

Students Strip-Searched During Visit to City Jail

Firings, lawsuits, suspensions follow

WASHINGTON, DC — At least five and as many as nine middle-school boys were strip-searched during a tour of the city jail on May 17, and a group of girls were also allegedly searched and harassed while visiting the jail on May 18. Warden Patricia Britton, a 19-year corrections department veteran, was fired May 29 for permitting the searches, along with corrections officers Jerome West, Karl White and Dexter Allen, all of whom had been employed by the department for at least 13 years. Corrections Department Director Odie Washington told the Associated Press (5-30-01) that prison officials had abused their authority and “exercised extremely poor judgment.”



The students were touring the jail as part of a “scared straight” program to warn disruptive children of the consequences of bad behavior. The teacher and school official who arranged the visits had been placed on administrative leave.

The outraged families of seven students have filed multi-million dollar lawsuits against the District of Columbia, seeking both compensatory and punitive damages. One 14-year old boy who was strip-searched said the guards told the students that they would be made to take their clothes off “like real prisoners.” A number of the girls were reportedly exposed to a lewd sex act by a male inmate. Angry parents wondered why the school hadn’t canceled the girls’ tour in view of

what had happened to the boys the previous day.

According to the Associated Press (5-24-01), Washington, DC school superintendent Paul Vance is “horrified at the chain of events” surrounding the strip searches. Steven Seleznow, who is heading an investigation for the school district, pointed out in response to a suggestion that the students’ conduct may have prompted the searches: “There is nothing a child could do that could warrant that response — nothing.”

When reports of the strip searches became public, a spokesman for the DC Department of Corrections explained to the *New York Times* (5-25-01) that guards regularly “pat search” jail visitors for weapons or contraband, but that strip searches “are obvious violations of the rules.”

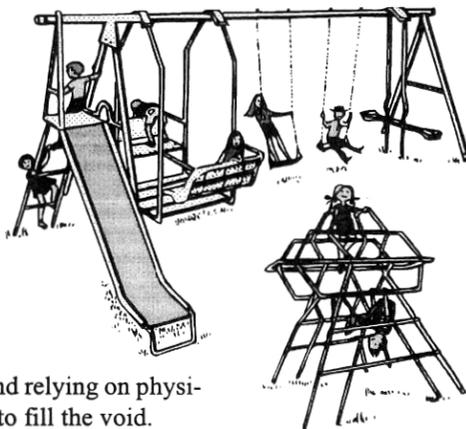
Commentaries about the incident have begun to appear. NewsMax.com columnist Joe Madison opined: “The jail hosted groups of students to deter them from committing crimes. The real crime is the lack of common sense used by the teachers and jail employees, all of whom are being investigated. If found guilty, they should be sent back to that same jail and locked up for a few weeks, after being strip-searched.”

Tours of the jail by outside groups — a common practice since 1989 — have been suspended.

Schools Reassess Recess

Playtime no longer elementary

To the chagrin of many parents, students and child development specialists, recess periods are gradually being eliminated from the elementary school day. This trend began several years ago and continues to gain steam, as school administrators worry about improving performance on state assessment tests and avoiding playground injury-related lawsuits. Across the country, schools are filling recess time with classroom curricula and activities and relying on physical education classes to fill the void.



Three years ago, the Atlanta school district eliminated recess at many elementary schools, and schools under construction at the time were being built without playgrounds. (See *Education Reporter*, June 1998.) Students at some schools in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia are also doing without recess, and more recently, school districts in Chicago, Illinois, Detroit, Michigan, Omaha, Nebraska, and Anne Arundel County, Maryland have followed suit.

The Associated Press (AP) reported on May 15 that complaints about the elimination of recess “are on the rise nationwide” from parents and teachers. “I don’t believe you can keep kids on task all day,” Georgia State University early child education professor Olga Jarrett told the AP. Professor Jarrett said her own studies show that children who get “vigorous exercise” during the school day perform better academically, whereas those kept indoors become “totally distracted for 15-20 minutes — the length of the average recess period.”

Thirty-five-year veteran early childhood teacher and school administrator Sheila Flaxman, writing for *Scholastic Inc.* (9-00), described eliminating recess as “a

dangerous proposition.” Flaxman listed 10 benefits of recess, a few of which include therapeutic value in providing opportunities for safe acting-out behaviors, muscular and speech development through physical and social interaction, language-skill development, and problem solving and creative thinking skills development.

The American Association for the Child’s Right to Play contends that there is “a misconception” in our society that recess fails to serve any real purpose. “Recess can serve as an outlet for reducing or lowering the child’s anxiety,” they point out. “The elementary school-age child has very few coping strategies . . . Recess provides a means for the child to manage stress.”

The Association also notes that “Students who do not get a break are much more fidgety in the classroom. . . .,” which is precisely the consequence that some parents and experts fear most. With more and more children taking prescription drugs such as Ritalin to keep them manageable in the classroom, the lack of a recess break virtually ensures that still more children will be labeled with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and their parents coerced to put them on medication.

“Physical activity is essential for the healthy growth and development of children,” states the American Association for the Child’s Right to Play. “Recess affords an avenue for the child’s natural urge for vigorous physical play, through which young children learn about their bodies’ capabilities, and how to control themselves in their environment.”

‘Noble’ Student’s Action Punished

Mother challenges ‘zero tolerance’ policy

RICHMOND, VA — An 8th-grade student who took a knife away from a suicidal classmate in 1999 was suspended for four months for possessing a weapon in violation of the school’s zero tolerance policy. Ben Ratner was attending class at the Blue Ridge Middle School when a friend slipped him a note revealing that she had a knife hidden in her notebook and was contemplating suicide. Familiar with the girl’s troubled history, Ratner asked her to give him the knife. She refused, and he took the notebook from her and locked it in his locker, intending to take it home and enlist his nurse mother’s help in contacting the girl’s parents.

Instead, school officials found out about the knife from another student and confronted Ratner. When he turned the weapon over to the school dean, he was

immediately suspended for 10 days. The suspension was extended to four months following a review by the school board. Shortly after the incident, the girl slashed her wrists in an unsuccessful suicide attempt.

Ben’s mother, Beth Haney, secured representation from the Rutherford Institute in December 1999 and launched an appeal to the Loudoun County School Board to reverse her son’s lengthy suspension. The request was denied. School officials admitted that, while Ben’s actions had been “noble” and “admirable” and he posed no danger to himself or anyone else, his suspension would nonetheless stand. Haney then filed suit against the district for violation of Ben’s right of due process, challenging the zero tolerance policy.

Rutherford Chief Litigation Counsel Steven Aden told *WorldNetDaily* (5-20-01) that the school district’s zero tolerance policy is intentionally broad, and covers “any instrument which could injure, harm or endanger the physical well-being of another person.” Aden noted in his appeal, which is currently being heard in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, that “strict adherence to this policy would prohibit the possession of a sharpened pencil, pen, ruler, compass or scissors. If intent is not to be considered, then every student in the Loudoun County schools is in violation of school policy, as are most of the teachers, for using all the normal tools

employed in a learning environment.”

Ms. Haney’s complaint is also asking the court to order her son’s school record expunged. She and her attorneys are seeking punitive damages for “willful and wanton” conduct on the part of the school district and monetary compensation to enroll Ben in private school.

“I think the path to safety in our schools is understanding where students are coming from and hearing them out — not kicking them out of school for technical violations of draconian zero-tolerance policies,” attorney Aden said. “We’ve gone down the wrong road since Columbine.”

EDUCATION BRIEFS

The National Spelling Bee champ for 2001 was homeschooled until he enrolled in a private school last September. Thirteen-year-old 8th grader Seth Conley of Anoka, Minnesota, accurately spelled "succedaneum," meaning "substitute," to take first place and the \$10,000 prize in the annual Scripps-Howard competition on May 31 in Washington, DC. More than 10% of the 248 students in this year's contest are homeschooled. Last year, the top three finalists were all homeschooled, and the 1st-place winner also finished second in the National Geography Bee. National academic competitions have become showcases for home-schooled students, who make up only 2% of the school-age population in the U.S.

A private school in New York City declined to celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day this year. The new policy at Rodeph Shalom Day School in Manhattan is intended to "protect" children in non-traditional families, including those headed by same-sex couples. A note sent home with students explained: "We are a school with many different family makeups, and we need to recognize the emotional wellbeing of all the children in our school." One outraged mother told the *New York Post* (5-8-01): "There are ways of showing sensitivity to the needs of children in unusual situations that don't require undermining traditional family structures."

Students surveyed by a Rutgers University professor say many teachers ignore cheating. Of the 4,500 high school students queried nationwide, 47% believe their teachers prefer not to confront known academic cheaters. More than one fourth of these students feel that teachers avoid taking the time to report dishonesty. Experts say many teachers close their eyes to student cheating out of fear of parental retaliation, including lawsuits.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation is promoting a "Youth Manifesto," which endorses abortion for children "of all ages," in the halls of the United Nations and in dozens of developing countries.

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Against All Odds: Homeless homeschooler gets perfect SAT score!

SONORA, CA — A 17-year-old homeschooled student scored a perfect 800 on both the verbal and mathematics sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in April, despite the adversity of periodic homelessness. Trevor Loflin credits his mother, whom he calls "a great teacher," and his family's strong religious faith, for his success.

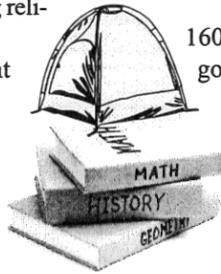
Now living in an apartment in northern California, Trevor recalls that "things started coming apart at the seams" for his family in 1996, with job losses, a divorce, bad credit, fire and theft of their belongings, and other "odd misfortunes," which eventually led to homelessness. In spite of these trials, Trevor's mother began homeschooling her three children several years ago, when, as they describe it, the public schools "really began getting in the way of our education."

Trevor reports on his new website (<http://www.rmwest.com/trevor/>) that the children studied in the car, on picnic tables, in tents and, occasionally, in the garages and living rooms of friends. His mother tested them with the optional SAT

II subject tests to determine the effectiveness of their instruction, and Trevor's subject test scores (perfect 800s in physics, math, and language, with slightly lower scores in literature and chemistry) pre-saged his performance on the SAT I college entrance exam.

As a result of his combined 1600 SAT I score, Trevor received a good deal of publicity in the media and on the internet. He also earned the title "Presidential Scholar Candidate," which is conferred on only two students per state per year. He plans to attend Bob Jones University in the fall, although his choice of this institution makes him ineligible for government grants and scholarships, as well as for most private foundation grants.

A happy result of Trevor's notoriety has been the establishment of an "Educational Fund" in his name. He hopes to enroll in a work-study program to earn the rest of his college tuition and says that, if he "should happen to receive" more than he absolutely needs for his educational expenses, he will help his sisters attend college as well.



Homeschooler Well Prepared for College

AIKEN, SC — A student who was homeschooled throughout his high school years graduated from the University of South Carolina on May 10 with a 4.0 grade point average. Tim Sutherland enrolled at the university four years ago after receiving a "Palmetto Scholarship," the first ever awarded to a homeschooled student in South Carolina.

During his college career, Tim studied philosophy and political science. He was named "Outstanding Student in Philosophy" during his junior year, and "Outstanding Student in Political Science" during his senior year.

Tim won awards in state speech competitions three years in a row, receiving "outstanding" commendations and trophies. He participated in the university's

invitation-only "Leadership Training" workshops, and was active in student government. He joined a fraternity during his sophomore year, and managed to rise to the office of president while shunning the use of alcohol and encouraging his fraternity brothers to follow his example.

Tim's mother reports that only her son and one other student graduated *summa cum laude*, and neither was invited to speak at the graduation ceremony. "The extent of their recognition was a brief mention of

their accomplishment during official welcoming remarks," Rebekah Sutherland observed, "and there was no mention of these exceptional students in the newspapers the following day. It appears that colleges do not respect their top scholars."



Tim Sutherland



Book of the Month



The Burden of Bad Ideas: How Modern Intellectuals Misshape Our Society, Heather MacDonald, Ivan R. Dee Publishers, Chicago, 2000; 234 pp., \$26

According to author and Manhattan Institute Fellow Heather MacDonald, the anti-knowledge ideology that pervades the teachers' colleges

THE BURDEN OF BAD IDEAS

How Modern Intellectuals Misshape Our Society



HEATHER MAC DONALD

has given rise to some of the worst of the bad ideas cited in her provocative new book. These ideas have caused the problem that Johnny's teacher cannot teach as she wants to teach

and as parents expect her to teach.

MacDonald writes that knowledge as we've known it — memorization of facts, knowledge of history — is somehow perceived by schools of education as an oppressive imposition on students. Children are instead encouraged to construct their own knowledge by teaching themselves in small groups, which MacDonald calls "absurd." "Group learning is the most destructive pedagogical bad idea that has come out of the education schools," she states. "If you visit the typical classroom, you often see students in small groups with the teacher benignly surveying the scene. The kids are supposed to be talking about Charlemagne or medieval history, but the conversation quickly turns to the child with the newest pair of sneakers or last weekend's parties."

Miss MacDonald debunks the romantic notion of children as "naturally wise and creative," and that "drilling and memorization" destroy their love of learning. "Exactly the opposite is true," she contends. "Children love to master the multiplication tables and phonetics."

She emphasizes that liberal bad ideas especially harm minorities and the poor. "Double standards are established for minorities, education becomes a tool for 'ethnic empowerment' rather than a means of gaining knowledge, and reason is dismissed as a tool of male oppression." She describes a public high school in Brooklyn, New York that teaches a course about graffiti for academic credit called "Hip Hop 101." Students are tested on how quickly they can create a design for "roasting" a subway car. Term papers are written about rap stars from articles in hip-hop magazines. "This is the outcome of the self esteem movement," MacDonald writes. "It's also the easy way out — embracing the concept of ethnic empowerment instead of teaching students basic skills."

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FOCUS: New Definition of Education Standards

By Virginia Miller

America is embroiled in a debate over how best to educate its students. As post-secondary schools increasingly assume the responsibilities of elementary and secondary education, and as employers and parents complain about the failure of schools to teach basic skills, the standards movement has become the latest attempt to remedy lagging performance.

Eager to respond to growing public pressure to improve the quality of education, policymakers at all levels of government are pressing for higher standards. Major corporations are calling for higher standards and partnering with educators to promote their strategies. Governors are instituting state standards and assessments, and many states are tying them to grade promotion and graduation. Federal funding of education programs through such legislation as the Improving America's Schools Act and Goals 2000 impose state content and performance standards tied to state assessments as a condition of funding eligibility. Indeed, the mantra of the day in education reform is high academic standards with accountability.

Underlying this effort is the assumption that linking high-stakes assessments to standards will motivate educators to higher levels of teaching and students to higher levels of academic achievement. The success of both the new standards and the assessment of student progress in meeting those standards will hinge on the content and quality of the standards themselves; so far, however, policymakers have focused on how to implement standards, paying little attention to their actual content.

Quite unnoticed, a new definition of education standards has emerged — one that places greater relevance on the world of work. All learning is to take place within the context of a work situation or real-world environment with emphasis on workplace competencies. Proponents believe this will foster in students a greater desire to learn because the subject matter has greater relevance to their goals. But the result has been a narrower education that focuses on practical skills to the detriment of a broader academic education. The danger is that the new standards may elevate workplace competencies above essential academic knowledge.

Schools should not be required or encouraged by federal funding to narrow their focus to emphasize workplace skills. The failure of vocational education in America to provide a quality education for non-college-bound students is no reason to infuse workforce education throughout the elementary and secondary education system. A better solution would be to rebuild a vibrant voluntary vocational system to provide a proper transition to work and a career for non-college-bound youth.

The major impetus for transforming academic standards came in the 1990s when the U.S. Secretary of Labor con-

vened the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). In 1992, the commission published a report entitled *Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance*. This report identified the skills that the commission believed a 21st century high-performance workplace would require, including: "Foundational Skills" — basic reading, writing, and math skills; thinking skills and problem solving; and personal qualities such as individual responsibility, self-esteem, and integrity; and SCANS "Workplace Competencies" — knowing how to allocate time, money, and materials; interpersonal skills such as working on teams, teaching others, and negotiating; using, evaluating, and communicating information; understanding social, organizational, and technological systems; effectively using technology.

The SCANS report recommended integrating these competencies into core academic subjects taught in kindergarten through 12th grade and beyond. Calls to integrate the SCANS skills and competencies into state standards and assessments of core academic subjects increased nationwide.

Today, state after state is implementing such standards, and a focus on workforce development is replacing academic essentials. It does not matter what descriptors are attached to these standards — "high," "rigorous," or "academic." What is important is the objective level each standard sets for measuring academic quality.

In 1994, Congress passed the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, which embodies the central tenets of the school-to-work (STW) philosophy — workplace relevance, integration of academic and vocational education, and workplace competencies. STW is neither vocational education nor a distinct program. Rather, it is an umbrella philosophy for many activities that are intended to systematically restructure all education for all students.

A number of studies have raised serious questions about the effectiveness of STW. While some studies have found higher student motivation and engagement, as well as slightly lower dropout rates, not one study conducted to date has found that STW, or any of its component learning theories, has increased the academic achievement of students as measured by standardized test scores. Children may be more motivated to attend school, but this does not answer the question, what are they learning and how well?

To improve education, Washington should assure that efforts to promote standards focus on academic standards. More important, state legislators and education officials at the state and local level should:

- ◆ Eliminate school-to-work programs and activities from comprehensive elementary and secondary education;

- ◆ Develop and incorporate education standards that are academic, rigorous, specific, measurable, and non-prescriptive of methodology or ideology, and that focus on academic content rather than workplace competencies;

- ◆ Phase out contextual learning and replace it with proven teaching methods;

- ◆ Resist the integration of workplace competencies and academics at all grade levels;

- ◆ Restore academic focus and rigor to all subjects for all students;

- ◆ Restrict the participation of students in workforce investment programs;

- ◆ Protect kindergarten through 12th-grade curricula and standards from inordinate business influence; and

- ◆ Rebuild a vibrant and voluntary vocational system for transition to work and careers for non-college-bound students.

Research shows that education oriented to specific workplace skills and job training produces graduates who are less versatile and unable to change occupations without substantial retraining. By contrast, graduates of a rigorous liberal arts education can readily learn new skills and adjust to new jobs. There is lifelong value in gaining knowledge of history, lit-

erature, science, mathematics, and the arts far beyond the world of work. The most important purpose of schools is to educate Americans to be vigilant guardians of their freedom and to be able to take advantage of the social and economic opportunities that a free society affords.

America's schools should not be required by their utilization of government funding to narrow their focus to practical skills at the expense of academic skills. There is more to education than securing gainful employment. Knowledge of history, science, mathematics, and literature is valuable regardless of whether it leads directly to a job.

For too long, primary and secondary public education has retreated from teaching these core academic competencies. The success of the current effort in Washington to improve the quality of education and to graduate adults who are better prepared for the many opportunities of the 21st century by imposing higher standards and assessments will depend on the content and quality of these standards.

Virginia Miller is an education policy consultant based in Pittsburgh, PA. This article is excerpted from the Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1427, April 4, 2001, entitled The New Definition of Standards in American Education.



Virginia Miller

Star of Suicide Play Takes Own Life

KEENE, NH — A 17-year-old high school junior about to take the lead role in his school play this spring instead took his own life. The play, *Ordinary People*, is a depressing drama about a suicidal teen's struggles to overcome guilt following his brother's accidental death. The story mirrored reality for Gregory Kochman, whose older brother, Eric, committed suicide in 1999, also at the age of 17.

Gregory was an athlete, a member of the Monadnock Regional High School soccer and track teams. Academically, he ranked third in his class and had applied to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He was planning to take an advanced studies program this summer at St. Paul's preparatory school in Concord, New Hampshire. According to friends and school officials, there were no warning signs that he might kill himself.

After Gregory's death, his father, David Kochman, blamed the school play. He told the *Boston Globe* in a May 9 interview that, when he heard about his son's involvement in *Ordinary People*, he "thought it was a sick joke," and "I should have followed my gut instinct and stopped it." Kochman said Gregory's drama coach, as well as his therapist, thought that doing the play would be therapeutic because it allowed the boy to act out some of his feelings.

This is hardly the first time that death and suicide themes in school curricula and activities have been associated with stu-

dent deaths and suicide attempts. A rash of teen suicides in the late 1980s in Colorado became the subject of a 1990 exposé on death education by ABC-TV's 20/20. The story was told through the eyes of student Tara Becker, who described her own temptation to commit suicide after taking death education classes. She confided that, although she personally hadn't been "brave enough" to go through with it, "the things we learned in class taught us how to be brave enough to face death." (See *Education Reporter*, July 1999.)

During the 11 years since 1990, numerous reports from parents have indicated that death education, usually integrated into other courses, continues to thrive in America's schools, and that extracurricular activities, including videos, books, plays, and assemblies, often feature death and suicide themes.

David Kochman says he believes that everyone associated with his younger son "tried to do the right thing" and he doesn't blame anyone for Gregory's death.

Gregory and his brother, Eric, lived with their father after their parents' divorce in 1997. Kochman told the *Boston Globe* that his sons were "unbelievably close." In *Ordinary People*, the suicidal surviving son is pushed aside by a cold, emotionally detached mother who is determined to go on with her own life. A sympathetic father and a psychiatrist help the fictional character work through his grief and guilt.



Tufts University Hosts 2nd Annual Gay 'Teach-Out'

MEDFORD, MA — The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) held its second (now annual) gay sex conference at Tufts University on March 24. Despite the parental outrage and nationwide negative publicity that followed last year's event, when a concerned parent's audiotapes of the sexually explicit sessions became public (see *Education Reporter* July & Sept. 2000), this year's conference was reportedly larger. An internet "News Alert" from the Parents Rights Coalition of Massachusetts (PRC) called the conference "a thinly disguised sex festival and recruitment fair, with even more students bussed in this year than last."

The *Massachusetts News* estimates that 400 students and 250 teachers and administrators attended this year's "Teach-Out." According to the newspaper, public funds helped the private sponsor, GLSEN, pay for the event. At least two public school buses were used to transport children.

The pretext for this year's conference was student safety and overcoming homophobia, but Planned Parenthood set up a booth and distributed what were presumably "safe" sex kits containing one latex glove and lubricant, with instructions for their use.

All tape recorders and cameras were banned as a result of last year's bad publicity, and conference attendees were frequently reminded of this rule. The PRC stated in its alert that Tufts University police "prevented parents and journalists from observing events at the conference." The press was allowed to peruse the display tables, attend lunch, and witness the final event of the conference, a play that was reportedly "substantially cleaned up" from last year, with the sexual innuendo and crude jokes removed.

A new workshop entitled "A Look At Last Year's Setbacks in Massachusetts, What We Have Learned and How We

Can Move Forward" was added to the agenda. The description read in part: "Over the past year, one of the nation's most successful safe schools programs for GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) youth has been beset by attacks from reactionary forces both inside and outside the public education bureaucracy." It claimed that "backsliding" is now evident in parental notification policy, teacher certification standards, students' rights regulations, and parameters for HIV/AIDS instruction. The workshop's aim was to explore responses to such "challenges."

Other workshops included: "Addressing GLBT Issues in Preschools, Daycare and Kindergartens: A Networking Summit and a Chance to Share Experiences," "Gay Rights 101, Incorporating the Basics of the Gay Rights Movement Into Your U.S. History Curriculum," "From Lesbos to Stonewall: Including the History of GLBT Individuals in a HS or Middle School World History Curriculum," "Incorporating GLBT Inclusive Literature in the High School English Curriculum," "Using the Arts to Express and Explore GLBT Issues in Your School," and "Homophobia in School Athletics."

Literature available to students at the conference included a brochure entitled "Be Yourself," published by the gay activist group PFLAG. Citing the discredited Alfred Kinsey as its source, this brochure states: "Most people have some attraction to the same sex during their lives," and "Being gay is as natural, normal and healthy as being straight." A pamphlet by a group called "Political Research Associates," entitled "The 'Ex' Files," called the ex-gay movement "a new threat to democracy and diversity," and offered information on how to "challenge" those who have turned away from the gay lifestyle, either by choice or through spiritual intervention. 🍌

State Task Force Dictates Diversity

SACRAMENTO, CA — The California Department of Education released the final report of a 38-member advisory task force on April 11 outlining strategies for implementing the state's new "diversity" laws. This report is a blueprint for incorporating state-mandated pro-gay instruction and activities into the public school curriculum under the guise of reducing "hate violence."

Since 1999, several bills advancing the gay agenda have passed the California legislature. Two of the most recent, AB 1785 and AB 1931, passed by one-vote margins and went into effect on Jan. 1, 2001. Together, the new laws:

- ◆ Add "sexual orientation" to all prohibited discrimination clauses, including all public schools and religious or private schools receiving state funds.

- ◆ Provide money for assisting school personnel in determining the motives of students who display tendencies toward "hate violence."

- ◆ Revise curriculum frameworks to include "fostering an appreciation" for diversity, and give grades K-12 access to "supplemental resources" to combat "gender or sexual orientation" bias.

- ◆ Require schools to develop "tolerance programs" to foster "mutual respect" for differences, including "gender and other characteristics."

- ◆ Create programs that will include staff development and instructional practices "responsive to the diversity" of students.

"No one wants to see any child mistreated or harassed, even by other children," says Karen Holgate, director of policy for the Sacramento-based Capitol Resource Institute (CRI), "but the laws that were passed and the task force's new policy recommendations and strategies go far beyond just protecting children. They constitute a plan that includes teaching all California students what the state believes they should know about homosexu-

ality, even if that is different from what parents want their children to know."

According to CRI, the task force's recommendations and strategies will:

- 1) Repeal the right of parents to exempt their children from taking certain surveys.

- 2) Integrate all curricula, including math, science, history, and language arts, with positive, pro-homosexual, transgender, and "gender variant" messages.

- 3) Create new policies "to reduce adverse impact of gender segregation . . . related to locker room facilities, restrooms and dress."

- 4) Trample local control by forcing all schools to adopt the rules and regulations set forth in the report.

- 5) Use taxpayer dollars to establish Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) on school campuses, conduct training for all school personnel, fund a media blitz to convince parents that the new rules are wonderful, create a response system that will "provide rehabilitation to perpetrators" of discrimination, and hire "monitors" (thought police) for each school.

The education department is expected to adopt the task force's recommendations, although those involving funding must be approved by the legislature. Attorney Brad Dacus, director of the Pacific Justice Institute, believes many of the recommendations will be implemented by Governor Gray Davis through executive order. "When implemented, these overreaching state mandates will virtually shut the coffin on the rights of parents with children in California public schools," Dacus said, "and we intend to challenge them."

As previously reported in *Education Reporter*, parents may opt their children out of the classes and activities described in this article. Forms are available on the CRI website at www.capitolresource.org or on the Pacific Justice Institute website at www.pacificjustice.org. 🍌



Karen Holgate

Injecting Common Sense

Illinois passes pro-parent vaccine bill



SPRINGFIELD, IL — The Illinois General Assembly last month unanimously approved S.B. 1305, which will protect parents from nuisance investigations by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for exercising their legal right to exempt their children from mandatory vaccinations. Governor George Ryan called the measure "a good piece of legislation," and promised to sign it into law.

For the past several years, Illinois families have reported emotional and financial suffering as a result of DCFS investigations, despite the fact that state law permits vaccine exemptions based on medical or religious grounds. Medical exemptions must be signed by a physi-

cian. Religious exemptions must clearly define the parents' religious beliefs and how they lead to mandatory vaccination exemption.



Fran Eaton

"We've heard story after story from families under investigation by the DCFS," states Illinois pro-family leader Fran Eaton, who serves on the Illinois Immunization Advisory Committee. "We learned of a mother with a young child afflicted with Downs Syndrome who was reported to the DCFS by her own pediatrician while she was still in his office

because she wanted to delay her child's vaccinations for religious reasons. Another family had a DCFS social worker at their door within 24 hours of an emergency room visit because the parents refused a tetanus booster for their 10-year-old son."

Mrs. Eaton explains that, currently, anyone may file an allegation of "medical neglect or abuse" with the DCFS, even anonymously, and there are no repercussions for "false alarms" or "false filings." "Emergency room physicians and nurses are reporting children who are not 'on schedule' with their vaccinations," she says, "and pediatricians and family practitioners who disagree with a family's religious beliefs are reporting them to the authorities, initiating investigations for 'medical neglect or abuse.'"

After he was informed of these problems by constituents and pro-family leaders, Illinois Sen. Patrick O'Malley agreed

to sponsor legislation to protect parents who want to make their own immunization choices for their children. The result was S.B. 1305, which states: "A child shall not be considered neglected or abused for the sole reason that the child's parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare failed to vaccinate, delayed vaccination, or refused vaccination for the child whether due to a waiver on religious or medical grounds as permitted by the law or otherwise."

"This bill is a wonderful victory for parents in Illinois," Mrs. Eaton observes. "It removes vaccination exemption or parent-determined [vaccination] schedule delay from the category of 'medical neglect or abuse,' which will restore peace to caring families. Additionally, S.B. 1305 will relieve the DCFS from an overload of investigations, allowing case workers to focus on situations that are truly harmful to innocent children." 🍌