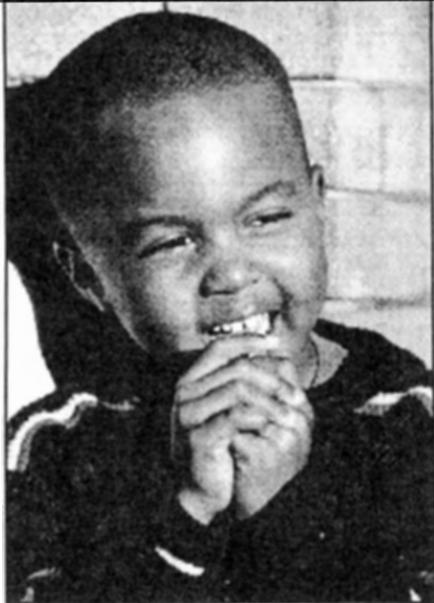


# EDUCATION REPORTER

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MAY 2003



Failure to teach basic skills is most detrimental to minorities and boys.



## Virginia Parents Stop Nosy Questionnaire!

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA — A controversial nosy questionnaire scheduled to be given to area children in grades 6-12 at the end of April was scrapped by the company that produced it. The 169-question survey asks students about their sexual behavior, use of drugs and alcohol, whether they have ever considered suicide, and other personal matters. Fairfax County officials said they were unable to release the Channing Bete Company that produced the survey from liability, and the company declined to take the risk of lawsuits filed by parents who object to the survey's intrusive personal questions.

The *Washington Post* reported (4-23-03) that the survey was "hotly protested by many parents" who do not want their children quizzed during school time about how old they were when they first had sex, whether or not they've ever had oral sex, and other sex questions. Participation in the survey was said to be voluntary, and the sex questions were to have been given only to 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. All remaining questions about personal behavior, suicide, and other personal matters would have been given to 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students.

A spokesman for the Massachusetts-based Channing Bete Company told the *Washington Times* (4-24-03): "We didn't have an issue with the content — the handful of sex questions that were added by Fairfax County. We just made a business decision that we couldn't take a legal risk." As reported in *Education Reporter*

(March 2003), Channing Bete has sold its "Communities That Care" (CTC) questionnaires to about 400 communities nationwide to be given to middle and high school students for the purpose of measuring "a comprehensive set of risk factors" affecting teens. Survey results are used to obtain grant monies for funding health curricula and community programs that many parents and citizens don't even want.

The new survey was scheduled as a follow-up to the CTC questionnaire given to Fairfax County children in 2001, which asked them whether they engaged in binge drinking, used various drugs, and probed for their experience with guns or other weapons. According to the *Washington Post*, the results of that survey enabled the county "to qualify for more than \$1 million in grants for various programs."

Channing Bete was apparently put on guard by the two lawsuits filed in Ridge-wood, N.J. since 1999 to challenge nosy-survey violations of children's innocence and privacy (see *Education Reporter*, Jan. and Feb. 2002, and Feb. 2003). Last year, the New Jersey legislature passed a law prohibiting nosy questionnaires without prior written parental consent.

Fairfax County officials, however, seem undeterred by parental outrage. Laura Yager, director of prevention services for the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, told the *Washington Post*: "Because this was an unfortunate circumstance, our hope is that we will still be able to do a survey in the future." 



## City Schools Fail to Beat Odds

WASHINGTON, DC — The Council of the Great City Schools announced in March the results of its third annual Beating the Odds study. While the report shows overall gains in some areas, a majority of students performed at below proficient levels in reading and mathematics despite increases in per-pupil spending and reductions in class sizes. The *Washington Times* reported (4-23-03) that Beating the Odds III found, for example, that slightly more than half of first-graders in the District of Columbia tested as proficient in reading and mathematics in 2002, but the number drops steadily in the later grades. The District spends \$9,650 per child and averages only 13.5 students per teacher.

Among Beating the Odds III's other findings:

- ◆ Despite new gains on state assessments, urban reading scores remain below state and national averages.
- ◆ The current average per-pupil expendi-

ture in the Great City Schools was \$6,835 for the 1999 fiscal year (the most recent year federal data available), up 12.9% from \$6,055 in 1995-96.

◆ In many districts, reading achievement drops dramatically in the upper grades. By sixth grade, less than 30% of students test as proficient in reading, and by 11<sup>th</sup> grade, only 15% of students test as proficient.

◆ While the gaps in reading and mathematics achievement between white and minority students narrowed slightly, they remain significant in virtually all the urban districts evaluated by the Council of the Great City Schools.

President Bush's chief reading advisor, G. Reid Lyon, told the *Washington Times* that student illiteracy in the later grades is due primarily to "a 'flawed' word-memorization reading method called 'whole language' or 'sight reading' used in many schools." He pointed

(See *City Schools*, page 4)

## Students In Big Apple Get Month-By-Month 'Phonics'

### Can year-by-year declines in reading scores be far behind?

NEW YORK CITY — After asserting that the \$12 billion currently being spent on New York City's public schools is more than sufficient to provide a good education for its 1.1 million students, Mayor Michael Bloomberg pledged in January that reading and writing programs would include "a daily focus on phonics." Since approximately 60 to 70% of black American and Hispanic children in the school system are illiterate despite the financial outlay, his words offered reason for hope. One week later, however, he installed a mandatory whole language and fuzzy math curriculum.

Hallmarks of the new curriculum, which was introduced by the Big Apple's new Department of Education, are *Month*

*by Month Phonics* and *Everyday Mathematics*. The former is sure to guarantee students' failure to learn to read, while the latter has triggered parental outrage across the country.

Writing in the Winter 2003 issue of *City Journal*, Manhattan Institute senior fellow Sol Stern called the new curriculum "a disaster in the making." Stern stated that "the children in the targeted schools are mainly poor and minority — the very population historically most damaged by such methods." Stern noted that *Month by Month Phonics* "has little to do with phonics," despite its name. "Sure, you will find a handful of suggestions to teachers about how to weave the occasional word- and letter-sounding

cues into daily classroom reading activities," he wrote. "But right from the start, the authors make it clear that they're not enthusiastic about phonics."

Stern pointed out the irony of the fact that Mayor Bloomberg made his promise to install a back-to-basics reading program in the schools on Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, even though *Month by Month Phonics* was already chosen. "Bloomberg and his hand-picked schools chancellor, Joel Klein, shrouded their approach to reorganizing the school system and to picking the new standard curriculum in almost

total secrecy," Stern wrote.

Of New York City's 1,000 public schools, 208 are exempt from the mandatory curriculum. These "high performing" schools will be granted waivers because they already have programs in place that are working.

#### 'Palace Coup'

Stern explained that what he called Bloomberg's "palace coup" — mayoral control of the New York City public schools — was made possible by the efforts of former mayor Rudy Giuliani and some conservatives, while it was fiercely resisted by progressives. Now, however, progressive educators are singing a different tune. Not only are they enthusias-

(See *Phonics*, page 3)



G. Reid Lyon

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

The nonpartisan campaign finance watchdog group Center for Responsive Politics charges that the NEA's reported \$22.3 million in political contributions since 1989 is only a small fraction of the union's total political expenditures. The Center cited research by the Landmark Legal Foundation as having conclusively demonstrated this fact in numerous filings with the IRS and the U.S. Department of Labor. The NEA's Washington headquarters, for example, currently spends more than \$47 million, and local affiliates spend another \$43 million, to underwrite the activities of the union's Uniserv network, a political organization that "effectively serves as an auxiliary unit of the Democratic Party." Democrat candidates and party operatives receive 94% of the NEA's political contributions. (*Washington Times*, 4-11-03)

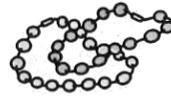
A new study by New York-based polling group Public Agenda found violence in public schools a top worry for students and teachers. The *Washington Times* reported (4-25-03) that Public Agenda's "Where We Are Now: 12 Things You Need to Know About Public Opinion and Public Schools" survey shows that nearly half the teachers questioned said they spend most of their class time trying to maintain order. More than four in 10 say they spend more time keeping order than they do teaching. The students complained that violence in school is a fact of life.

A 12-year-old El Paso, Texas middle school student was accused of sexual harassment for sticking his tongue out at a girl when she declined to be his girlfriend. School officials suspended Sal Santana for three days and said they were considering placing him in an alternative school. Sal's parents said they would appeal their son's punishment to the school board and will probably sue the school district regardless of the outcome. Mrs. Salvador told the *El Paso Times* (4-1-03): "This is crazy. I don't think [Sal] even knows what sexual harassment is."

(More Briefs on page 3)

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## For U.S. Students, PIRLS Yields Few Pearls



BOSTON, MA — The results of a new international study of 4<sup>th</sup>-grade reading achievement, released on April 8, show that only 30-40% of U.S. 4<sup>th</sup>-graders are proficient readers. U.S. students ranked ninth overall in literacy compared to 4<sup>th</sup>-graders in 34 other countries.

Called the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the report also found that U.S. students ranked thirteenth in understanding of factual textbook reading and fourth in fiction reading. The study was conducted by researchers at Boston College, who evaluated 150,000 students in 5,250 schools around the world.

In an interview with the *Washington Times* (4-9-03), the Bush Administration's top reading advisor, G. Reid Lyon, said the study is disappointing in that it found no change in the level of reading achievement of American students from two other reading studies conducted during the past decade. "That's very concerning," Lyon said. "We've still got stagnant rates, and it's a bit bothersome when we're comparing ourselves internationally, while at the same time we lose sight of the kids who aren't getting it in this country."

Grover "Russ" Whitehurst, director of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, stated in a press release that, "In the United States

there are significant gaps in reading literacy achievement between racial/ethnic groups, between students in high poverty schools and other public schools, and also between boys and girls."

Other PIRLS results showed that:

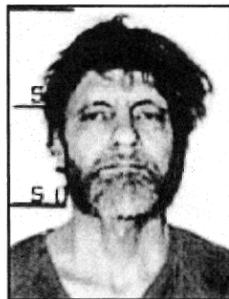
- 4<sup>th</sup>-grade girls outperform boys in reading literacy in every participating country.
- Swedish students ranked first overall in reading achievement, performing highest in both informational and fiction reading.
- 11% of U.S. students scored significantly below the international average.
- Nearly all U.S. 4<sup>th</sup>-graders (95%) attend schools that emphasize reading instruction and 65% receive more than six hours of reading instruction per week, a higher percentage than the international average of 28%.

These results appear to indicate that while U.S. students are receiving sufficient amounts of reading instruction in the vast majority of public schools, **well over a third are reading below grade level, and more than one in 10 are barely able to read.** Supporters of phonics reading instruction point to the persistence of the education establishment in promoting the failed Whole Language reading programs. Whole Language instruction harms all children, they assert, but inflicts the most damage on boys and on children in the poorest and lowest-performing schools.

## Unabomber: Made, Not Born?

Remember Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski, the infamous Unabomber? Many would consider his story "old news" and write him off as that crazy guy who lived alone and built bombs in a cabin in the Montana woods. And didn't he write some weird manifesto?

Recently (3-3-03), the *New York Times* reviewed a new book about the Unabomber entitled *Harvard and the Unabomber: The Education of an American Terrorist* by Alston Chase. This book offers a new perspective on what may have shaped Kaczynski's brand of terrorism. The review states that Chase "argues forcefully, if at times repetitively, that the educational



Ted Kaczynski

philosophy prevalent during this killer's college years laid the groundwork for an all-too-epidemic brand of antisocial rage."

Suggesting that this killer could have been made rather than born, the author bases his argument on the change in science philosophy after World War II and the release of an influential Harvard report called *General Education in a Free Society*. According to the *Times*, "By 1958 when Mr. Kaczynski arrived at Harvard as an undergraduate, the Cold War had created covert new links between research and government, links calling for moral blinders that rendered

traditional scientific ethics all but obsolete." According to Chase, the Harvard report also created a hopeless view among undergraduates that became known as "the culture of despair."

*Harvard and the Unabomber* explains Kaczynski's Harvard experience as "a mixture of emasculation, snobbery and ethical confusion" that "would have lifelong effects." The book describes experiments Kaczynski was involved in during his education in which he was humiliated, ridiculed, and secretly photographed.

Author Chase further suggests that Kaczynski's theories were a reflection of his educational experience and should be examined for their origins, if not for the ideas these theories actually contained. He writes that Kaczynski's manifesto "is neither brilliant nor a symptom of mental illness. It is a compendium of philosophical and environmental clichés that expresses concerns shared by millions of Americans."

In closing its review, the *Times* notes: "But it would help, he [Chase] argues, if students as bright as the Harvard-era Ted Kaczynski were prized rather than ostracized, and if their work were assessed in terms of absolute morality, rather than the relativism that can so easily be rejected, subverted, or ignored."

## Book of the Month



**Dismantling Evolution**, Ralph O. Muncaster, 2003, 224 pps., \$11.99 (soft cover)

"Everything that exists can be explained by what we can now see or otherwise observe." So claim proponents of Darwinian evolution, and that is what school children have been taught for decades as scientific fact.

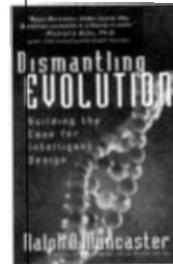
In his new book, Ralph Muncaster dismantles evolutionary dogma from the perspective of a former believer in evolution. Fortified by years of assurances and alleged proof presented by science teachers, Muncaster was unmoved when challenged by an acquaintance who included hard-science findings in his defense of intelligent design. But Muncaster's engineering background, which had taught him that "things aren't always the way they appear," inspired him to embark on a search for the truth.

Throughout his book, Muncaster compares the evidence for evolution to building a bridge. He cautions that every component of a bridge, from the beams to the bolts must be strong, or the structure will fall. "In the case of evolution," he writes, "the entire sequence of evidence must be strong, or the theory will fall apart. One broken element in the evolutionary span is all it takes for the theory to be false."

*Dismantling Evolution* does exactly that, by first exposing myths such as homology – the notion that common body structures imply a common ancestor – and evolutionary trees, which are based on homology. Muncaster also describes the latest scientific discoveries about the incredible complexity of cells, from DNA to proteins, and the virtually impossible odds that a single cell could have evolved into 1.7 million different species regardless of the time span. He conveys this information, along with a wealth of historical material, in easy-to-understand layman's terms, making his case for intelligent design not only compelling but fun.

The author also makes the point that Darwin has been "wrongly criticized" because "he predicted problems in his theory that are still problems today." In other words, *Dismantling Evolution* states what believers in intelligent design already know: that the theory of evolution has been raised to the level of a religion despite Darwin's own warnings. Now, Muncaster writes, "hard-science evidence is only adding to these difficulties."

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# FOCUS: Teacher Unions vs. Good Schools



By Myron Lieberman and David Salisbury

Twenty years ago this month, an ad hoc commission established by then-Education Secretary Terrell H. Bell released a report entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*. The report quickly became the most widely discussed educational reform blueprint in American history. One sentence in the report summarized the commission's take on the status of American education: "If an unfriendly

**The unions welcome reforms that lead to more dues revenue for the unions.**

power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

Although the report generated a landslide of attention and multiple reform efforts, our education system is still in crisis. We have not solved the problems identified in the report because the teacher unions have consistently blocked meaningful reforms.

Recent reports provide fresh evidence of our continuing educational emergency. The U.S. Commission on National Secu-

rity lately lamented the fact that U.S. students lag behind other countries in scientific knowledge and mathematics. Most recently, the Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education released its findings after a review of the state of American education 20 years since *A Nation at Risk*.

The Task Force found that the performance of U.S. public schools remains stagnant. For instance, about 80 million first graders "have walked into schools where they have scant chance of learning more than the youngsters whose plight troubled the commission in 1983."

Certainly, we have seen changes in our schools during the last 20 years. Teacher salaries have been raised, student-teacher ratios have been reduced, annual per-pupil spending has increased by about 40 percent (from \$4,700 per student to \$6,600) and total annual expenditures have grown by nearly 60 percent in constant dollars, from about \$180 billion to \$280 billion.

Note, however, that those changes were supported by the teacher unions. The unions welcome reforms that lead to higher salaries and smaller classes for teachers and more dues-revenue for the unions. At the same time, the teacher



David Salisbury

unions oppose reforms that would empower parents or allow private schools to compete on a level playing field for students.

During the same 20 years, reformers have fought desperately for reforms that would give parents more power, or provide any support for parents who prefer a private to a public school. However, only a few states now have a significant number of charter schools and even fewer allow parents a choice between a private and public school.

Everywhere parent measures have passed, reformers have faced intense opposition from the teacher unions. With over three million members and dues revenues that exceed \$1 billion a year, the unions are an empire-like force.

Through strong-arm political tactics and hefty financial and in-kind support to candidates who support teacher unions' positions, the unions are a virtually insurmountable obstacle to reforms that are essential to educational improvement.

Today, the unions are better prepared to block constructive reforms than they were in 1983. For example, teacher union membership and revenues have escalated, and the unions' stranglehold on education policy — typified by the failure to



Myron Lieberman

include private school choice in the No Child Left Behind Act — is as strong as ever.

In their report released this month, the Hoover Institution's Koret Task Force correctly identified the teacher unions as one of the "powerful forces of inertia" that underlies the public education establishment. These forces proved more powerful than the Excellence Commission could have foreseen in 1983.

Reformers who want to see schools improve in 2003 and beyond should not make the mistake of underestimating the opposition they will face from the teacher unions.

Before significant reforms to our education system can be widely introduced, the power of the public education establishment, mainly the teacher unions, to block reforms must be curbed. Twenty years of cosmetic change in education permit no other conclusion.

*Dr. Myron Lieberman is an author and senior research scholar at Bowling Green University in Bowling Green, Ohio. He is also chairman of the Education Policy Institute (web site: www.educationpolicy.org). Dr. David F. Salisbury is director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute (web site: www.cato.org). He explores and promotes education reform policies and private initiatives to strengthen the independent education system. This article originally appeared in the New York Post (4-19-03).*

## Phonics (Continued from page 1)

tic about the implementation of *Month by Month Phonics*, they are unhappy that more than 200 schools will be allowed to opt out of the program. Some of the best schools failed to make the exempt list, they say, while lesser-achievers did make the list. "If the curriculum is proven to be good, why exempt anyone?" seems to be the consensus.

But is the curriculum proven? Stern says not. He called such assertions by Diana Lam, New York City's Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, "bunk," adding that the improvements in reading scores at an elementary school in Brooklyn cited by Lam were overestimated. "Klein and Lam misled the public egregiously by implying that P.S. 172 used *Month by Month Phonics* throughout the period during which the school's scores went up," Stern explained. "The school only introduced the program two years ago, in 2001. Before then, it used *Open Court*, a tightly scripted phonics program anathema to progressive educators. A significant portion of the gains that Klein and Lam celebrated, in other words, likely resulted from *Open Court*."

### *Month by Month Phonics* in Violation of NCLB

President George W. Bush's reading advisor, G. Reid Lyon, a researcher at the National Institute of Child Health and Hu-

man Development, apparently agrees with Stern. Lyon stated that New York City's new reading program "has no proven track record." Lyon told the *New York Times*: "We can find no published research indicating that this program has been tested with well-defined groups of kids and shown to be effective."

One question that has arisen is whether the Bush administration will allow New York City to receive tens of millions of dollars in federal education funds even though it is in obvious violation of the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires a phonics-based instructional approach to teach reading.

### Fuzzy Math Connection

According to Stern and many other observers, the combination of Whole Language reading and fuzzy math programs can prove deadly for students. "The text-heavy *Everyday Math* presumes that kids already possess sufficient reading fluency to grasp complex word problems, which is unlikely in inner-city schools and which the new reading program will make even more unlikely," Stern wrote.

He described how former teacher Matthew Clavel complained that when his district forced him to use *Everyday Mathematics* in his 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade class in the South Bronx, "the students who were behind in language acquisition found the word

problems 'simply baffling.'"

Clavel related in a recent issue of *City Journal* that a student told him, "Mr. Clavel, no one understands this stuff." Another teacher lamented that *Everyday Math* "encourages students to use calculators when the numbers get too big," and that the calculators become a crutch. "If you give a child a calculator in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, you're getting him to commit intellectual suicide," she said.

Parents all over the country have raged against *Everyday Math* and other fuzzy math programs, often to no avail. While some school districts have introduced alternative math programs, in most instances the fuzzy math programs have remained in place, and parents have been forced to tutor their children themselves or to hire tutors.

### Month-by-Month Blunder?

Sol Stern asserted that "Bloomberg's officials have worked hard to promote the image of *Month by Month Phonics* as an effective new reading program." He added that the *New York Times* has aided the city's cause, despite the testimony of G. Reid Lyon. "Though the Department of Education guards access to the schools as if they were military bases in Afghanistan," Stern wrote, "it recently allowed *Times* reporter Abby Goodnough to spend a week observing classes at P.S. 172. Goodnough's article glowingly described all-around satisfaction with *Month by*

*Month Phonics* at the school."

Stern pointed out that Mayor Bloomberg accepted a significant political risk by taking on the New York City public school system. "He has to decide soon whether he really wants to stake his reputation and so much of his political capital on an untested reading program masquerading as phonics, led by a group of progressive educators who have never demonstrated that they can provide minority children with the basic skills they need to succeed in life." 

## Briefs (Continued)

**Texas Tech biology professor Michael Dini dropped his requirement that students believe in evolution in order to earn letters of recommendation.** As reported in *Education Reporter* last month, Dini refused to recommend students who did not "truthfully and forthrightly" apply a "scientific" explanation to the question: "How do you think the human species originated?" A student and the Liberty Legal Institute filed a complaint with the U.S. Justice Department against Dini and the university claiming "religious bigotry". The Justice Department began an investigation, then dropped it when Dini replaced his evolution-belief requirement with the requirement that students explain the theory of evolution.

## Teaching Civics & Government in the New Federal Curriculum

Federal laws enacted over the past nine years, including 1994's Goals 2000 Educate America Act, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, the 1994 funding bill known as H.R. 6, and more recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, have spawned a new federal curriculum. This new curriculum establishes national standards for academic subjects and entrusts the subject of civics and government to a single institution, the Center for Civic Education (CCE).

As author, political science professor, and former Minnesota State Representative Allen Quist explains in his 2002 book *FedEd: The New Federal Curriculum and How It's Enforced*, the teaching of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights is now done selectively to serve the goals of world government rather than our constitutional republic.

In his review of *FedEd* on Lew Rockwell.com (2-22-03), author and Ludwig von Mises Institute Fellow Steven Yates explains that one of the new curriculum's key texts is *National Standards for Civics and Government*, which makes 81 references to the First Amendment but none to the Second Amendment. "This is unsurprising," Yates writes, "the goal, after all, is not merely dumbed-down subjects but disarmed ones as well, a people encouraged to fear guns." Yates adds that the Tenth Amendment "also disappears" from *National Standards*, because "it would suggest to thoughtful readers that the entire federal-educative edifice is unconstitutional. Out of sight, out of mind."

### What's in a Lesson?

What does the new federal curriculum teach about civics and government? Prompted by a tip from a researcher and pro-family activist in Idaho, *Education Reporter* reviewed the sample lessons on the Center for Civic Education's website ([www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org)). The topic of Lesson 6 is "What are the Possible Consequences of Privacy?" Teachers are directed to divide their classes into groups to discuss the benefits and costs of privacy based on a series of scenarios.

The lesson initially equates privacy with people's freedom "to think and act as they please without unreasonable and unfair influence or control by others." But it goes on to suggest that individuals who have "too much privacy" can become lonely and have "poor relations with others." It equates "too much privacy" with "loss of stimulation and intellectual growth," stating: "People correct errors in their thinking and learn new ideas and ways of doing things by interacting with other people." [Emphasis added.] The lesson does not state who decides how

much privacy is too much or who determines what ways of thinking are "errors." Could the implied solution be more government?

Lesson 6 links privacy with "misbehavior and lawlessness." "Privacy may prevent unlawful behavior from being discovered and punished," it states, and includes these examples: "If there are private places where people are not watched, they can go there to commit crimes or to hide evidence of their crimes." It also pits privacy against financial cost: "Building homes with separate rooms to provide privacy costs more than building a single large room."

Finally, Lesson 6 ties privacy to lack of accountability. "Privacy enables people to do things that cannot be observed by others," it states. "As a result, there may be no way to hold them responsible for wrongdoing." Examples given are: (1) "If they are not being supervised, people might take shortcuts in doing their work, or cheat on a test, or steal"; and (2) "Other people might never discover what has been done, or there may be no way to prove who is responsible."

### Reading Lists

The Center for Civic Education also publishes "Comparative Lessons for Democracy," which it bills as "A Collaborative Effort of Educators from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Russia, and the United States."

These "Comparative Lessons" are apparently taught by class assignments based on a list of recommended books. An introduction to the list states: "This annotated bibliography is designed to tap the rich resource of children's literature to stimulate discussion of violence and of alternative, peaceful ways to resolve conflict. Its focus is on books appropriate for upper elementary and middle school students, though a number of books can be used in the earlier grades as well."

Not included on this list are books celebrating the legacy of freedom made possible by American constitutional government, and the wonderful examples of pioneering spirit, invention, entrepreneurship, and innovation that resulted. Stories about American heroes who built, sustained and defended the most prosperous, most powerful nation on earth over the past 225 years are excluded. Instead, we find the following books recommended [descriptions in quotes are from CCE's website]:

- *The Big Book for Peace*: "A compilation of short stories . . . addresses the many kinds of peace needed in today's world . . . It has a pacifist, nonviolent-resistance bent."

- *Smokey Night*: "It is set against the fires and looting, the anger and excitement, the danger and the fright of the Los Angeles riots in 1992."

- *Mrs. Moscowitz's Last Stand*: Friendships "blossomed under the ginko tree in front of [Mrs. Moscowitz's] house. Now the tree is threatened by a city order to cut it down . . . When all else fails, she resorts to civil disobedience by chaining herself to the tree. The resultant publicity works. The tree is saved and the neighborhood celebrates."

- *Pink and Say*: "'Mother, this war has to be won or this sickness that has taken this land will never stop' . . . This powerful 'picture book' is for older children, those who can begin to understand the cruelty of this civil war as well as the strong bonds that were forged amid the horror . . . It raises the question of conflict between states around a policy that created a great moral dilemma."

- *Cesar Chavez, Hope for the People*: "'I am convinced that the truest act of courage . . . is to struggle for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice.'"

- *Scorpions*: "Jamal is a twelve-year-old in New York City, caught in a web of loyalties: first to his family, including a hard-working mother, a brother in jail for drug dealing and a young sister, then to his brother's gang."

- *The Fighting Ground*: "Against his father's wishes, 13-year-old Jonathan goes off to fight in the American Revolutionary War . . . There is no glory here, but killing of friend and enemy; combatant and civilian."

- *The Great Peace March*: "The words for this book come from a song written for the 1986 Great Peace March for Nuclear Disarmament."

- *The Secret of the Peaceful Warrior*: "A nine-year-old boy moves to a new neighborhood where he is confronted by the neighborhood bully. He is helped to deal with his fear and anger by a grandfather named Socrates, who stresses that one's goal should not be to run away, or to fight, but to become a 'peaceful warrior.'"

- *I Dream of Peace, Images of War by Children of Former Yugoslavia*: "Pictures and short writings by children, ages 6 to 15, were gathered by UNICEF from refugee camps and schools . . . [The

book] serves as 'a protest against the violation of [children's] fundamental right to be free of the torments of war,' and calls for the people of the world to join with the children in saying 'enough is enough.'"

- *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*: "In real life, 12-year-old Sadako became a heroine to children in Japan and throughout the world for her spirited fight against leukemia caused by atomic radiation after the bombing of Hiroshima . . . Making origami cranes has become an annual ritual throughout Japan and internationally, in order to remember the human cost of war and to stress the need for peace."

- *Out of Control*: "This Newbery Honor book author has written an insightful story about sexual harassment of teenage girls by their male classmates."

- *Don't Hurt Laurie!*: "Laurie is beaten by her mother, regularly, unexpectedly, and with increasing severity . . . Finally, when she becomes fearful for her life, Laurie reaches out for help . . ."

- *The Great Brain Reforms*: "In a small Utah town, a young 'con artist' swindles his peers out of everything they hold dear . . . When he goes too far and endangers life itself, the children find a unique way to resolve the conflict . . ."

- *Death of the Iron Horse*: "In August 1867, an 'Iron Horse' was derailed by Native Americans – the only time in history such an event happened. This is the true story of that act, characterized by the author as 'a tale of courage and pride and of a people caught up in an unequal struggle to preserve a sacred way of life.'"

- *Violence in the Schools: Developing Prevention Plans*: "Students examine the problem of violence in a hypothetical middle school, in their communities, and in the nation and develop a prevention plan . . ."

### What to do

If you do not believe that the Center for Civic Education's lessons and bibliography provide proper instruction in American constitutional government and civics, Allen Quist, Steven Yates, and many other concerned parents, educators, and activists urge you to get involved. For more information, Allen Quist's book, *FedEd*, is available from the Maple River Education Coalition, 1402 Concordia Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. The coalition's website is [www.edwatch.org](http://www.edwatch.org).



## City Schools (Continued from page 1)

out that research has demonstrated that the ability to read "takes good power in phonemic awareness and phonics. Those two are absolutely non-negotiable. You can't learn to read without them," he said.

Founded in 1956 and incorporated in

1961, the Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 60 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Its stated mission is to improve urban public education through legislation, research, media relations, instruction, management, technology, and special projects.

