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Sexual Misconduct by Educators an Ongoing Problem

The sexual abuse of children is a hot news item these days, but the problem of sexual misconduct by educators has never received much press. In an April 24 Letter to the editor of *Education Week*, New Jersey parent Carole Nunn observed: "It is terrifying for parents to read again and again that educators are consistently among those arrested for such crimes."

In the fall of 1999, the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* explored the issue of teacher sexual abuse in a special three-part series. The authors noted that this subject is a "sensitive" one "that's been whispered about in school hallways and behind closed office doors as long as there have been schools." The *Gazette* examined 727 cases of sex abuse by teachers from 1994 to 1999. Among the findings:

- ◆ The number of teachers losing their licenses for sex offenses during that period jumped nearly 80%. Experts told the *Gazette* that "even the growing numbers don't reflect the actual toll."
- ◆ Several offenders had been molesting students for many years. One university researcher stated: "When they get caught, it's never a case of one act of bad judgment with one child."
- ◆ Administrators and principals sometimes help offenders land jobs in other schools; educators call this "passing the trash."
- ◆ Some states do not conduct background checks on teacher applicants, while others do only partial checks. In many states, educators convicted of sex crimes against students do not automatically lose their licenses.
- ◆ The appeals process allows some abusers to teach in other districts or states until their appeals run out.
- ◆ Due to poor communication between education departments and criminal justice branches of state governments, education officials don't always find out if a teacher has been arrested for a sex offense.

Education Week Report

A six-month investigation of teacher sexual abuse by *Education Week* in 1998 culminated in the publication of a special report on the issue. Investigators interviewed law-enforcement officers, officials and educators across the country and found that "far more misconduct takes place — and far more students are made victims — than is ever made public."

Education Week found "a dearth of national data on sex offenses against students by school employees," but in-

(See *Misconduct*, page 4)

NEA Charged with Misusing Funds

Landmark Legal Foundation launches complaint with U.S. Labor Department

HERNDON, VA — The public-interest law firm, Landmark Legal Foundation, filed a complaint on April 22 with the U.S. Labor Department charging the National Education Association (NEA) with violations of the federal Labor and Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA). Landmark charged the union with concealing its use for political purposes of millions of dollars in member dues, at least since 1994.

"The LMRDA was enacted to ensure that union members could make informed, responsible decisions about their union's leadership and its activities," said Landmark President Mark Levin. "The NEA's leadership spends millions of tax-exempt dollars on political activities every year, in coordination with the Democratic National Committee, yet reports none of it on its Labor Department filings."

The federal disclosure law requires labor unions to report their income and expenditures (on a form called the LM-2) in sufficient detail to give a clear picture of their operations. Landmark analyzed thousands of pages of NEA documents dating back to 1994 and found that, while millions of dollars were spent on recruitment and support of political candidates, "none of these expenditures are specifically reported."

The *Wall Street Journal* (4-22-02) called the NEA "one of America's great political juggernauts," adding that "from its labor filings not even a diligent union member could figure out just how his cash is being spent on politics."

The *WSJ* noted that "most egregious of all are [NEA's] 1,800 UniServ directors," who are supposed to oversee collective bargaining but who instead "operate as an army of paid political organizers and lobbyists." An NEA publication "specifically charges the UniServ directors with 'managing all political activities' within their area." Although NEA documents show that the union spent about \$40 million on UniServ during the 1996 election year, the *WSJ* opined that "You'd have no inkling about this from the NEA's labor disclosures."

An editorial in the *Washington Times* (4-25-02) asserted that Landmark's complaint has "irrefutably demonstrated" . . . that the NEA "repeatedly evaded its legal reporting requirements." The editorial chastised the union for its failure to also report this information to its members,

(See *Landmark*, page 2)

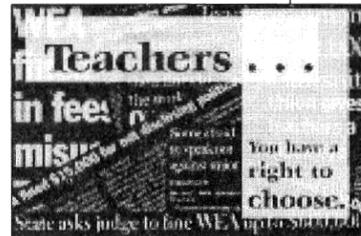
Evergreen Freedom Foundation files suit

OLYMPIA, WA — The Evergreen Freedom Foundation (EFF), a public policy research organization founded in 1991, filed a lawsuit against the NEA on April 8 charging the national union with illegally using mandatory fees paid by non-member teachers to influence state elections. A complaint filed by EFF in January on the same grounds was scheduled for an April 11 hearing before the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC), but was "set aside" by the PDC due to the litigation.

Last year, the NEA's Washington state affiliate (WEA) was found guilty of breaking the same law, after Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire filed suit against the union based on a complaint by the EFF. The judge found the union's violations "intentional" and ordered it to pay \$400,000 in fines, \$190,000 in legal fees, and to refund non-member teachers a total of \$200,000 in misused dues money.

The PDC also found the union guilty of violations and recommended that the Attorney General seek a settlement with "substantial penalties." At issue is the NEA/WEA's pouring of more than \$500,000 into recent Washington state initiative campaigns. However, the PDC

(See *Evergreen*, page 2)



All About Harry Potter

Marketing witchcraft to school children

The media frenzy has faded and the debut film has disappeared from first-run theater screens, but *Harry Potter* is alive and well in America's public schools. The fallout from this successful occult venture continues, with occult themes becoming more commonplace in books, films, TV programs, and promotional toys and paraphernalia.

A new documentary by Jeremiah Films called *Harry Potter: Witchcraft Repackaged* (www.jeremiahfilms.com) contends that more and more young Potter fans are becoming involved in witchcraft, and that Scholastic Inc., the world's largest publisher of children's books, is producing more and more materials featuring graphic horror, the occult, the supernatural, and spiritism.

This video points out that Scholastic "eagerly secured the publishing rights to *Harry Potter*, which far surpassed its previous best seller, the occult adventure series *Goosebumps*." Author Robert S. McGee, one of the film's narrators, states that Scholastic "used its good name and

unrivaled position in the world of education [its products reach 32 million American school children each year] to market



Harry Potter to teachers, recommending that they read the books aloud in class."

"Scholastic's 35 school-based magazines geared to K-12 students tirelessly say the books," McGee says, "as does its award-winning website, which integrates the Potter materials into classroom activities. The religion of witchcraft is given honorable status in the nation's classrooms, while Bible-based reading is banned."

Parents Protest

That *Harry Potter* promotes the religion of witchcraft, or wicca, during the school day has been the chief complaint of concerned parents ever since the books invaded American classrooms four years ago. As the *Potter* craze caught fire and spread throughout the nation, parents in South Carolina, New York, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, California, Georgia and

Nebraska protested to school district administrators and to local and state school boards. They asserted that wicca (witchcraft) is a religion recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. military. Since *Harry Potter* promotes witchcraft and the occult, they argued, the books do not belong in the classroom.

Parents in South Carolina made national news when they presented evidence to their state school board that the Potter books "promote witchcraft" and contain "violence" and "lack of respect" for authority. The intent of these parents was to curtail the schools' heavy promotion of the books and to stop teachers from reading them in class. "At no time did we ask the state board to remove the books from school libraries," explains Elizabeth Mounce, whose son's teacher was reading *Harry Potter* in class. "We simply asked that they not be read aloud to students during class time, but we could not get even that much accomplished."

Mrs. Mounce ultimately pulled her son out of public school and began homeschooling him, while other parents opted their children out of the reading sessions.

Pundits Weigh In

Some Christian parents and pundits

(See *Harry Potter*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Only about 30% of students enrolled in public colleges and universities graduate in four years, according to *National Review* (4-22-02). When reporting graduation rates to compare the performance of student-athletes with non-athletes, for example, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) now uses the six-year rate at the standard. U.S. Education Department Undersecretary Eugene Hickok, a great-great nephew of "Wild Bill" Hickok, called the four-year graduation rate "scandalous" and the cost to states "enormous."

A federal judge in April ended more than 25 years of forced busing in the Dayton, Ohio public schools. The nearly 21,000-student district was the only one in the state still busing students to achieve racial balance. The court order was lifted after the city of Dayton agreed to spend \$30 million over the next five years on programs to boost academic achievement.

President Bush says testing standards for new teachers are too low. In a speech to 4,000 teachers in Minnesota in March, the president said these standards are "so low that all you have to do is answer half the questions and you're in." He said the teaching profession should have the highest standards possible and that the current testing system "doesn't make sense."

Prominent conservatives advise parents to remove their children from public schools. Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family and popular radio talk-show hosts Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Marlin Maddoux recently joined the Alliance for Separation of School and State, headed by Marshall Fritz, to urge parents to remove their children from public schools. Founded in 1994, the Alliance's goal is to get government out of K-12 education. The anti-public school movement is growing primarily because of the politically-correct propaganda in the classroom, including pro-gay indoctrination, and the continued failure of public schools to teach basic skills.

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Landmark (Continued from page 1)

"thus grossly violating both the spirit and letter of the law."

Landmark's complaint shows that during the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign, top NEA officials attended national Democratic Party steering committee meetings. According to the *WSJ*, "this committee and its state affiliates gave the NEA and other unions a virtual veto over the party's platform." The NEA also worked with other Democratic Party campaign organizations, the AFL-CIO and Emily's List (a Political Action Committee that helps raise funds to elect pro-abortion Democratic women) in support of Democratic candidates.

The *Washington Times* asked, "Given the veto power the NEA wields over the [Democratic] party's platform and the union's vast, nationwide, dues-financed army of 1,800 political operatives formally known as 'Uniserv directors,' the Democratic Party has often acted as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the NEA."

Evergreen (Continued from page 1)

further stated that "if a settlement cannot be reached . . . staff do not recommend that the Attorney General proceed with litigation based on the current budget cutbacks and the cost of such litigation."

EFF filed suit against the NEA in response to the PDC's recommendation. "Asking nicely doesn't give the union much incentive to enter a settlement," said EFF President Bob Williams.

Since filing the lawsuit, the EFF has been targeted by the union with radio and newspaper ads attacking its integrity and that of its president. According to *The Olympian* (4-11-02), the WEA will spend

Critics familiar with the NEA's political machinations question how the union has managed to "get away" with its activities. The *WSJ* pointed out that the Labor Department's Office of Labor-Management Standards, which is in charge of oversight of unions' financial disclosures, is "among the only parts of the federal government that the Clinton Administration cut." During the Clinton years, the staff was reduced from 325 full-time employees to 260. In his budget request for next year, President Bush is asking for an additional \$3.4 million to pay for 40 new full-time workers to help ensure reporting compliance.

In both 2000 and 2001, the Landmark Legal Foundation filed complaints against the NEA with the IRS and the Federal Election Commission (FEC), charging that NEA's unreported political expenditures and activities violate federal tax and election laws. (See *Education Reporter*, August 2000.)

at least \$85,000 to run ads ridiculing Bob Williams and charging the foundation with "advocating a number of positions opposed to public education and accepting donations from a number of education-unfriendly conservative groups."

An op-ed column in *The Columbian* on the same day countered that the WEA and its parent NEA "have continually criticized" EFF "because the fiscally conservative tax watchdog group successfully took up the cause of a handful of state teachers who were sick of paying union dues, only to see a portion of their money devoted to political causes they oppose."

Gender Inequity in Mixed-Sex Wrestling

ST. PAUL, MN — A sensible resolution to the mixed-sex wrestling controversy in Minnesota appeared imminent at the end of February, when a bill requiring gender-separated wrestling teams (H.F. 2437) received a second hearing and successfully passed the House Education Policy Committee. H.F. 2437 would repeal portions of a state law enacted in 1981 allowing girls to participate on boys' wrestling teams.

But the measure, introduced last year by Rep. Sondra Erickson (R) and which had six co-sponsors as of April 9, is now stalled in the House. The Senate Education Committee chair has blocked a hearing on the companion Senate bill, sponsored in January by Sen. Gen Olson (R).

The House bill passed out of committee after a hearing on Feb. 19 that included "dramatic" testimony about the "awkwardness" of mixed-sex wrestling. (*Star Tribune* 2-20-02) Wrestler Abe Olson of Trinity High School at River Ridge in Bloomington, MN, testified that he had always been told to respect women, but that "the nature of the sport goes against what I've been taught." Olson explained that wrestling is different from other contact sports because opponents are separated by only "a thin layer of spandex."

To illustrate his point, two Burnsville High School wrestlers demonstrated how intimate touching, such as during a maneuver called the "high crotch takedown," is the inevitable reality of the sport. Opponents "pin" each other by pressing down hard on the chest.



A track and swimming coach who is also the mother of a high school wrestler, testified to the "anguish" her son felt whenever he declined to wrestle a girl and was forced to forfeit his match. "The pendulum [of women's rights] has swung too far," she stated. "What about the males' rights?"

Opponents of the bill complained that "financial crises" facing schools hamper the formation of girls' teams, and that girls who want to wrestle must continue to be given the opportunity.

Although she did not testify at the hearing, the Center of the American Experiment's Director Katherine Kersten — who is perhaps Minnesota's most eloquent critic of mixed-gender wrestling — acted as an advisor to legislators and helped line up wrestling coaches and students of both sexes to present their testimony.

Kersten has written that mixed-sex wrestling "creates legal risks for males." (See *Wrestling*, page 4)

Book of the Month



Real-Life Homeschooling, by Rhonda Barfield, Fireside (Simon & Schuster), 2002, 292 pps., \$14

For parents considering educating their children at home, or those who've already begun the process who want to gain additional insight and ideas, *Real-Life Homeschooling* is for you.

A homeschooling mother of four and the author of two previous books,



Barfield has compiled 21 fascinatingly individual homeschooling stories in a reader-friendly format. She chronicles the challenges and rewards of these families, who come from all walks of

life and all areas of the country.

Readers of *Real Life* will meet urbanites, suburbanites, rural families, small-town dwellers, a homeschooling family in the wilds of Alaska, and a few brave parents who are educating their special-needs children. It becomes obvious from the first few chapters that there is no such thing as a "typical" homeschooling family.

Most of the parents profiled are deeply religious, which influenced their decision to homeschool; others simply wish to instill their personal values and beliefs in their children. All 21 families are firmly committed to helping their children reach their full potential, and all view public schools as inadequate for the task. Some fear that their children would be shortchanged or even harmed in public education; others seek to provide the individualized instruction that conventional schooling cannot.

Real Life also includes references to specific curricula. Visit www.lilacpublishing.com or write the author at P.O. Box 665, St. Charles, MO 63302.

Homeschool Double Play!



Video of the Month

Home-based Education: The Informed Choice, 106 min., \$19.95

This important new video by Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute makes an interesting, fact-filled case for home-



schooling. An expert on homeschool research, Dr. Ray offers practical proof of the overwhelming success of home-schooling and shows why 1.5 - 1.7 million children are currently home educated in America.

Dr. Ray touches on the five major reasons parents homeschool, and shows why homeschooled students are rocketing past their peers on all measures of academic achievement. A real gem!

Order online at www.nheri.org or call 503/364-1490.

FOCUS: Global Ethics, World Government & the NEA

By Dennis Cuddy

In 1932, the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association (NEA) published its *Tenth Yearbook* subtitled *Character Education*. The Department of Superintendence was one of many subdivisions of the NEA at that time which have since been spun off into separate organizations.

Character Education presents the NEA's plans to use America's schools to undermine traditional values in pursuit of the goal of world government. Most people assume the NEA adopted its radical resolutions and objectives fairly recently. Those who believe that the redistribution of wealth, global interdependence, world citizenship, the loss of morality and the weakening of the church's influence, as well as educational initiatives including sex education, situation ethics, School-to-Work, universal preschool, and Marc Tucker's "cradle to grave" system, are relatively new should read on.

Here are direct quotations from the NEA's *Character Education*, published in 1932:

◆ "Relativity must replace absolutism in the realm of morals as well as in the spheres of physics and biology."

◆ "If the individual is to be happy in the contemporary order, he must be open-minded with respect to new values and

new arrangements."

◆ "Loyalty to the family must be merged into loyalty to the community, loyalty to the community

into loyalty to the nation, and loyalty to the nation into loyalty to mankind. The citizen of the future must be a citizen of the world."

◆ "Also, within the limits of a particular society, individualistic and competitive impulses must be subordinated increasingly to social and cooperative tendencies."

◆ "... interdependence rather than independence is the rule of life ..."

◆ "Under the condition of freedom and plenty generated by industrial society, the youth of the country are abandoning the severe sex taboos of the past; the sanctity of the marriage relationship is being challenged; the dogmas and ceremonies of the church are losing their power."

◆ "The church seems never to have been able to win either the masses or the statesmen of the Western nations to the Chris-

tian way of life The position of the church today is one of confusion and uncertainty. It has lost much of the authority with which it at one time was clothed . . . Only when it employs the outworn dogmas of the past and appeals to certain of the traditional prejudices of the people does it appear to have confidence in its own pronouncements."

◆ "This analysis shows a need for statements of objectives which . . . stimulate the creation of new moralities in accord with our changing society. . . The old structure passes. Religion, morality, business, family, school, and state change."

◆ "Until we have a more equitable distribution of property and income in this country, great numbers of families will remain totally unfit agencies of character education."

◆ "Emotional conditioning does determine a great deal of one's attitudes toward persons, things, and ideals, and is responsible for a large part of one's outlook on life. Conditioning is therefore a process which may be employed by the teacher or parent to build up attitudes in the child and predispose him to the actions by which these attitudes are expressed."

◆ "An eminent teacher of ethics, Professor George Herbert Palmer (said): 'Many here (New England) carry a conscience about with them which makes us say, How

much better off they would be with none!'"

◆ "The objective of character education is to teach the child that he will do the best possible thing in each situation, old and new."

◆ "Presumably the person which has specialized in child psychology and other sciences is better prepared to engineer a group of boys and girls in certain socialized activities than is the lay parent."

◆ "Education must be redirected if it is to become the chief means whereby society will attempt to remake itself."

◆ "School life will begin with the nursery school and extend to include adult education in various forms."

◆ "It may come to be, in this changing world, that society will come quickly to support and control a program of education extending, for the individual, from the cradle to the grave . . . As need arises, it will offer the individual opportunity to change quickly or slowly from one vocation or profession to another."

◆ "The question of demand and supply of workers in the various professions and occupations may in time also become a part of our social planning."

Dennis Cuddy, Ph.D. is a political analyst, former educator and Senior Associate with the U.S. Department of Education. He is the author of *NEA: Grab for Power* (available from 888/891-3300).

"The old structure passes. Religion, morality, business, family, school, and state change."

— NEA, 1932



Pushy feminists dominate the college town I live in

By Isabel Lyman

Pushy feminists who want to remake competitive boys into cooperative girls run rampant in my neck of western Massachusetts. There are five colleges in the area, including two for women — Smith and Mount Holyoke — that aid and abet this old-girls network through their respective (but not respectable) women's studies departments. These academic gulags are typically run by masculinity-and-make-up-hating harpies.

If you are a guy who digs NASCAR, shingles roofs for a living, and was moved by *We Were Soldiers*, this place is an estrogen chamber of horrors. In fact, when someone sneezes, the politically correct say, "Goddess, bless you."

Thanks to the steady stream of graduates that these women's studies departments produce, there's no battle of the sexes going on here. We are too confused to know our yin from our yang. We are too fatigued to keep up with the trends: Is this "Heather has two mommies" week? Or, is this "boys want to play on girls' field hockey teams" week? Or, maybe it's "all men are rapists" week?

The few sane folks who haven't relocated to New Hampshire often need help deconstructing their brave new world. So, who 'ya gonna call to divine the se-

crets of the sisterhood? Christina Hoff Sommers, the patroness saint of boys who want to play dodge ball at recess, that's who.

Sommers, the author of *Who Stole Feminism?* and *The War Against Boys*, recently spoke at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) at the invitation of the Republican Club. Before she began her lecture titled, "The Death of the Feminist Movement," she inadvertently made a pro-chivalry statement. She tried to unscrew the cap to her water bottle and failed. Quicker than you could say, "women are dominated by the patriarchy," a young man came to her assistance.

The girls giggled, the boys laughed. Everyone understood.

Dr. Sommers began her talk by explaining that man-hating, far-left "gender" feminists have hijacked women's studies programs and the women's movement from the "equity" feminists who merely wanted equal rights between the sexes. "Women are from Venus, men are from hell," is the motto of these Marxist militants.

Debunking phony-baloney statistics, Sommers explained that radical feminists claim that 30% of women who seek care in emergency rooms do so because they have been involved in a domestic violence altercation. The doc explained that statistics culled from the Department of Justice tell a different story: less than one

percent of the women who visit emergency rooms do so because a boyfriend or husband has beaten them.

"How are women helped by these bogus statistics?" she asked.

Well, they help the wacky feminists maintain job security when they champion this propaganda, no?

She also noted that women's studies programs appeal to students "eager to believe the worst about men" who "only hear conservative views caricatured." She was too polite to state the obvious: They also appeal to co-eds who aren't smart enough to pass the engineering classes.

Consider a sampling of the core courses offered for Spring 2002 in the UMass women's studies program: "Agency, Resistance and Gender Violence in the Caribbean Development"; "The Social Construction of Whiteness and Women"; and "Gender Politics of the Muslim World in Mass Media." Translation: Show up, spout, get an A.

The results of this gender bending can be hilarious. Sommers says that when a toy company test-marketed a unisex playhouse/fort, the little girls cared for the baby doll that came with the house while the little boys catapulted the doll's car-

riage off the roof of the fort. That dumb idea must have been the brainchild of the Lexington, Massachusetts high school principal who insisted on being identified as a princess.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Sommers called for a return to a "women's movement that is grounded in common sense and sound scholarship." A worthy goal, but one that has already been achieved by the mothers who comprise the modern-day homeschooling movement.

During the question-and-answer period, it became obvious that Christina Hoff Sommers' presentation was a hit. Scott, an anthropology student who lacked a respectable amount of machismo, told Sommers that she had mocked the ideas of radical feminists whose viewpoint is rarely heard outside the halls of academia. "I really don't see radicals as having as much of a voice overall," he whined.

Thank goddess! And if my college-age son ever talks like Scott, I am shipping him off to boot camp. Ten-hut!

Isabel (Izzy) Lyman is a homeschooling mom and the author of *The Homeschooling Revolution and numerous articles*. Pushy feminists originally appeared on the internet journal *Enter Stage Right* (www.enterstageright.com), which covers politics, culture and economics. (Edited slightly here for space.)



Isabel Lyman

Misconduct (Continued from page 1)

investigators managed to turn up 244 cases of abuse nationwide over a six-month period, from March through August 1998. These cases involved everything from inappropriate touching to long-term sexual relationships and serial rape. The suspects ranged in age from 21 to 75, with 28 the average age. More than seven of 10 offenders were teachers, but school administrators, janitors, bus drivers and librarians were also involved. Victims ranged in age from kindergarten children to high school seniors. In more than two-thirds of the cases, students were 14 or older.

The report stated that, despite growing awareness of the destructiveness of sexual abuse to the students involved, little has been done to stop it. Among the reasons for this inaction:

- ◆ The number of offenders is small and their behavior so repugnant that many people assume they are easy to spot. The reality is that most perpetrators are the least likely people to arouse suspicion.

- ◆ There is a natural reluctance among school employees to believe their colleagues could engage in such behavior. "It's something that always happens in some other part of the country or in some other school district," one superintendent admitted after a female teacher in his district pleaded guilty to having a three-month sexual relationship with a teenage male student.

- ◆ Victims are often labeled liars by classmates and sometimes by teachers, counselors and principals. They may also be blamed for "bringing down" popular educators. "The characteristics that make you a good teacher are the same characteristics that make you successful in getting close to kids to abuse them," a Utah state education department official told *Education Week*.

- ◆ Powerful incentives keep many victims silent, from vows of love to threats of violence from abusers. When students do speak up, they often beg their confidants for secrecy.

Costly Failure

Education Week found that "time after time, school officials have fallen short in their duty to keep students safe." This failure has proven costly to districts: vic-

tims have been awarded millions of dollars in damages from the courts. In a small but growing number of cases, school officials are being disciplined for failure to properly handle their employees' sexual misconduct. The top lawyer for the National School Boards Association revealed that school officials often fear potential lawsuits by alleged abusers more than by their victims. Employees "sue for defamation, for violation of due process rights, for even suspending them to do an investigation," she said, while the possibility of litigation by victims "is much more remote."

A New Hampshire mother whose 8th-grade daughter had sex repeatedly with her teacher, lamented: "What really offends me is that the one place there are no child advocates is in the schools." Another parent, the father of a 5th-grade student who was one of many young girls molested by a male teacher in California, told *Education Week*: "By law, we've got to take our kids and drop them off at this school. Before this happened, we felt it was a safe place, a place we could trust. Now we don't know at all."

Sexual Abuse and Surveys

Parent Carole Nunn wonders whether abusive educators have access to the many intrusive surveys given to school children that solicit personal information about their sexual behavior, use of drugs and alcohol, and private family matters. Mrs. Nunn's son was forced to take such a survey without her knowledge when he was 13, and she wonders who might have read or reviewed it.

"People who prey on children often take jobs where children are," she says, and adds that parents "have no guarantee that those collecting the data from intrusive questionnaires are not child pornographers or pedophiles."

New Jersey now has a law guaranteeing parents the right to informed, written consent before their children are given intrusive surveys. (See *Education Reporter*, Jan. & Feb. 2002.) Mrs. Nunn and other concerned parents believe this law is an important tool for preventing "highly sensitive information about children and their families from landing in the wrong hands."

Harry Potter (Continued from page 1)

defend Potter's magic as being "of an entirely different nature from real-world witchcraft," but others object to the books' positive portrayal of witchcraft. "Desensitization to witchcraft is already happening," wrote Focus on the Family's Lindy Beam in an online review of the *Harry Potter* series last year. "In an abcNEWS.com interview," Beam noted, "practicing Wiccan [witch] Phyllis Currot said, 'Sure, you are seeing witches in *Harry Potter* do things they don't do in real life. But it is positive. They are friendly. They are good. The book[s] might change the way people feel about us.'"

According to Focus on the Family's *Teachers Focus* (Feb. 2000), other dangers in the Potter novels are the lack of moral authority and the fact that author J.K. Rowling's stories are not based on Judeo-Christian ethics. "When we read Rowling's series, we find that she effectively divorces power from authority," the article stated. "There is no sovereign person or principle governing the use of power. Magical power is gained through inheritance and learning. It is not granted by a Higher Authority, because there is no Higher Authority — at least none higher than Harry's mentor, Albus Dumbledore, and the evil Lord Voldemort."

Some critics decry the Potter books for promoting moral relativism. Harry frequently breaks the Hogwarts school rules, for example, but never suffers the consequences of his actions. "The child becomes a law unto himself," observed one reviewer, who described her visit to an occult bookstore where *Harry Potter* was prominently featured in the children's section, but C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* were conspicuously absent. "The occultists accept Harry," she noted. "We could equate [Potter] to a sort of marketing plan developed to sell the occult."

World magazine reported (10-30-99) that "The magical elements [in Potter] throw a relativistic element ball. The rules of the wizard world are rarely solid and steadfast, and nothing is as it appears."

"The *Harry Potter* craze is bound to generate tremendous confusion between good and evil, especially in the already-relativized ambience of our days," agrees traditional Catholic writer Marian T. Horvat. "Children not only need absolutes, but seek them."

Horvat and others warn that the sense of the demonic is trivialized in *Potter*. "Magic is presented as a funny thing, a game. Spells are 'cool.'" writes Horvat. "What I fear the young reader of *Harry Potter* novels will not realize is that such curses invoke evil — and the origin of all evil is demonic."

Capitalizing on Witchcraft

During the initial rush of Pottermania, author J.K. Rowling's book-signing events drew more than 1,000 people, causing long lines and near-riots at U.S. bookstores. Focus on the Family's *Citizen* magazine reported (Feb. 2000) that Scholastic Inc. warned stores in advance of "the need to properly prepare" for crowds. *Citizen* observed that Scholastic "couldn't be happier about the Rowling-inspired craze."

According to Jeremiah Films, Scholastic is continuing to ride the wave of Pottermania. In addition to the four *Harry Potter* novels released so far, students and teachers can find *Conversations with J.K. Rowling*, *Harry Potter* movie books, journals and stationery, coloring and activity books, pop-up books, and bookmarks, on Scholastic's website.

The website also offers *Goosebumps*, and an occult series called *T•Witches* about fictional identical twins — "the twin daughters of two very powerful witches" — who were separated at birth.

Wrestling (From page 2)

Boys who wrestle girls, or practice with female teammates, must touch them in ways that would constitute illegal sexual harassment in any other setting. In our litigious society, coaches take a risk whenever they have close physical contact with young female athletes." (See *Education Reporter*, May 2001.)

But Kersten and many others object to mixed-gender wrestling primarily because "a civilized society should teach men that they must not use their superior strength to overpower and control women . . . Decent men respect women, and view using force against them as dishonorable and unmanly."

Rep. Paul Marquart (D), a supporter of H.F. 2437, told the *Star Tribune* (3-3-02) that, despite his belief in the right of girls to wrestle other girls, the "indelicate" realities of mixed-gender wrestling "are easier to ignore in theory than in reality." "My concern is that if you match girls and boys," he stated, "you are putting them in very difficult situations on the mat that are very different than even any other contact sport."

The *Tribune* noted that "the issue has

been so politicized and oversimplified that [Marquart's position] has no chance. By offering the possibility that mixed-sex wrestling is not a good idea, he will be branded as a Susan B. Anthony-hating Neanderthal. . ."

The fate of mixed-sex wrestling may ultimately be decided by the courts. On Jan. 16, a group of college wrestling coaches and other interested parties filed a lawsuit charging the U.S. Department of Education with instilling discrimination against men's sports teams through its interpretation of Title IX, which became part of federal education law in 1972. Title IX *does* require schools and colleges receiving federal funds to provide equal educational and athletic opportunities for women, but *does not* require schools to integrate specific sports teams.

According to *Education Week* (1-23-02), the lawsuit asserts that the Education Department illegally adopted a rule in 1996 that "schools must count actual athletes, not spots available on teams, to prove gender equity." The plaintiffs contend that this rule has forced schools to cut men's teams, and that they hope their lawsuit will lead to a "more reasonable way to enforce Title IX."

