

## Coalition Wants to Censor Abstinence Education

WASHINGTON, DC — Planned Parenthood, SIECUS, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and about 30 other groups held a press conference on June 12 to announce they will work together to defund the teaching of sexual abstinence in public schools. Accusing abstinence-until-marriage programs of “censorship,” the coalition wants the federal government to limit schools’ ability to choose abstinence programs for their students under the Title V block grant provision of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. The coalition also warned of legislative efforts by some states to “copy the federal abstinence-only statute.” “Even if they don’t pass,” a press release stated, “these bills have a censorial and chilling effect.”



Scott Phelps

The coalition described funding for abstinence-until-marriage programs as “one of the religious right’s greatest victories.” Among the “problems” allegedly caused by abstinence education: (1) grant

money is being awarded to pastors and religious organizations for abstinence programs; (2) “chastity” events are being held in public schools during which children pledge to wait until marriage to have sex; (3) sexually-explicit portions of health textbooks and other classroom materials are being removed; and (4) students are “suffer[ing] from ignorance.”

Abstinence education advocates reject the coalition’s claims. “Who is censoring whom?” asks Scott Phelps of Chicago-based Project Reality, a leader in abstinence-centered education. “Abstinence education is spreading like wildfire. After years of holding a monopoly on sex education, Planned Parenthood and friends are losing their grip as more and more schools across the country embrace abstinence education.”

Last September, the Guttmacher Institute — a Planned Parenthood affiliate — reported that the number of teachers and school nurses embracing abstinence education jumped from 25% to 41% over a 10-year period, while the number of teachers who considered contraception instruction “most important” declined from 5% to just 1.5%. (See *Education* (See *Coalition*, page 2)

## Is a Backlash Brewing Against ‘Zero Tolerance’?

MANALAPAN, NJ — A parent backlash to a draconian zero-tolerance policy has forced change in this solidly middle-class New Jersey suburb. Parents outraged by the automatic suspension of elementary-school children for off-the-cuff verbal “threats” hired lawyers and forced their local school board to halt the suspensions. The Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School District will now implement a saner policy of allowing teachers and principals to address student infractions.

The school district adopted its “zero” policy at the behest of the county prosecutor following the shootings at Santana High School in California in March. The superintendent and principals began meting out suspensions to any student who used words that could possibly constitute a threat. According to the *New York Times* (5-17-01), about 50 children were suspended over a six-week period after the policy was adopted, compared to none last year. Most of them were in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and all had police files created documenting their misdeeds.

The school board has now pledged to “review” the police file of each suspended student and attempt to expunge the record

“if the punishment seemed unfair.” According to the Rutherford Institute, many of the suspensions were “not only carried out in an overzealous manner, but defied common sense”:

◆ A 10-year-old girl was suspended for three days for murmuring “I could kill her,” in reference to a teacher who refused to allow her to go to the bathroom, causing her to have an accident.

◆ A 10-year-old boy was similarly punished after he muttered “I oughtta murdered his face,” when a classmate trashed his desk.

◆ Yet another student, in discussing the school’s new policy, wondered aloud on the school bus what would happen if students substituted the word “doughnut” for the word “kill.” When his comments were overheard — consisting of “I’ll give you a doughnut” and “It will be so big and I’ll put sprinkles on it” — and reported to school authorities, he was suspended for three weeks.

Although some parents were initially in favor of a tougher school policy, most view the end result as trampling on their children’s civil rights. “They’re suspending babies for saying things they hear everywhere they go,” one mother told the *New York Times*.



## Connecticut Curbs Promotion of Ritalin

HARTFORD, CT — The Connecticut General Assembly has approved a bill prohibiting educators from recommending psychotropic drugs such as Ritalin for use on school children. (See text below.) The House of Representatives on May 22 approved H.B. 5701 by a vote of 141-0. The bill has also passed the Senate and is awaiting the Governor’s signature.

State Rep. Lenny Winkler (R-Groton) introduced the legislation, citing “the dramatic increase in the amount of psychotropic drugs, such as Ritalin and Prozac, being prescribed for children in recent years.” In announcing the bill’s passage, she stated that “these drugs are too often prescribed without a thorough medical and psychological evaluation. This bill will go a long way toward preventing unnecessary use of psychotropic drugs in Connecticut.”

An emergency room nurse herself, Winkler expressed horror at the list of mind-altering drugs that are taken by some

of the children admitted to the hospital. She pointed out that strong “anecdotal evidence” indicates that recommendations of these drugs to parents by school personnel have contributed to the increase in prescriptions. “Because teachers are held in such high esteem,” Winkler noted, “their opinions regarding a student’s health are taken seriously.”

H.B. 5701 also prohibits a parent’s refusal to place a child on psychotropic drugs from becoming grounds for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families to take the child into custody.

The law *does* allow schools to recommend that a student undergo a thorough medical examination. With the parents’ permission, school officials may still consult with doctors about a child’s case. “The school system will always play a vital role in a child’s well being,” Rep. Winkler affirmed. “But it’s extremely important that the diagnosis of any medical condition be performed by a medical professional.”



Lenny Winkler

### Partial Text of H.B. 5701

#### An Act Concerning Recommendations For And Refusals Of The Use Of Psychotropic Drugs By Children. . . .

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

**Section 1.** Each local and regional board of education shall adopt and implement policies prohibiting any school personnel from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any child. The provisions of this section shall not prohibit school medical staff from recommending that a child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, or prohibit school personnel from consulting with such practitioner with the consent of the parents or guard-

ian of such child.

**Section 2.** The refusal of a parent or other person having control of a child to administer or consent to the administration of any psychotropic drug to such child shall not, in and of itself, constitute grounds for the Department of Children and Families to take such child into custody or for any court of competent jurisdiction to order that such child be taken into custody by the department, unless such refusal causes such child to be neglected or abused, as defined in section 46b-120 of the general statutes.

The U.S. Department of Education, which helped fuel the fire for zero-tolerance policies with its “Safe and Drug-Free Schools” initiative, is now warning the 90% of school districts nationwide who have implemented such policies to beware, and is compiling a new handbook in conjunction with the Secret Service on how better to evaluate threats.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has also gotten into the act. A February 2001 ABA resolution opposing zero-tol-

erance policies admits: “Zero tolerance has become a one-size-fits-all solution to all the problems schools confront. It has redefined students as criminals, with unfortunate consequences.”

The resolution recommends a return to “school discipline policies that are grounded in common sense, and that are sensitive to student safety and the educational needs of all students.”

(See also “Zero Tolerance Equals Zero Thinking” on page 4 of this issue.)

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**Fifty-five percent of California 9<sup>th</sup> graders flunked the new state exit test.** According to *Education Week* (6-20-01), "fewer than 45% of the students who volunteered to take the test this past March were able to reach the minimum score of 60% in reading and 55% in mathematics." The test is slated to become mandatory for high school graduation in 2004. Nearly 81% of the state's freshmen agreed to take the exam, which was created to reflect California's new state standards.

**An American Federation of Teachers press release celebrating the U.S. Senate defeat of vouchers contained a misspelling.** In its rush to crow over the chamber's rejection of a school voucher proposal in the massive federal education bill, AFT president Sandra Feldman stated: "Why waste time on voucher programs that *pedal* false hopes?" Unfortunately, electronic spellcheck doesn't work on homonyms — memorization of basic facts is still essential.

**A Washington, DC city councilman has proposed lowering the compulsory age for public school attendance to three.** If Councilman Kevin Chavous has his way, DC toddlers will be giving up Big Bird for book bags. Chavous told the *Washington Post* last month that enrolling three- and four-year-olds in the city's schools "would force the school system to take charge and responsibility... to make sure they are prepared for kindergarten."

**The national PTA kicked off a multi-million dollar public relations campaign at its annual convention in June.** Designed to position the organization as a "grassroots" advocate of children, the campaign was developed in response to the negative image the PTA has earned in recent years by supporting the left-wing political agenda of the NEA and the Democratic party. Although claiming to be non-partisan, the PTA opposes school vouchers, tuition tax credits and state-to-state, district-to-district and school-to-school comparisons of student academic achievement, while supporting reduced class sizes and more federal spending for education.

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Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>  
E-mail: [education@eagleforum.org](mailto:education@eagleforum.org)

## Coalition (Continued from page 1)

Reporter, November 2000.)

"This is particularly problematic for Planned Parenthood," observes Phelps, "since they've just begun selling their own brand of condoms targeted to kids 'in a variety of styles, colors, and flavors.' Although claiming that 'abstinence doesn't work,' Planned Parenthood likely knows that abstinence *does* work, and they are extremely concerned about it."

In January of this year, the *American Journal of Sociology* published the results of an extensive research study conducted by Columbia and Yale Universities on "virginity pledges," which may be part of some abstinence-centered programs. The researchers concluded in their report that "Taking a pledge delays intercourse for a long time. The pledge effect... is real and it is substantial."

The researchers found that teens who took chastity pledges were 34% less likely to engage in premarital sex, and that the median age for first intercourse among pledging females was reduced two to three years compared to non-pledging females. Similar delays were found in males.

Many abstinence advocates believe that these research findings explain why

Planned Parenthood and its allies are stepping up their anti-abstinence campaign. "While these groups are claiming that teaching abstinence to teens is censorship, they are ironically saying that teachers who fail to teach what they want them to teach should be censored," Scott Phelps points out. "They are demanding that all schools teach Planned Parenthood's brand of sex education even though many parents, teachers and schools are choosing abstinence education."

Phelps notes that, while comprehensive sex education claims to teach "both abstinence and contraception," it focuses on teaching students how to use condoms even if they are not sexually active.

Despite the Planned Parenthood coalition's efforts, abstinence programs are expected to continue to increase. "Abstinence education programs are growing in numbers, impact and popularity among schools and administrators," says Project Reality director Kathleen Sullivan, "and government funding does not involve censorship, but recognition of success. The cry of censorship certainly applies to groups who would suggest eliminating programs that teach teens that abstinence is the safest and healthiest lifestyle."

## Phonics Sparked Harvard Grads' Success

ALBUQUERQUE, NM — When 22-year-old Elena Chavez graduated from Harvard University on June 7, she was the last of five children in her family to do so. Three of her four older siblings have gone on to earn post-graduate degrees from Stanford, and one holds a Ph.D.

The Chavez family isn't wealthy. Elena's mother, Rose, is the daughter of poor Spanish and Mexican immigrants. Her father, Ray, is a draftsman. How did these parents manage to send five children to Harvard? In their own words, it was a combination of hard work, personal sacrifice and teaching their children to read with phonics before they went to kindergarten. "If you know how to read when you go to school, you never fall

behind," Ray Chavez told the Associated Press (5-27-01).

Rose quit her secretarial job and took in typing so that she could stay at home and supplement her children's education. She taught them to read using phonics records. Later, she drilled them in history, science and other subjects with a program called "Cycle Teacher." There was very little television viewing.

Advocates of traditional education believe that the achievements of the Chavez children, though undoubtedly helped by God-given talent and extraordinary parental efforts, nonetheless supports their long-held belief that phonics and the memorization of basic facts can successfully educate *all* children, regardless of economic status or ethnicity.

## 'Good News'!

**The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 11 that religious clubs may meet in public schools after regular class hours.** In a 6-3 decision, the high court found that prohibiting the Good News (Bible) Club from meeting after school in the Milford School District in New York was unconstitutional discrimination based on the club's views. The school district allows after-school access to "social, civic and recreational" groups. The club's leader expressed satisfaction with the ruling and pointed out that the club meetings have nothing to do with school. "We're just using a school building after hours," she explained. "We don't want the government mandating prayer over the public address system or anything like that."



## Book of the Month



**The Media-Wise Family**, Ted Baehr, Chariot Victor Publishing, 1998, 410 pps., \$12.00

"What are your kids watching?" "Do you know the impact of their entertainment choices?" Author Ted Baehr poses these questions in *The Media-Wise Family*, and his helpful guide shows both parents and children how to make choices that are morally sound.

*Media-Wise* reflects Dr. Baehr's 20 years' experience as an award-winning producer, writer, director, radio personality, and scholar. He is currently chairman of the Christian Film and Television Commission, a non-profit group dedicated to educating the general public and the entertainment industry about the impact the media has on audiences. He also publishes *Movie Guide*, a weekly entertainment guide based on biblical values.

Dr. Baehr notes that four of every five parents believe that popular culture such as music, television, and movies negatively affects their children. He writes that most parents are concerned about the entertainment industry's emphasis on sex, violence and obscenity, and worry that their children are conforming "in dress, actions and ideas to the images of Hollywood idols" rather than to "positive, moral images of virtuous men and women."

Although written from a Christian perspective, *The Media-Wise Family* doesn't simply tell readers to turn off their TV sets and pretend Hollywood doesn't exist. Rather, it offers common-sense advice on how to "use and enjoy the mass media" without allowing it to negatively influence the family.

The book offers practical tools parents can use to teach their children "discernment," which is the ability "to use the media for entertainment, information and even education without being conformed and addicted to it." Exercises are included at the end of the book for children of various ages to help them sharpen their "media-wise discernment" skills.

In *The Media-Wise Family*, Dr. Baehr examines the media's biases and uncovers a well-orchestrated plan to corrupt the moral and spiritual standards of Americans. His crisp, factual style helps parents understand the harm that the media can do to children at different stages of cognitive development.

Filled with facts and solid research, this book makes an excellent resource for every family library. Call 1/800-899-6684 or visit your local bookstore or Amazon.com.

# FOCUS: Self-Esteem Needs Boot Camp



By Diane Alden

It is a fact that educrats and psychologists are kind of an incestuous breed. When some theory sounds good, even if it flies in the face of common sense, educrats will cling to it and try it as a new panacea that will eventually mean absolute perfection. The tried and true usually gets dumped for the latest sociological or educational theory no matter how inane or foolish.

Before the national self-esteem movement began, kids earned self-esteem or absorbed it naturally from their parents. When they accomplished something, whether or not they received praise for it, they understood that they had done something good.

Long ago and far away, kids often did things for the sheer joy of doing them. From earning a Scout merit badge to plumbing the depths of long division or Latin verbs, from memorizing Shakespeare to memorizing the times tables, these efforts produced something that no one could take away. It did not require phony love-ins with teachers drumming into their heads how wonderful they were because they had learned a skill of some sort. The accomplishment engendered self-esteem and not vice versa.

However, as the sociologists and educrats of the '60s applied the psychological theories to the schools, education went downhill. The results have been disastrous. Test scores, reading and math ability of American children have spiraled downward. "New" concepts in math and reading were tried. No matter that the results have been devastating, the education establishment will not give them up.

But the fact is that even psychologists have begun to understand what a disaster the self-esteem movement has been for America's children, especially black children. America's children may feel good about themselves, but according to some scientists, that

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is the problem. As it turns out, more scientists believe that this overblown self-esteem may actually be one of the causes of violence in public schools and elsewhere. As one who has been around teenagers for many years, as a teacher and a mother, I know that "dissing," or disrespecting, is the worst thing you can do to a kid. If you look at the kids involved in the shootings at Columbine and other places, "dissing" or disrespecting the violent kid has been isolated as one of the prime causes for the violence. Add the drugs these tender psyches needed to get them through the school year and the result is the brave new world of education.

We have had years of counseling, therapy, drugs, and touchy-feely non-academics, and what we have gotten for this is dumb kids who feel good about being dumb and violent.

It is very possible that bullying has gone up in direct proportion to self-esteem movements. Bullying has been around forever, but it used to end with a schoolyard bloody nose or a parent getting involved and slamming some doors in the school administration office. Whatever happened to parents? Whatever happened to demanding that a child not be bullied and expecting the school to respond? Whatever happened to kids fighting back?

Why does the response for bullying end in murder rather than a bloody nose? Are modern kids' egos so fragile that no amount of self-esteem classes will help? Why are schools more interested in making kids feel good about being rotten at something than in helping them develop the tools and academic skills to succeed?

Both the bully and the kid who indiscriminately responds with violence toward the bully have no ability to put themselves in another's shoes, nor do they have self-control. That is what the experts are finally having to come to terms with. This is both a spiritual and a psychological problem, but no amount of self-esteem training or diversity or sensitivity classes will change it.

Recently, researchers have taken a more critical look at the benefits and possible detriments of self-esteem development programs in the schools. In the April issue of *Scientific American*, Dr. Roy F. Baumeister, a renowned expert on the concept of self-esteem, has come down hard on it. Baumeister suggests that the low self-esteem model, which explains violent behavior as caused in part by low self-esteem, is untenable and that "on empirical and theoretical grounds . . . we must reject the view."

Baumeister also suggests that the benefits and positive consequences of self-esteem programs are likely to be minor, while inflated self-esteem carries an assortment of risks and dangers. He believes that the time, effort and resources a school puts into self-esteem programs will not improve school performance, citizenship or other outcomes.

Another psychologist, Dr. Barbara Lerner, is in favor of "good self-esteem" rather than "feel good now self-esteem." She also believes that earned self-esteem is less "vulnerable to ego-threats than possibly inflated "feel good self-esteem." What this boils down to is that the experts are rediscovering the wheel.

Al Shanker, former head of the American Federation of Teachers, stated not long before his death: "The kind of self-esteem that has you thinking well of yourself, whether or not you have any basis for doing so, also has a dark side — conceit, pride, feelings of superiority and entitlement. How many parents would want

to encourage these attitudes in a child, and how would they feel if they thought the child's school was doing so?"

Baumeister's contention is that self-esteem drilling may actually be harmful,



Diane Alden

particularly when it is not founded in reality — which is the kind of self-esteem supporters have been advocating for the schools. Baumeister and his colleagues found that studies done by many different researchers linked unfounded self-esteem with bad behavior of all kinds, from schoolyard bullying and juvenile delinquency to murder, rape and other crimes of violence. These studies show that a person who thinks he is great — and who has no objective reason for thinking so — is likely to turn on people who fail to share his good opinion of himself. And as he tries to assert his superiority, violence is likely to erupt.

The American Psychology Association has stated that the studies conducted by psychologists Brad Bushman of Iowa State University, and Baumeister (of Case Western Reserve University), "explored the connection between narcissism, negative interpersonal feedback, and aggression in 540 undergraduate students." Narcissists, according to the authors, "are emotionally invested in establishing their superiority, yet while they care passionately about being superior to others, they are not convinced that they have achieved this superiority. While high self-esteem entails thinking well of oneself, narcissism involves passionately wanting to think well of oneself. In both studies, narcissism and self-esteem were measured, and participants were given an opportunity to act aggressively toward a neutral third party, toward someone who had insulted them, or toward someone who had praised them."

When researchers Harold Stevenson and James Stigler compared the math achievement of American and Asian elementary school students, they found that American kids did considerably poorer than Japanese and Chinese students. But that's okay, because American students felt good about their performance even though it stunk.

American kids are encouraged to think positively about themselves regardless of how bad their academic performance is. From kindergarten through college, this attitude has produced illiterates and grade inflation. Now there is a movement in teaching math that tells the kids there is no right answer but that all answers may be acceptable. The same goes for teaching English, spelling and grammar.

A recent article in *National Review* quoted a political science professor as saying that incoming freshmen can't read or write. Grade inflation at Harvard and other prestigious schools has led to prob-

lems for Professor Harvey Mansfield, who does not believe in grade inflation for any reason. Mansfield maintains that everyone is expecting an A, no matter their level of competence. Most of the time, professors routinely give them out.

As I discovered when I went back to graduate school several years ago, only a complete ninny would not get an A these days. Compared with what it took to get them in the late '50s and early '60s, I can see how a reasonably bright person who can write a coherent sentence now almost automatically gets an A. Professors used to make assumptions about a certain level of competency in various subject areas and a majority of them could not do that today. About a third or more incoming freshmen are required to take remedial classes in reading or math.

Sandra Graham of the UCLA School of Education said that false praise can actually undermine confidence because it sends a message that the teachers don't expect much. In many classrooms, Graham said, "it's just scripted that, if the low achiever does anything, you praise them."

Bushman of Iowa State University notes that "if kids begin to develop unrealistically optimistic opinions of themselves and those beliefs are constantly rejected by others, their feelings of self-love could make these kids potentially dangerous to those around them."

#### Conclusion

So, Rosie and Hillary, put away your Million Mom March paraphernalia. Stop the violence by helping moms stay home with their kids if they choose. Take the sword of over-taxation out of the heart of the American family and give them a break. You two need to be raising hell with the education establishment instead of taking away guns.

GWB, forget more money for schools. Forget the U.S. Department of Education — it is a home for incompetents. Forget the public school system — it is a mess and fixing it won't do any good.

A profound change needs to take place in American society: a tsunami of a revolution in what and how we are teaching our kids. They don't need phony feel-goodism; they need to learn the times tables and memorize some Latin derivatives. They need phonics and not self-esteem. Kids need both parents, if possible, to be involved, to instill character and to offer love.

Dump the self-esteem — it will come with success. The problem of self-esteem resides with the family and not with the schools. But unless we raise the standards for ourselves as a nation and re-instill self-discipline, nothing will change; the rest of it is window dressing and "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

*Diane Alden is a research analyst with a background in political science and economics. Her work has appeared in the Washington Times as well as NewsMax.com and many other online publications. This article was excerpted from NewsMax.com (5-2-01).*

## Group Launches New Campaign to Turn Off Channel One

A broad coalition of companies, organizations and activists kicked off a new campaign last month to stop Primedia's Channel One from exploiting school children for commercial gain. Channel One is the in-school television program with a daily captive audience of about eight million school children in 12,000 schools, broadcasting 10 minutes of "news," music and filler, plus two minutes of advertising for a variety of child-directed products and services.

Members of the coalition include Ralph Nader, Phyllis Schlafly, the United Methodist Church, Focus on the Family, the American Family Association, authors John Taylor Gatto and Jane M. Healy, actor Matt Damon, and Peggy O'Mara, editor and publisher of *Mothering* magazine, among many others.

The coalition is asking all Channel One's advertisers to stop advertising on Channel One and requests that the top 50 U. S. advertising agencies not place ads on Channel One. Members of the U. S. Senate and House appropriations committees have been asked to prohibit the federal government from buying advertising time on Channel One (such as ads for the armed services).

The coalition sent a letter to Channel One's advertisers detailing its most compelling reasons not to advertise on Channel One, including:

- ◆ Channel One misuses compulsory school attendance laws to force children to watch ads, wasting valuable school time. The programs consume the equivalent of one instructional week of school time each school year, including one full

day watching ads.

- ◆ Channel One promotes violent entertainment by promoting violent movies such as *Supernova*, *The Mummy*, and James Bond's *The World is Not Enough*.

- ◆ Channel One wastes the tax dollars spent on schools. A 1998 study titled "The Hidden Costs of Channel One," concluded that Channel One's cost to taxpayers in lost class time is \$1.8 billion per year.

- ◆ Channel One promotes the wrong values to children, advertising extremely vulgar films including *Head Over Heels*, which contains sexual situations, profanity, violence, and suggestive language and sight gags. Another film, *Dude, Where's My Car*, glorifies two marijuana users who were so stoned they couldn't remember where they parked their car. This film contained sexually suggestive scenes and language. In February, Channel One advertised *Monkeybone*, a crass movie about the battle between a cartoonist and his genitals, symbolized by a monkey.

- ◆ Channel One promotes the commercial culture in general and teaches a curriculum of materialism — that buying is good and will solve your problems, and that consumption and self-gratification are the goals and ends of life.

- ◆ Channel One is bad for children's health. American children are suffering



Jim Metrock

from an epidemic of obesity, which Channel One likely makes worse by aggressively promoting junk food and soda pop.

### Pediatrician Opposes Channel One

Noted Alabama pediatrician Dr. Carden Johnston wrote an exposé on Channel One for the American Academy of Pediatrics' internet journal in April (4-4-01). Johnston listed his many objections to Channel One, including dietary concerns that are shared by many physicians. "The National School Lunch Program has rigorous detailed regulations about foods allowed to be served to children," Johnston wrote. "In conflict with these rules and even with the impending epidemic of adolescent obesity and Type II diabetes, we are allowing many schools to contractually obligate children to watch ads for soft drinks and candies."

Johnston's commentary pointed out another danger associated with Channel One — the willingness of school children to divulge personal information for a "reward." "Contests are propagated [through Channel One] whereby companies can have access to a child's name and address," Johnston stated. "Students are enticed to go to a website after school where companies can acquire telephone numbers, email addresses, social security numbers, and credit card numbers if students declare they are at least 13 years old."

### Controversial Teen Website

The coalition's letter noted that "Primedia's Channel One professes to be a conservative, pro-family company. That claim is especially laughable since Primedia has merged with About.com, which distributes hard-core pornography on the internet."

Some coalition members take issue with Channel One's advertising of About.com's "Teen Advice" website. Jim Metrock of Obligation Inc., a leading op-

ponent of Channel One, described the "advice" offered to teens last December 26 in preparation for New Year's eve. "Whether you play it straight this New Year or decide to walk on the wild side, Teen Advice wants you to be safe," the website stated. "PC or not, here are some tips to help make the most of your evening — no matter how you opt to spend it." Potentially drunk and/or drugged-out teens were then told to carry "a note with essential emergency medical information" and stick to "one type" of alcohol, among other "tips."

"What does this mean, 'walk on the wild side'?" Metrock demanded. "What is this saying to children? How many parents want this advice directed at their child?"

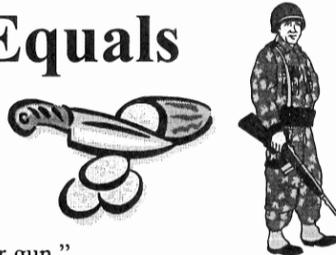
The Teen Advice website also addresses sexual issues, and while it emphasizes the dangers associated with teenage sex — abstinence is even mentioned — the central theme is that whatever kids want to do or are comfortable with is okay. The site includes "how to" directions for french kissing, using a condom and having sex.

### Organizational Opposition

Many organizations oppose Channel One or its use of the schools for commercial advertising for a variety of reasons. The National Council of Teachers of English, the National PTA, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and other educational organizations oppose the "intrusion" of commercials into the classroom. In 1999, the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination, passed a resolution urging parents to "seek effective ways to protect their children" from Channel One's "advertising assault."

## Zero Tolerance Equals Zero Thinking

By John R. Lott Jr.



Welcome to the brave new world of "zero-tolerance" schooling, where young minds are molded to abhor aggression.

Schools are banning dodge ball and tag because the games encourage "violent behavior." Some schools are removing any references to the military from their libraries, and some high schools are banning military recruiters.

Elementary students in Texas and Louisiana have been suspended for pointing pencils and saying "pow" and drawing pictures of soldiers. Students in Mississippi were held in jail for trivial infractions, such as throwing peanuts at one another. A 5<sup>th</sup>-grader in St. Petersburg, Fla., was arrested for drawing pictures of "weapons."

Recent victims of this witch hunt include an exemplary high-school student, a National Merit Scholar, jailed in Fort Myers, Fla., because school authorities found a kitchen knife under her car seat. The knife had accidentally fallen there during a move between apartments. "Terrorist threat" criminal charges were filed against two eight-year-olds in Irvington, N.J., for "playing cops and robbers with

a paper gun."

Second-graders have been arrested for bringing toy guns to school. And while juvenile records can be expunged, in some cases, such as for Brady law background checks, they last a lifetime.

Fear over school shootings is legitimate, but common sense is needed. Since the most recent school shootings started in the fall of 1997, 32 students and three teachers have been shot to death at U.S. elementary or secondary schools, an annual rate of less than one death per four million students. This includes deaths from gang fights, robberies and accidents as well as from incidents such as at Columbine High School in Colorado. By contrast, during that same period, 53 students died playing high school football.

What are we really teaching children by zero tolerance? To see evil where none exists? Or that justice is arbitrary and authorities are waiting to get you? Who is really out of control?

John R. Lott Jr., a Senior Research Scholar at the Yale University Law School, is the Author of *More Guns, Less Crime* (University of Chicago Press, 2000)

## Education Bill May Protect Boy Scouts

WASHINGTON, DC — The House and Senate have adopted amendments to the education bill (H.R. 1, S. 1) that would deny federal funding to any state or local agency or school that discriminates against the Boy Scouts. Homosexual groups are lobbying to have the amend-

ments stripped from the bill in conference.

The Boy Scouts have been under attack since the Supreme Court ruled last year that the group is not obligated to hire homosexual troop leaders. Some school districts have taken action against the Scouts because of its policy.

