the tests have actually "gotten harder." Regardless, ACT data show that more students are taking the exam and that more colleges are using it as part of their admissions criteria.

Last spring, the results of a national study showed that homeschooled students perform much better on standardized tests than their peers. (See *Education Reporter*, May 1999.) They scored between the 75th and 85th percentile, compared to the national average, which is the 50th percentile.



Feds 'Out to Lunch' on School Lunch Program

While enterprising principals make hay at sacred cow's expense

WASHINGTON, DC — In 1995, Congressional Republicans were hard at work on their "Contract With America." One of their targets for reform was the federal school lunch program, but howls of protest from Democrats and the liberal media successfully drowned out any sensible discussion of the program's problems. Republicans were portrayed as heartless monsters who wanted to starve schoolchildren, and the issue was set aside.

The program's need for an overhaul didn't go away, however, and fewer and fewer students ate the over-regulated lunches prescribed by special interest groups intent on dictating the eating habits of American schoolchildren. Enterprising principals obligingly plugged the gap.

In the *Washington Post* (Mar. 31, 1999), Douglas Besharov, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and a professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Affairs, described how some D.C. principals sell pizza, hot dogs and snacks to students desperate for an alternative to government fare. One middle school principal was "placed on administrative leave with pay" for "the unauthorized selling of pizzas" and using the profits for "staff stipends, Christmas gifts, landscaping, and other school-related expenses."

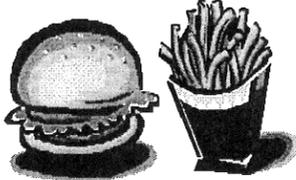
Besharov chronicled his visit to a high school cafeteria in which the long line moved very slowly due to the dearth of workers behind the counter. When he asked why there were so few servers, he

was told that, since part-time workers and volunteers had given way to "union and political pressures" and now servers must be paid "\$10 to \$14.50 per hour for seven hours," even though needed

for only three hours a day, the school district could not afford salaries for a sufficient number of workers.

When Besharov tried the food, he found it "so greasy and salty that it was hard to eat." He reported that many of the kids avoided the cafeteria altogether, preferring instead to visit the principal's office where various goodies were available for sale. He was advised that "the sales revenue was used to buy sports equipment and other items" not included in the school's budget.

Across the country, principals are circumventing the school lunch program and bringing in food from the outside that their students will actually eat. Besharov declined to speculate on the legality of such actions, but he noted that "breaking or bending the rules is not a good solution." He bemoaned the "sacred cow" that the school lunch program has become, suggesting that "we need a new recipe for federal food aid" to schools.



Darwin (Continued from page 1)

tion because the unproven theory is presented as fact. Tom Willis, director of the Creation Science Association for Mid-America, which helped write the Kansas curriculum proposal, told the *Washington Post* (Aug. 12): "Teaching evolution misleads students. It's deception. You can't go into the laboratory or the field and make the first fish. When you tell students that science has determined evolution to be true, you're deceiving them."



For many scientists, evolution is the basis for all biological study. They claim that life on earth began 3.9 billion years ago and that all species evolved from a common ancestor. A survey published in the science journal *Nature* also shows that "95% of National Academy of Science biologists and 60% of ranking American natural scientists do not believe in God." (*Washington Times*, 8-12-99)

Proponents of creation theory believe that geologic events can happen very

quickly, and that life on earth is actually only about 10,000 years old. According to the *New York Times*, the new Kansas science standards "include Mount St. Helens and Mount Etna as examples that 'suggest alternative explanations to scientific hypotheses or theories.'" Some creationists stop short of endorsing the biblical account in Genesis, but admit that the complexity of life on earth defies explanation other than that it was created by an "intelligent designer."

The Kansas Board of Education's decision has intensified the debate on evolution. The new standards have come under attack from some biologists, science teachers, school officials, and politicians.

According to Kansas pro-family leader Betty Hanicke: "The school board members didn't vote to ban evolution, they just said, 'let's leave it up to the local school districts whether to teach it or not.'" She added that her greatest concern now is the attitude of some, including Governor Bill Graves, who say that the Kansas Board of Education, with its duly-elected and voter-accountable members, should be made an appointed body.

Appeals Court Approves Student-Led School Prayer

MONTGOMERY, AL — The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in July to allow student-initiated prayer in the DeKalb County, Alabama public schools. The court upheld a prior restriction against school officials leading prayers or conducting other religious activities. The ruling overturns a portion of U.S. District Judge Ira DeMent's 1997 injunction, which not only banned teacher-led devotionals and the distribution of Bibles, but also student-led prayer.

The case originated with former Valley Head High School vice principal, Michael Chandler, who filed a lawsuit claiming that students and school officials in the DeKalb County School District were "unconstitutionally" promoting Christianity. Judge DeMent agreed.

Both Chandler and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) are considering an appeal of the Circuit Court's decision because they fear "how far student-initiated activities could go." ACLU attorney Pamela Summers expressed relief that "school teachers still can't grab students and ask them to pray in a class, which is what they were doing in DeKalb County."

Summers claims the decision means "a bunch of bad legal advice will be handed out," and predicts that teachers will end up participating in religious activities at school. "We'll be right back where we were," she stated. "We'll have to reinvent the wheel that the Supreme Court invented for us in 1963. (Associated Press, 7-14-99)

"The Supreme Court's 1963 ruling was indeed judge-invented law contrary to the original intent of our Constitution,"

agrees Alabama pro-family leader Eunie Smith. "The resulting denial of the free exercise of religion and of God Himself has left us with the terrible trauma of student violence and rebellion that will only end when we are again free to honor God as He is acknowledged in our Declaration of Independence. The removal from the classroom of the positive influence of our Judeo-Christian ethic, upon which this nation was founded, has brought disaster upon many of our young people."

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor called the Circuit Court's ruling "a victory for all the children in the public schools of our state, that they do not surrender their constitutional rights when they attend a public school in Alabama. They do not surrender their religious faith and their religious beliefs." (*Birmingham News*, 7-15-99)

Pryor indicated that he expects the ruling to stand, and vowed to work with state school superintendent Ed Richardson to "write guidelines the public schools can follow."

When Judge DeMent issued his injunction against the DeKalb County schools in 1997, outraged parents organized protest marches and rallies, and some called for his impeachment. One parent founded a group called "United We Stand" in opposition to the ban. Parents and residents now say they "feel vindicated."

United We Stand's Gary Holcombe told the *Birmingham News*: "We didn't think we could change anything, but we thought we should rise up. We always thought the injunction went too far. We'll surely praise the Lord for this [ruling]."

Channel One Unplugged in Shelby County

The Shelby County, Alabama, Board of Education severed its connection with Channel One on August 3, which means that the county's middle and high school students will no longer be viewing the network's daily 12-minute "news" shows during class. The programming includes two minutes of commercial advertising

for everything from designer jeans and sneakers to movies, fast food and soft drinks.

The board's decision resulted from the discovery of a link to a homosexual chat room on Channel One's Internet web site, which it promotes during its daily telecasts.

