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Election Update

Good news for grassroots!

Grassroots activists in many states have much to celebrate following last month's mid-term elections. Pro-family candidates prevailed in a number of important races at the federal, state, and local levels, some despite tremendous odds. One David vs. Goliath effort occurred in Alabama, where Eagle Forum leader Betty Peters was elected to the State Board of Education by 1,700 votes out of more than 150,000 cast. Her opponent, Democrat Charlotte Kirkland Williams, was supported by the Alabama Education Association (AEA), the state affiliate of the NEA.

"Betty knew her real opponent was the AEA," Alabama Republican Assembly President Frank Myers stated in an editorial on Nov. 6. "The *Birmingham News* actually called the race one between the Eagle Forum and the AEA. The AEA-supported PACs and other liberal PACs heavily financed the Democrat candidates, while Betty had only a few thousand dollars in contributions."

Myers noted that "many friends and supporters" helped Mrs. Peters win, adding that "she had the right message" in promoting education based on proven methods and common sense.

Mrs. Peters is a self-made education expert. As conservative political pundit Diane Alden noted, "Betty is not an educational hack but an accountant who has become one of the South's most knowledgeable experts on the failures of public education and alternative plans to counter those failures."

Peters will represent both city and county public school systems in 14 counties as a member of the state board. "She



Michele Bachmann (top), Betty Peters (above left), Leah Vukmir (above right), and Kathy Wilmot (right).

will bring a breath of fresh air to the board," Myers asserted.

A similar battle for local school board seats took place in Collier County, Florida. Two Christian conservative men, parents of schoolchildren, won seats on the five-member Collier County School Board. Eagle Forum leader Alyse O'Neill reports (See *Election*, page 4)

What Do Teachers Teach?

NEW YORK, NY — The Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute released in September the results of a study of America's 4th- and 8th-grade teachers. Called "What Do Teachers Teach?" this study focused on teachers' pedagogical philosophies, teaching methods, expectations for students, and general views on education.

An extensive survey of teachers nationwide, the study showed that majorities or large minorities of teachers evaluate student work primarily on factors other than whether the student provided the correct answer, base final grades on each student's ability rather than on a class-wide standard, and prefer that students direct the learning experience. Many of the teachers surveyed do not even believe that their role is to help students learn what the community has decided they should know, and many have very low expectations for what their students will learn.

"We believe these survey results provide important new data that can help ascertain what is really going on inside America's classrooms and add to the ongoing debates," the study's authors wrote in their introduction to the report.

Among the findings:

- A clear majority of the teachers (56%) describe their teaching philosophies as favoring student-directed learning rather than teacher-directed learning.
- Less than 15% believe it is most important to teach students "specific information and skills"; more than 7 in 10 favor the premise that "learning how to learn is most important for students."
- More than half of 4th-grade teachers do not expect their students to spell correctly at all times.

- In evaluating student work, only about one quarter of 4th- and 8th-grade teachers place the greatest emphasis on whether the student provided the correct answer.
- Nearly six in ten 4th-grade teachers base final grades more on each student's individual abilities than on any "single, class-wide standard."

- More than two in ten 4th-grade math teachers regularly permit students to use calculators to solve math problems. By the 8th-grade, 70% of teachers permit the use of calculators in class.

- Many 8th-grade students may not get enough writing practice to enable them to master composition; 15% of teachers never give their students homework including at least one page of writing; 31% require their students to write, edit, and complete a composition of at least 250 words (three to four paragraphs) no more than once a month.

- Three in ten 4th-grade teachers and nearly four in ten 8th-grade teachers rated student feedback as the most important factor in personal evaluations of their own work.

- 55% of 4th-grade teachers prefer cooperative learning in small classroom groups.

- Two in ten 4th-grade teachers say they assign their students lists of new words less than once a week or not at all, and 42% assign only one writing assignment longer than a paragraph per week.

- While 5/6ths of the 4th-grade teachers surveyed expect all their students to master such basic tasks as adding and subtracting two- and three-digit numbers, teacher expectations drop as tasks get more complex. For example, 31% of teachers think half or fewer of their students can do these tasks.

(See *Teachers*, page 4)

Whole Language Program Tells Children: 'Get Your Mouth Ready!'

KUTZTOWN, PA — First-grade students at Weisenberg Elementary School are supposed to be learning how to read, but their instruction is all about looking at pictures and playing word-guessing games. Handouts obtained by *Education Reporter* outline a series of seven reading "strategies" from a Whole Language textbook called *Literature Works* published by Silver Burdett and Ginn. In September 2000, Education Market Research asked 10,500 classroom teachers in grades K-8 "which basal Reading series" they use. *Literature Works* was cited by 5% of the teachers surveyed.

Strategy I instructs children to "Look at the Pictures." The handout states that "good readers depend on language patterns and pictures," and tells parents that their children will be "looking at the picture for clues before reading when stuck on a tricky word."

Strategy II asserts: "Good readers

make sure that what they read is logical and makes sense." But parents are wondering how children who are taught to look at pictures in order to guess the words can possibly learn to read, much less determine whether what they read is "logical." Strategy II affirms the look-say method and tells children to "self-monitor" their reading progress by continually re-checking the pictures.

Strategy III tells students to "Get Your Mouth Ready" to "better predict the correct word." *Predicting* the words is supposed to "foster independence." The teacher is instructed to ask the child, "Did you look at the picture? Did you get your mouth ready? Can you think of a word that would make sense and starts with that letter?"

Strategy IV claims that "good readers check their reading by looking through the entire word from left to right and by asking 'does it look right?'" This strat-

egy repeats the instruction to "self-monitor" by asking "Does it [the word] make sense?" Children are again exhorted to "get their mouths ready to help predict a tricky word." They are to ask themselves if a word "looks right."

Strategy V tells children that "when good readers come to a tricky word, they reread to try and figure the word out or to regain meaning." Strategies I through IV are then reiterated.

In Strategy VII, students have a new directive: "Look for Chunks." This unappetizing suggestion is explained by the use of the sample word "fan." Students "can use the *an* chunk to figure out the word *hand* or *candle*," the handout states.

Strategy VII claims that "good read-

ers also find words that look like other words, such as *cat* and *pat*. Being able to read *cat* [presumably by looking at a picture of a cat] makes reading *pat* more likely." The handout tells parents to "prompt" their children by reminding them that they "know a word almost like the unknown word."

Parents wonder why their children are learning to guess at words and "get their mouths ready" instead of learning letter sounds and phonemic blends so that they can sound out words and actually read. One baffled parent

complains that his child "reads okay when he's looking at the pictures, but when you cover up the pictures, he has no idea what the words are." This parent has purchased Phyllis Schlafly's phonics textbook, *Turbo Reader*, in the hope that he can teach his son to read in his spare time.



EDUCATION BRIEFS

The NEA and three Ohio affiliates agree to accommodate members' religious objections. Teachers who object to the union's spending of their dues money for political causes with which they disagree will now have to register their objections only once rather than annually, and will be allowed to donate that portion of their dues to the charities of their choice. This agreement resulted from a complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) by the National Right to Work Foundation on behalf of Ohio teacher Dennis Robey, who petitioned the union for years to stop using his dues for objectionable political purposes and to cease the yearly interrogations about his religious beliefs. The EEOC agreed, and ordered the NEA to stop subjecting teachers to "a burdensome and invasive process before respecting their religious objections to union affiliation."

The amount of government education funds spent for instruction declines. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, this amount fell from 55.5% of all education spending in 1980 to 52.8% in 1998. Education finance experts say America's school districts are spending more money than ever on administration, technology, special education, and testing.

Foreign students were found cheating on American universities' graduate admissions tests. The Graduate Record Examinations were given electronically in China, Taiwan and South Korea as often as six days per week, and test questions were routinely re-used. This gave rise to websites in the Chinese and Korean languages disclosing previously used test questions. Education Testing Service officials launched an investigation at the behest of American college deans, who noticed that the test results of students from these three countries did not match their fluency in English. The tests will now be given only two days a year and on paper. The Examinations Board asserts that "we are now monitoring the web very aggressively." (*New York Times*, 8-8-02) (More Briefs at right)

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Phonics Spat Clouds Real Issue

WASHINGTON, DC — Many educators who normally support the U.S. Department of Education and the federal funding of education are upset that the Bush administration is promoting phonics. They charge that phonics doesn't work for all children and that the federal government is usurping local control in violation of its No Child Left Behind Act. As one observer noted: "Whole Language was fully funded for years by the feds and these people had no problem with it."

Bush administration officials have determined that phonics is the best method for teaching reading, but the real issue may be whether the approved Direct Instruction method will cure the nation's reading woes. Direct Instruction involves intensive scripted lessons by teachers, and educators at both ends of the spectrum, from Whole Language devotees to those who support traditional phonics instruction, are unhappy.

Some educators charge that, in order to receive funds from the President's Reading First initiative, schools must comply with what the administration has determined is good reading instruction and use its preferred programs and textbooks. "What they want is to have the publishers making teacher-proof materials, and of course it is big business," Lucy M. Calkins, Founding director of the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia Teachers College, told the *Washington Post* (9-10-02). "The thing that is really scary is how do you prove that your reading program is a success? It's by kids doing well on the standardized tests made by the same publishers that wrote the teacher-proof programs."

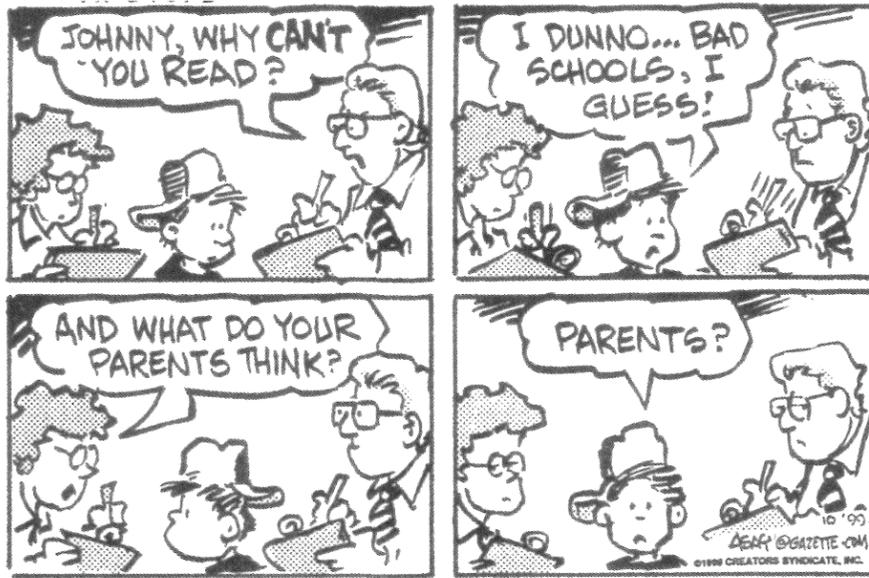
Other reading experts insist that, although Direct Instruction may work in

the short term, it doesn't produce long-term results. "Direct Instruction is B.F. Skinner's mastery learning, and the federal government has promoted that for longer than they've promoted whole language," states education expert and researcher, Charlotte Iserbyt. "It was primarily used on special education children, and studies show that special education students have not benefited from such programs." (See *Education Reporter*, September 2002.)

"The tragedy," asserts Iserbyt, "is that no one points out that there is a third way: traditional phonics reading instruction as developed most recently by Samuel Blumenfeld, Phyllis Schlafly, and Sister Monica Foltzer." This method begins with the alphabet and its phonetic characteristics, and prepares students to sound out syllables and words. It does not rely on predetermined scripts and stimulus-response-stimulus methods.

Iserbyt continues: "The question should be asked, why isn't the Department of Education promoting traditional phonics? Answer: because traditional phonics doesn't provide the 'method' necessary for workforce training and it doesn't work with computer-assisted instruction. Skinner said 'the computer is my box,' and 'I could make a pigeon a high achiever by reinforcing it on a proper schedule.' Everything will involve computer-assisted instruction from now on."

Fortunately, the increased awareness of the importance of phonics in teaching children to read has shed some light on traditional phonics programs, including Phyllis Schlafly's *Turbo Reader*, and some teachers are using traditional phonics texts to supplement school-adopted textbooks.



School officials in Ames, Iowa used school district equipment to urge parents to vote on a tax increase. Computer emails, phone messages, posters, signs, and fact sheets were among the means used to urge citizens to "Remember to vote Oct. 8: Local-option sales tax for schools." Although officials did not advocate a position, some parents complained that the reminders were intended to influence voters to approve the tax.

A federal appeals court ruled that a

New Jersey school district cannot bar students from wearing shirts with the word "redneck." Thomas Sypniewski sued the Warren Hills School District when he was a high school senior in 2001, after he was suspended for three days for wearing a T-shirt displaying comedian Jeff Foxworthy's humor, including the word "redneck." A district court ruled that the shirt violated the school district's racial harassment policy. But the appeals court declared that "redneck" cannot be equated with racial harassment."

Book of the Month



Championship Writing: 50 ways to improve your writing, Paula LaRocque, Marion Street Press, Inc, 2000, 204 pps., \$18.95

"Knowledge isn't worth much if we can't convey it to others." This truism is the basis for acclaimed writing coach Paula LaRocque's new book, a handy tool for helping writers of all kinds be more understandable and understood.

Championship Writing isn't your everyday grammar and composition book. It's a testimony for clear, concise writing, which many resist either because they have been poorly educated and have not mastered Standard English, or because they "don't want to do the thoughtful, careful work that clear writing demands."

This latter group, notes LaRocque, wants the *reader* to do the work. Many writers have been rewarded by academe for "stiff, dense, pretentious" writing, "glutted with gobbledygook and arcane phrasing."

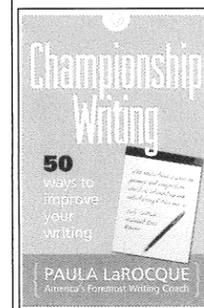
LaRocque notes that our education system often wrongly teaches us to make a distinction between formal and informal communication, and that formal is superior. "The result," she states, "is a professional world that spouts stiff, pompous, abstract and often meaningless jargon." What most people need to improve, she contends, is their capacity to be storytellers.

"We've all seen examples of academic gibberish," LaRocque writes. "The educated often bring academe's heavy and unconvivial writing style into the workplace, and it is unwelcome."

Championship Writing isn't just for writers and aspiring writers, but for everyone who puts pen to paper or types into a computer terminal. She describes such literary horrors as what she calls "octopus writing" — which "sinks readers in a sea of words" — as well as sentence clutter, wordiness, use of "fadspeak," and overwriting. She discusses the "building blocks of sentences" and demonstrates how short words and simple phrases usually communicate best.

Championship Writing delivers what its title promises. It is packed with examples, tips, tricks of the trade and, yes, it's easy and interesting to read. This book should be in every English professor's desk, on top of every businessperson's desk, and in home offices and libraries everywhere.

Contact Marion Street Press, P.O. Box 2249, Oak Park, IL 60303, (708) 445-8330, www.marionstreetpress.com.



FOCUS: Whole Language: Down for the Count? No Way!



By Carlo DiNota

Whether we're talking about teachers' colleges *per se* or an education department at a university, teacher training programs are of the same cloth. Let's not mince words. They're bastions of touchy-feely, amateur psychiatry. Examine any education textbook which is required reading for aspiring teachers, and you'll find a recurring thread: competition among children is bad, strong discipline is oppressive, teacher-centered classrooms are a no-no, and testing is an inaccurate and intimidating means of assessing students. These ideological taboos have helped to define what has become known as the progressive approach to education. No surprise that behaviorists like Carl Rogers and Benjamin Bloom are held in such high regard in any education theory class.

No surprise also that education professors unanimously disapprove of intensive, systematic phonics — too rigid, uncreative, and passé. In my year and a half of taking education courses in order to be certified by New York State to teach English, I never met one prospective reading instructor who could adequately explain what phonics is, nor did I ever meet a professor who could either. Yet I received the same response every time I inquired about phonics: "There's more than one way to teach reading."

While linguists worldwide argue that an alphabetic system like English must be taught phonetically, America's educracy remains enthralled by the anti-intellectual mumbo-jumbo of Whole Language, which maintains that children learn to read by reading and through osmosis they eventually pick up the association of letters and sounds.

News flash: 44% of U.S. elementary and high school students read below basic level and nearly half of American adults have trouble reading newspapers. And what has been the predominant form of reading instruction in U.S. public schools over the last fifty years? Whole Language and its equally idiotic forefather, look-say (AKA Dick and Jane).

But let's remember that schools of education (from whence the Mickey-Mouse pedagogy arises) are hardly bastions of sound intellectual scholarship, and thus we should not be shocked that the proper way to teach reading — via phonics — is not emphasized in our nation's teachers colleges. James Koerner summed it up poignantly in his 1963 book *The Miseducation of American Teachers*, indicting the education major as "one of the intellectually weakest, most nebulous, and generally unsatisfactory fields in higher education, although it is the biggest." Oh, and in case you've been away, standards in teacher-training courses have not improved in the 1990s. In April 1998, 60% of candidates seeking Massachusetts teaching certification failed a basic literacy test, with the Chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education, John Silber,

maintaining that a bright high schooler could have easily passed the exam.

The Phonics Movement

The phonics movement has gained momentum in the last few years, with California's Board of Education announcing its abandonment of whole language. The board's executive director has rightfully referred to whole language as a "heinous experiment." The much anticipated 1998 report by the National Research Council, commissioned by the U. S. Department of Education and the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development, concludes that early elementary reading instruction must include phonics.

Public Education and Whole Language

Yet, expending tireless energy trying to incorporate intensive, systematic phonics into all our government schools is ultimately a useless endeavor. Phonics in every classroom would require the support of every teachers college in America, which have heretofore abandoned phonics for the latter half of the century. It would mean that teachers colleges would have to promote a structured, traditional curriculum, when it is rare to find any textbook used at these institutions that promotes "the old way."

It would mean drastically reforming the National Education Association's caustic opposition to phonics and disbanding their hundreds of surrogate literacy councils that promote Whole Language. One look at the brazenly leftist resolutions passed at an annual NEA convention would reinforce anyone's pessimism that the teachers union would support phonics, which for so many years has been a major issue with conservative education activists. As *The Wall Street Journal* noted, when the National Research Council's study was released in March of 1998, the NEA was promoting Whole Language that very month at a "Read Across America" day.

It would mean forcing publishing houses, which have made millions due to the voluminous nature of Whole-Language reading curricula, to trim down their books for the intrinsically lean and mean phonics primers. A real phonics curriculum, such as the *McGuffey* Readers of the 19th century, would take but a fraction of the shelf space that present Whole-Language materials occupy in a typical classroom. Whole Language means big bucks for the publishing houses, while genuine phonics does not. Never underestimate the influence of a publishing company on a school board, for they wine and dine big-city board members in order to lull them into signing a lucrative and sometimes exclusive contract promoting Whole-Language reading materials. Of course, it is possible that the publishers would create primers that claim to be phonics-based, when in fact they are filled with the gibberish of the sight/whole-word



method. Phony phonics curriculums are, in fact, running rampant today.

Most importantly, introducing intensive, systematic phonics into every classroom would mean that the educracy would have to temper its impassioned allegiance to the likes of John Dewey, Edmund Burke Huey, G. Stanley Hall, Arthur I. Gates, William S. Gray, *et al.* Having taken education courses not too long ago, I do not see this happening. Education Theory 101 textbooks view these disciples of progressive education and non-phonics alternatives to reading instruction as the bedrock from which all significant pedagogical theory stems. It would be the equivalent of telling communists to forget Karl Marx.

Entrenchment

I am often asked why the education establishment continues to embrace Whole Language when there is ample evidence that this system fails millions of children each year and has contributed to the epidemic known as functional illiteracy. In a word, *entrenchment*. Progressive education theory is deeply entrenched in our government schools, and has been for most of the past century. With teachers colleges, teachers unions, education publishers, educrats, and influential "experts" univocally joined in an almost Masonic-like brotherhood — embracing the gospel according to Dewey — one should not be so naive as to expect an "anti-progressive" method such as intensive, systematic phonics to ever assimilate into their value system.

Education Ph.D.s fill their textbooks with highfalutin, pseudo-scientific language in order to hide the innate absurdity of their pedagogy.

Phonics did not sweep into government schools upon the publishing of Rudolf Flesch's best-seller *Why Johnny Can't Read* in 1955, and it won't make serious inroads today with the NRC report or phonics editorials from the *New York Times*. The noble edict from California's Board of Education, which calls for the abandonment of Whole Language, will inevitably be sabotaged by the teachers colleges, teachers unions, and other like-minded and influential brethren. Lest we forget, the Dewey cabal that created our nation's schools of education did so in part to establish homogeneous progressive thinking among all public school teachers. Today's educational professors who shape the impressionable minds of prospective elementary school instructors are simply incapable of turning on the disciples of look-say/Whole Language, if not philosophically unwilling to do so. In general, they haven't expunged dopey pedagogical theories such as guided fantasy, role playing, sensitivity training, encoun-

ter groups, and values clarification, and history shows us that they won't expunge Whole Language either.

As Thomas Sowell brilliantly argues in his book *Inside American Education*, university education professors suffer from an inferiority complex. Their scholarship is hardly taken seriously by professors in other fields of study largely due to its touchy-feely value system that borders on dopiness. I would add, education Ph.D.s fill their textbooks with highfalutin, pseudo-scientific language in order to hide the innate absurdity of their pedagogy. Hence we have the reading issue. Prior to the advent of public schools, parents taught their children to read with relative ease using phonics. The teaching of reading, which is such an important part of the learning process, is hardly a mystery, as homeschooling parents today demonstrate. You don't have to be an "expert" to teach a child to read so long as you stick to the time-tested phonetic way of teaching an alphabetic language system.

Yet today's education experts need to justify their existence and save face in the academic world, so they hyper-obfuscate the reading process via Whole Language and drown their propaganda with such bombast so to give the impression that only the holier-than-thou "professionally-trained" instructor could teach Johnny to read. Kenneth Goodman, reigning guru of modern Whole Language, reinforces this elite status with seemingly every written word. "Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game," he writes. Heavy stuff. Serious scholarship, he would like us to believe. Yet wrong-headed through and through. I marvel at the lengths education experts will go to complicate such a simple issue as reading.

Absurd non-scholarship is a powerful influence on American education today, yet illogical pedagogy translates into danger for our children who bear the damaging consequences of, for example, Goodman's silly approach to reading. And when such revered early pioneers of modern education theory as G. Stanley Hall actually extol the virtues of *illiteracy* — stating that illiterates "are probably more active and less sedentary," "escape certain temptations, such as vacuous and vicious reading," and that maybe "we are prone to put too high a value both upon the ability required to attain this art" of literacy "and the discipline involved in doing so" — it is clear that today's pedagogical theory is rich in loony tradition.

Government schools will never liberate themselves from the enthrallment of John Dewey and company. Therefore, enter at your own risk.

Carlo DiNota teaches English at a private high school in Brookline Massachusetts and is an adjunct professor of English at Bay State College in Boston. He can be reached at ctdinota@aol.com. This article originally appeared in the Chalcedon Report, April 1999. Edited slightly for space.

From the Education Reporter Mailbag:**Bilingual Boondoggle**

When I was a student attending public school in New Mexico, my parents and I were constantly harassed about taking tests designed for bilingual students. These tests were to evaluate the success of the district's bilingual programs.

I was not a bilingual student. All of my education, beginning with my mother's instruction, was done in English. I could read (thanks to Phyllis Schlafly's advocacy of phonics) by the time I was four, and had been speaking English (and Spanish) since I was 11 months old.

The school system wanted me to take the tests because I was listed as a bilingual student, although I had never had a single bilingual class. They used me and my academic success to pad their scores, knowing that I, and other students like me, would score well on English proficiency tests. Their hope was that our scores would raise the average of their failing program, which kept the oversight analysts away and the money rolling in.

I took these tests all through elementary school without my parents' consent and without understanding why I was taking them. When they tried to test me in junior high, I was angered by the deception, and my mother stepped in to stop it. They tried again in high school and I simply refused to take the test. Eventually, I was brought to the principal, who explained that since I was listed as bilingual it was necessary for me to be tested. My mother again became involved and I led a mini-revolt of other students in the same position until school

administrators backed down.

Bilingual education is a joke. So many students enrolled in these classes have failed to become competent in English and are virtually unemployable except as unskilled laborers. It's a travesty of my town that graduates of bilingual programs, with their high school diplomas in hand, are washing dishes in restaurants owned by those who can speak and read English.

Thanks to my parents' insistence that I speak English first, foremost, and well, I graduated from high school near the top of my class in an Advanced Placement curriculum. I am a graduate of the University of Notre Dame with a degree in philosophy and theology. Now, I hope I can join you in your fight to end this waste of taxpayers' money.

Stephen R. Sanchez

I teach in Texas, and for years I have decried the fact that students are pulled out of my reading class for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes where they fall farther and farther behind. In my district and, I assume, in most school districts in Texas, these students are not receiving the education they deserve and their parents are being sold a bill of goods.

There is pressure to pass ESL students which, in turn, creates more problems for them. I have two girls in my 5th-grade homeroom who are probably on a 2nd-grade level. They have been passed on and are well aware that they cannot read.

Cherie Saylor Garrett

Teachers (Continued from page 1)

dents will be able, by year's end, to compare fractions with like and unlike denominators.

- 8th-grade math teachers have similar expectations. While 80-90% expect all or most of their students to understand concepts such as calculating basic algebraic equations, the numbers drop off as tasks become more complex. For example, only 58% expect all or most of their students to memorize and use the Pythagorean theorem, and only 44% expect all or most of their students to convert measurements from one unit, such as feet per second, to another, such as miles per hour.

- While 87% of 8th-grade English teachers expect all or most of their students to write and speak standard English, only 65% expect them to understand such basic concepts as fictional characterization and literary devices such as simile and metaphor.

- Nearly a quarter of 8th-grade science teachers surveyed said that their primary interest is to emphasize the role science plays in contemporary political debates.

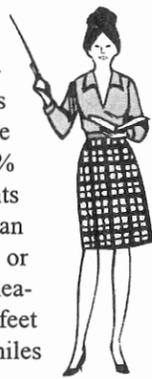
The survey results also showed a lack of high expectation for students among science and history teachers. Only 65% of 8th-grade science teachers thought that

all or most of their students would understand Newton's law of gravity. Among 8th-grade history teachers, 77% said that all or most of their students would know that Martin Luther King gave the "I have a dream speech," but only 27% felt that all or most of their students would know that the New Deal was F.D.R.'s program to combat the Great Depression.

Also among the findings: teachers consider parents an "asset" to the educational process (81% of 4th-grade teachers and 74% of 8th-grade teachers felt this way), and a substantial majority of the teachers surveyed favor ending the social promotion of students, even if it means holding significantly more students back. Fourth-grade teachers from urban and lower income schools especially favor ending this practice.

The Manhattan Institute study was conducted early this year. A total of 403 interviews with 4th-grade teachers of either math or English were conducted in January and February, and 806 interviews were conducted with 8th-grade teachers of specific subjects such as math, science, history or English.

Read the complete study at www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_28.html.

**Election** (Continued from page 1)

that Dick Bruce defeated his liberal Democrat opponent, and Steve Donovan, a paramedic and firefighter with almost no money, defeated a big-spending incumbent.

"Steve's wife and children were his entire campaign staff," Mrs. O'Neill reports, "and then the Eagles came on board. Now, three of the five county school board members are in the pro-family camp."

"Before the election, incumbent board member Linda Abbott was the lone conservative," Alyse explains. "She is now in the majority."

A battle for a state school board seat is raging in Nebraska, where Eagle Forum member Kathy Wilmot is trailing in her re-election bid by just 124 votes as we go to press. Mrs. Wilmot reports that there are "conditional, provisional and a few absentee ballots yet to be counted," and that "a recount is likely."

Mrs. Wilmot has opposed federal control of the public school classroom by voting against grants and agreements for Goals 2000, School-to-Work, national assessments and national standards. "These types of federal programs have eroded local control and decision making in our schools," she says.

Her opponent, who favors "comprehensive health education" (condom instruction), is backed by Nebraska's NEA affiliate, from which her campaign received \$21,000 in cash and in-kind support. The union also provided at least two phone banks, one featuring a child's voice explaining that she was "too young to vote" and urging citizens to vote for the candidate who would "fight for competitive teacher pay," etc.

During her eight-year term on the state board, Kathy Wilmot crusaded for phonics instruction and local control of public school districts. She is an ardent supporter of abstinence education and recognizes the right of parents to direct the education of their own children. Recently, she authored a resolution in support of the Pledge of Allegiance as originally written, including the words "under God." Her resolution was unanimously approved by the board. (See *Education Reporter*, September 2002).

Minnesotans Re-elect Michele

Voters in Minnesota's newly redrawn 52nd District re-elected State Sen. Michele Bachmann, keeping alive their voice for traditional education and fairness in state government. Sen. Bachmann spent thousands of hours researching and exposing Minnesota's version of Goals 2000, the flawed Profile of Learning. She works with the Maple River Education Coalition to create awareness of how America's public schools are being federalized.

"Under the Profile of Learning and School-to-Work, education is no longer based on academics, but skills training," Sen. Bachmann said. She supports the North Star Standard, an initiative introduced by State Rep. Tony Keilkucki as an alternative to the Profile of Learning.

"The North Star Standard's core is academics," Sen. Bachmann explains. "It promotes individual achievement by pre-

senting information to students in logical sequential steps, the same educational principle children have flourished under since our nation's founding."

"Professional educators would be empowered under the North Star Standard," she continues. "Their position in the classroom would be to teach facts, information and reasoning ability" instead of Goals 2000's "illogical philosophy of relativism: that children discover what they perceive could be the truth."

Sen. Bachmann's opponent, who outspent her in the campaign, supports the Profile of Learning and was endorsed by Education Minnesota, the state's teachers union. (In 1998, the Minnesota affiliates of the NEA and AFT merged to create the new union.)

"In addition to the candidates' opposing views on the Profile of Learning, which was huge, their differences on other issues were crystal clear as well," said Ann Elliott Korn, Sen. Bachmann's campaign manager. "Michele is for smaller government and lower taxes, her opponent for big government. Michele is pro-life, her opponent pro-abortion."

"The bottom line in this election was who best represents the people of the 52nd District," she continues. "Michele won by about 9%, despite the fact that the district was redrawn and about 60% of it was new territory for her. This speaks volumes about what voters really want."

Vukmir Victorious in Wisconsin

In neighboring Wisconsin, Assemblywoman-elect Leah Vukmir promises to bring a fresh voice to state politics. She received 89% of the vote in her newly redrawn 14th district, while her opponent, Libertarian David Comey, won just 11%.

A registered nurse and certified pediatric nurse practitioner, Mrs. Vukmir campaigned successfully on the issues of stemming the rising costs of health care, cutting state spending, lowering taxes, and promoting educational excellence, including "educational choices and options for parents and teachers."

When she decided to run for political office, Mrs. Vukmir stepped down as president of PARENTS Raising Educational Standards (PRESS), the organization she co-founded in 1994 with a dozen other parents concerned about the dumbing down of education. She was able to expand her work in 2000 when PRESS was adopted as a project of the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI), a non-profit organization established to study public policy issues.

Mrs. Vukmir has served as a WPRI Research Fellow, and contributes to the organization's publications including *Wisconsin Education Update*, *Wisconsin Interest*, and WPRI Research Reports. (Her article describing the battle against fuzzy math in Wisconsin appeared in *Education Reporter*, November 2001.)

Strong, Godly Candidates

Many observers point out that the election of these godly candidates, and others like them, was a credit to the revival of grassroots Republican politics, and that pro-family leaders should continue to identify and train like-minded activists.