

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## A-B-C (Anything But Christian)

### Schools Embrace Muslim Traditions



Even as Christian traditions have all but disappeared from American public schools, children are being increasingly exposed to Islamic and other faith traditions in the classroom, prompting charges of religious indoctrination.

In many California schools, middle-school students are required to take a three-week course in which students adopt a Muslim name, wear a robe, learn the tenets of Islam and stage their own "jihad." They pray in the name of Allah and chant to Allah, according to ASSIST News Service.

A federal judge on December 10 dismissed a suit by Christian students and their parents who objected to role-playing sessions of a Byron, CA seventh-grade history class that called for students to adopt Muslim names and recite language from prayers. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton held that the activities did not amount to an unconstitutional endorsement of Islam because the purpose was educational, not religious. She noted that California law requires seventh-grade world history courses to include a

unit on Islam.

"This is a religious indoctrination," complained Richard Thompson, president and chief counsel of the Thomas More Law Center in Ann Arbor, MI, who represented the plaintiffs. "It shows a double standard, one for the Christians and one for the other religions." (sfgate.com, 12-12-03)

The decision by the same court that had declared the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional provoked an indignant response from the Christian Educators Association International.

"The court did not find the Islamic prayer and worship to be 'devotional activities,' which they unquestionably are," said executive director Finn Laursen. "The contextual meaning of the word devotional here is religious observance or worship."

"Meanwhile, Christian 'devotional activities' are banned in public schools. There is a remarkable double standard at work that reflects a bias against Christianity and a fundamental misinterpretation of the law," he continued.

"Imagine if the students had been re-

quired to pray to receive Jesus Christ as their savior, take communion, memorize verses from the Bible, recite the Ten Commandments, pray the Lord's prayer, play 'evangelism games' and simulate a revival meeting," Laursen added. The court "is allowing the classroom to be used to teach one faith while banning another."

In Covina, CA, seventh graders fasted in November to celebrate the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in an extra-credit assignment, drinking only water during daylight hours. Outraged by the assignment of religious fasting in a public school, the American Middle-East Christian Association protested outside of Royal Oak Intermediate School. (oregonmag.com, 12-1-03)

Several New Jersey and Michigan school districts with large Muslim populations closed their schools on an Islamic holiday, the Eid-al-Fitr on last November 26 which celebrates the end of Ramadan. (AP story reprinted at newsday.com, 11-14-03)

In December, Christ and Christmas were censored in numerous ways by

(See A-B-C on page 4)

## Homeschoolers Flex Muscle

TRENTON, NJ — Homeschoolers in New Jersey scored a big victory on January 12, the final day of last year's legislative session, when the state legislature adjourned without taking up what was called the Anti-Homeschooling Act. Introduced by Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg, the bill would have required homeschoolers to be tested annually, and to submit to annual physical exams (even though this is not required of public school students). In addition, the bill would have given the State Board of Education unprecedented regulatory authority over homeschoolers.

Assemblywoman Weinberg appeared to be using some notorious examples of abuse of children investigated by the Division of Youth and Family Services as a smokescreen to win passage for her bill. Those cases, however, revealed the incompetence of the state agency, not any problem with homeschooling.

A diverse group of homeschool leaders from Catholic, Christian and homeschool groups mobilized some 300 homeschoolers and parents such as Carolee Adams of Montvale. They traveled to Trenton and lined the halls of the capitol to stop the bill. They held a news conference at which leaders presented many of the favorable facts and statistics showing the academic achievement of homeschooled students. Equipped with pictures of their own representatives, the homeschoolers were able to identify and speak to them directly about the academic and social value of homeschooling.

For most homeschoolers, this was their first experience in lobbying and they scored total success.

ber Terri Leo. "There are no transitional species ever found" in the fossil record.

The errors to be corrected include the removal of old, inaccurate Haeckel diagrams comparing human embryos and those of other species in an attempt to demonstrate common ancestry under evolutionary theory. The revisions drew praise from the Seattle-based Discovery Institute, which promotes the theory of intelligent design.

"This is real progress in the cause of science education reform," said institute president Bruce Chapman. "Finally fixing these errors is an important step to improving the accuracy of science education about evolution."



## Missouri Bill Would Require Teaching Alternative to Evolution

### Texas Corrects Science Texts

Intelligent Design theory would have to be taught in schools on an equal basis with evolutionary theory, according to a bill introduced in the Missouri legislature.

The Missouri Standard Science Act (H.B. 911), sponsored by Republican state Rep. Wayne Cooper, is the brainchild of Missourians for Excellence in Science Education, which cites an August 2001 Zogby poll showing that 78% of American adults support teaching "scientific evidence that points to an intelligent design of life."

"I'm very excited about it," commented Lois Linton, vice president of Missouri Eagle Forum. "It's strictly from a scientific point of view."

The seven-page, technically written bill aims to avoid promoting the teaching of specific religious beliefs. It defines "biological intelligent design" as "a hypothesis that the complex form and function observed in biological structures are the result of intelligence" and "requires any proposed identity of that intelligence to be verifiable by present-day observation or experimentation."

More broadly, the bill mandates that

all science taught in Missouri public elementary and secondary schools be "standard science," defined as "knowledge disclosed in a truthful and objective manner [about] the physical universe without any preconceived philosophical demands concerning origin or destiny . . . based upon verified empirical data obtained through observation and experimentation. . . ."

If scientific theory is taught, "the theory shall be identified as theory."

The group that launched the idea describes the bill as "a truth in labeling law for the teaching of science." Stating that evolution should be identified as theory, the Missourians for Excellence in Science Education position paper asserts, "The commingling of factual data with speculation and theory is currently misleading and confusing to both teachers and students."

H.B. 911 is currently in the Missouri

House education committee, chaired by Republican Rep. Jane Cunningham.

In Texas, which already has a law on the books requiring science texts to spell

out strengths and weaknesses of all scientific theories discussed in them, the state board of education recently adopted 11 new biology textbooks in a compromise that included a commitment to correct certain errors relating to evolutionary theory. While four of the 15 board members objected to how nine of the books portray the theory of evolution,

they joined a unanimous vote on November 7 to approve all the texts with corrections.

"We were not trying to put creationism in. We were asking merely that the law be followed," explained board mem-



Haeckel phony embryo diagram

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

A Florida appellate court has blocked review by a guardian of a test his child reportedly failed. Steven Cooper asked to see the questions on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, and the trial court allowed limited access without copying under Florida's Student Record Law. On appeal, the appellate court denied access. It held that test scores are part of a student's record, but the underlying test questions are not and thus cannot be reviewed by parents.

**Homeschooler pens novel that outpaces *Harry Potter* on recent U.S. bestseller list.** The fantasy, *Eragon*,



appears influenced by J.R.R. Tolkien. The teenage author, who never attended school and lives in rural Montana, was edited by his parents, who run a tiny publishing company for educational literature. Alfred A. Knopf has since made a \$500,000 deal with Christopher Paolini for three books, film rights have been sold for six figures, and a British publisher has snapped up the rights. The youth believes his isolation fired his imagination. (timesofindia, 10-13-03)

**92% of high schools and 71% of all schools had at least one violent incident in the school year,** according to a survey released in December by the U.S. Department of Education on violence in the nation's public schools. The survey covered 2,270 schools in 2000. The principals reported a total of 1,466,000 violent incidents.

**Soft drinks should be eliminated from schools** to help counter the nation's obesity epidemic, the American Academy of Pediatrics said in a policy statement issued in the January issue of *Pediatrics*. Nearly 9 million U.S. youngsters aged 6 to 19 are seriously overweight, triple the number in 1980. (Associated Press, 1-5-04)

(More Briefs on page 4)

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## Schools Riddled with Anti-Gun Bias



Second Amendment advocates have compiled impressive evidence of anti-gun bias in school textbooks, media coverage of school violence, and school disciplinary policies.

"What you think your child should be learning about the Constitution, the Second Amendment, violence and firearms may be radically different from what is actually being taught," Jeff Skocilich wrote in *America's 1<sup>st</sup> Freedom* (May 2002). "It is now quite common to regard the Second Amendment as little more than a license to form a militia or National Guard."

Distorted constitutional interpretation is only part of the problem. Consider the following blatantly negative slant found by Skocilich in the history textbook *The Enduring Vision* (D.C. Heath and Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.): "Assuming that they would have to fight their way across the plains, settlers prepared for the trip by buying enough guns for an army.... In reality, the pioneers were more likely to shoot themselves or each other than to be shot by the usually cooperative Indians, and much more likely to be scalped by the inflated prices charged by merchants ... than by the Native Americans."

Health textbooks are shot through with inaccurate statistics and propaganda about firearms, such as the following statements unearthed by Skocilich: "The law forbids people of any age from carrying a concealed weapon." (False. Concealed-carry is legal in most states.) "Guns are the weapons most likely to be used to harm teens." (Actually, other weapons account for almost 80% of aggravated assaults against teens, according to the FBI Uniform Crime Index.)

Prominent gun advocate John Lott, author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, has made a career of exposing anti-gun bias in the news media. After a notorious school shooting two years ago at Appalachian Law School, only four out of 280 news stories he reviewed mentioned that the students who stopped the attack had guns and pointed them at the attacker. Using words like "subdued," "restrained," "overpowered" and "tackled," 72 stories described how the attacker was foiled

without even noting that the student heroes had guns.

"Unfortunately, the coverage in this case was not unusual. In the other public school shootings in which citizens with guns have stopped attacks, rarely do more than 1 percent of the news stories mention that citizens with guns stopped the attacks," noted Lott (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 2-2-02).

Hostility to guns in any form also permeates school disciplinary policies. In November 2003, a federal appeals court unanimously ruled that the Albemarle County public schools may not enforce a dress code that prohibits students from wearing clothing depicting images of weapons. The suit was filed by the National Rifle Association on behalf of a student who was ordered to turn his NRA T-shirt inside out because school officials feared it could encourage violence. The shirt bore silhouettes of gunmen and the words "NRA Sports Shooting Camp."

The court said the policy is so broad that it could prohibit clothing displaying the Virginia state seal, which depicts a woman armed with a spear standing with one foot on the chest of a vanquished tyrant. It also could cover the musket-toting pioneer mascot of a neighboring high school and the crossed-sabers logo of the state university's sports teams, the court stated. (AP story reprinted at [timesdispatch.com](http://timesdispatch.com), 12-1-03)

Zero-tolerance policies have trapped numerous students for harmless possession or drawing of firearms. A Vermont junior was suspended under a zero-tolerance policy in November for taking an unloaded deer rifle onto school grounds. He had been hunting before school and forgot the weapon was in his car, according to his mother. (*New York Times* story reprinted at [boston.com](http://boston.com), 11-21-03) A 16-year-old boy was expelled from a Florida school November 10 for a stick-figure drawing of a person shooting another person. He made the sketch during geometry class and passed it along to a friend. ([news-press.com](http://news-press.com), 11-11-03) See also *Education Reporter*, Dec. 2003.

## Book of the Month



**Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences 800 B.C. to 1950**, Charles Murray, HarperCollins Publishers, 2003, 458 pps. (exclusive of lengthy appendices), \$29.95.

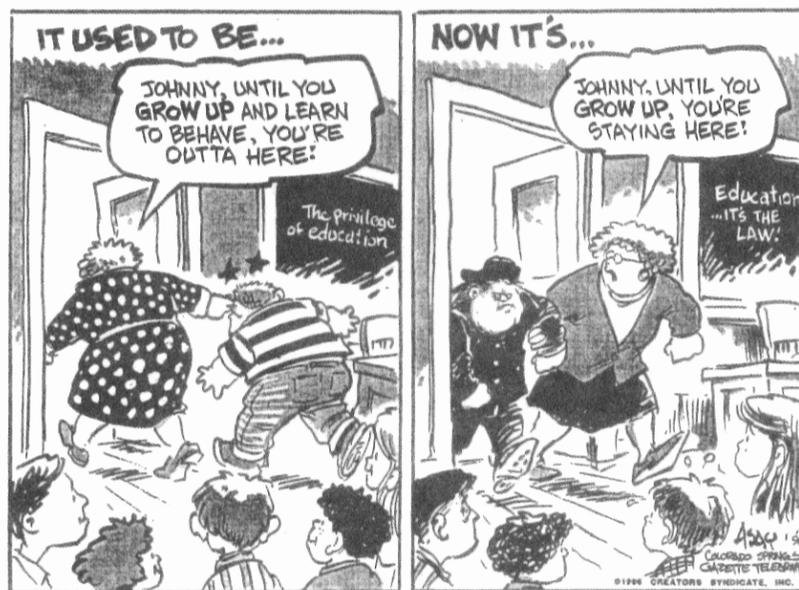
This audacious rebuke to academic political correctness uses the instruments of social science to compose a paean to Western civilization, and specifically the dead white European males (DWEMs) who overwhelmingly contributed to the arts and sciences. In the process, it implicitly refutes the reigning dogmas of contemporary universities, so many of which have chosen to de-emphasize DWEMs in favor of trendy ethnic and gender studies.

*Human Accomplishment* employs persuasive statistical techniques to list the most significant historical figures in the arts and sciences, including a top-20 ranking in each field. The author constructed his data from the proportion of space accorded to the figures in encyclopedias and biographical dictionaries concerning the sciences and technology, and Western and non-Western philosophy, music, literature and visual art. Graphs and lists are interspersed with historical summations, analyses, anecdotes and cogent arguments to give the reader the big picture of progress and the phenomenon of genius.

More interesting than the rankings, however, are the discussions of the conditions that gave rise to genius. Murray concludes that the "giants" overwhelmingly emerged between 1400 and 1900 from four countries in Europe, aided by such factors as prosperous cities with good schools and universities and some political freedom. He insightfully analyzes the resilience of accomplishment amid adverse conditions such as warfare and plague; the dearth of female significant figures; the flowering of Jewish achievement after anti-Semitic restrictions were lifted; and the more recent rise of U.S. accomplishment. But why did Western Europe predominate and not Asia, Russia or the Arab world, all of which made valuable contributions?

Murray's answer turns out to hinge on Christianity. The ancient "Greek miracle" hatched Western individualism, but it took the Christian doctrine of the equality of all people in the eyes of God, plus Thomas Aquinas's exaltation of reason as pleasing to God, plus the Reformation's assertion of the individual's direct relationship with God and Scripture, to foster the sense of purpose and autonomy that best enable genius to flourish. Brilliant people in the East had to contend with cultures showing far more deference to clan, tradition and authority, and aversion to debate and innovation, than prevailed in the West.

The author, whose best-known books are *Losing Ground* and *The Bell Curve*, concludes that even as political and economic freedom have rapidly improved the human condition, the rate of accomplishment in the arts and sciences has been declining at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the arts.



# FOCUS: The End of Education



By T. Robinson Ahlstrom

Once upon a time in a far-away place, a small band of deeply religious idealists set out to re-invent the world. Amazingly, they succeeded.

Leaving comfortable cottages and thriving businesses, they sold off their cows and most of their clothes. They cashed in family heirlooms, bartering pewter and silk for passage over “a vast and furious ocean.” They sacrificed everything, including the lives of half their number — but they carried with them every book they owned.

Upon ascending the thicketed coast and carving out a few primitive settlements, they established a college modeled after Cambridge. The body politic they fashioned included The Massachusetts School Laws — the first universal literacy legislation in recorded history.

Between 1640 and 1700, they maintained a society with literacy rates fixed at about 95%.<sup>1</sup> No precinct in either England or Europe could compare. Samuel Eliot Morrison referred to them as “a generation wholly committed to the life of the mind and the soul.”<sup>2</sup>

By the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the success of their venture paved the way for two seismic convulsions — the first, moral and spiritual; the second, political and economic. The Great Awakening and the American Revolution significantly widened access to learning and heightened the sense of urgency to maintain both a learned ministry and a literate citizenry.

John Adams of Massachusetts insisted on “education for every class and rank of people down to the lowest and the poorest.” Thomas Jefferson created a complete system of education for Virginia, asserting that “the education of the common people is the surest security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.”

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>, the system of public schools that emerged helped make America a beacon of hope and opportunity for peoples from every culture and corner. Unlike the tribal and traditional societies from which they fled, the United States was an egalitarian engine and a material meritocracy. It was the one place on earth where aspiration and perspiration counted for more than ancestry and pedigree. And education was the key. That was then.

## A National Nightmare

Today, the land of idealists and immigrants gets a failing grade! On the 2001 National Assessment of Educational Progress, nearly 40% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 26% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders could not demonstrate basic reading skills for their grade-level. In many urban schools, 70% of the students fail to read at the “Basic” reading level.

The 2002 NAEP report on writing skills tells a similar story. The proportion of high-school seniors who simply cannot write a cogent paragraph rose from

22% in 1998 to 26% in 2002. The *New York Times* reported that “more than two-thirds of the students in each grade could not organize their writing well enough to achieve the proficient level.” Currently, one quarter of the entire adult population of the United States is unable to perform the basic literacy-related tasks required by a typical job.<sup>3</sup>

If members of the American Medical Association delivered health care the way that members of the National Education Association deliver education, half of us would have already met our Maker, leaving the other half with grounds for a class-action lawsuit. What we now face — if we choose to face it — is nothing short of national malpractice.

## **A militant menagerie of psychologists, social engineers, lawyers, union organizers, judges and educrats have effectively re-tooled America's schools.**

The problem is not that most teachers are not dedicated professionals. They are. It is not that we don't spend enough money. (We spend approximately twice that of any other industrialized nation — and more, in adjusted dollars, than at any time in our nation's history.) The problem is systemic.

Public education in these United States has become rather like agriculture in the old Soviet Union — our flirtation with socialism. It has been unionized, bureaucratized, nationalized and politicized, and every year there is a new excuse for the crop failure.

Since the middle of the last century, a militant menagerie of psychologists, social engineers, lawyers, union organizers, judges and educrats have effectively re-tooled America's schools. The top-down labyrinth they constructed is artificially disconnected from the literary heritage of our civilization, hostile to both organized religion and simple expressions of personal piety, and slavishly wed to the latest socio-political fashion.

Still in charge, these high priests of hokum are possessed of a distaste for traditional literature-based learning that is matched only by their zeal to “socialize” the next generation. Their aversion to the strenuous rituals of reading, writing and arithmetic is matched only by their unswerving loyalty to a failed Freudian scheme called The Child Centered School.

The system they created is a luxury the nation can no longer afford. It is not merely an educational problem to which we must tend. It is a national nightmare from which we must awaken.

Our massive, monopolistic grid of public schools has become the Achilles' heel of our democratic society. It doesn't work and it won't listen. While the folks at the Department of Education rehearse their cant of “no child left behind,” the cinderblock and linoleum gulag they administer is leaving whole classes of soci-

ety to asphyxiate on the toxic fumes of spent ideas.

We are becoming “a house divided against itself” — two Americas, separate and unequal. Educational dysfunction, social disintegration and a growing digital divide are creating a two-track society without a common culture, shared sense of citizenship or vital moral center. Jefferson's apprehension concerning a nation insufficiently literate to sustain “a due degree of liberty” is now a real and present danger.

Unfortunately, America's new illiteracy is not only verbal and cultural — it is ethical. In 1955, Rudolf Flesch wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read*. In 1992, William Kirkpatrick wrote *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong*. Disturbing as they are, both books are truer today than when they were written.

When there are more than 700,000 attacks, shakedowns and robberies in our public schools each month and 18,000 serious crimes committed on school property every day, it's time for a change. When one in every five public-school students carries a weapon to school and 150,000 carry a gun and 22% are afraid to use the restroom at their school, it's time for a change.<sup>4</sup> When 78% of our students admit to cheating on tests — and only 16% believe that it's wrong — it's time for a change.<sup>5</sup>

Forty years of “values clarification” and myriad other forms of do-it-yourself ethics have left us with 72% of our school children believing that “there is not [a] single ethical code that is right for everyone.”<sup>6</sup> It's time for a change.

Why are we surprised when each day brings a new revelation of corporate greed and high corruption? Why are we shocked by the avarice and fraud on display at Enron, Global Crossing, Tyco, Arthur Andersen, ImClone, Merrill Lynch, WorldCom — *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*?

When Harvey Pitt, former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, observed that “far too many corporate officials have lost their moral compass,” he was wrong. They didn't lose their compass. They were using it — the one they were given in school! Ideas have consequences, and somewhere along the road to utopia, we forgot the end of education.

Like Plato, Plutarch and the Greeks before him, Kant placed ethics alongside physics and logic, expressing the confidence that there were laws governing the human will and what ought to happen, just as there were laws governing the material world and the formal rules of reason.

## An Immodest Proposal

With an eye to history, best practice and emerging research, the new School of Arts & Education at The King's College will redefine teacher training in the United States. Resisting both the Rousseau-Dewey legacy and the current addiction to novelty, A&E will create cur-

riculum, train teachers and shape policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

John Dewey believed that a school was “primarily a social institution.”<sup>7</sup> He was wrong. The school is primarily an educational institution. He taught that “we violate the child's nature . . . by introducing the child too abruptly to a number of special studies, of reading, writing, geography, etc. . . .”<sup>8</sup> He was wrong again. We violate a child's future when we do not teach phonics, spelling lists, formal grammar, geography and memorization for automaticity in mathematical computations.

Along with pedagogical training that takes us back to the future, King's will pioneer a national movement in content-driven teacher training. Our graduates will not only be prepared to teach. They will be prepared to teach something.

It is time to bring Latin, logic and rhetoric back into the American classroom. It is time to re-introduce the Bible as literature in both public and private settings. It is time for English teachers who can quote Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton and Keats. It is time for math teachers who know a little Virgil and the outlines of Western Civilization.

It is time for teachers who are not only trained, but also educated.

In reclaiming these classical and Christian traditions, we must not only reform America's schools. We must also reshape America's schools of education. The whole inbred system — including the process of credentialing — has been compromised.

Therefore, The King's College is convening a new National Committee for Educational Standards that will henceforth certify teachers who are truly excellent. To be sure, there are other agencies that certify teachers, but it's time to raise the bar.

The challenge is daunting. Without God's blessing, we will not succeed. But with heaven's aid we cannot fail. Armed with that faith, and with the memory of that other band of idealists, we will re-invent the world.

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1 Samuel Eliot Morrison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (Ithaca, NY: Great Seal Books), 1963, p. 112.

2 *Ibid.*, p. vi.

3 U.S. Department of Technology Assessment, 1997.

4 U.S. Department of Education Report on Violence, 1999.

5 The Columbia Conference on Universal Literacy, Annual Report, 2000, p. 9.

6 Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character* (New York, NY: Bantam Books) 1992, p.13.

7 John Dewey, *Dewey on Education: Selections* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press), 1959, p. 22.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

## Cautions Mount Against Anti-Depressants for Youth



British drug regulators in early December recommended against use of most of the new generation of antidepressants for children under 18 years old, because of possible links to suicidal behavior. The advisory applies to Paxil, Zoloft, Effexor, Celexa, Lexapro and Luvox. Prozac was exempted. (nytimes.com, 12-11-03)

The action followed on the heels of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's October 27 advisory urging doctors to proceed with caution when prescribing any of eight antidepressants including Prozac and Paxil pending the agency's receipt of additional information on the suicide risk. (See *Education Reporter*, Dec. 2003.)

Moreover, the scientist who led the latest trial of Zoloft and concluded it was safe for children has now conceded that the drug's potential to cause suicidal thinking needs to be investigated.

Karen Wagner of the University of Texas psychiatry department was the lead author of an article in the September *Jour-*

*nal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* concerning two trials of Zoloft. She also conducted studies of Paxil, which was banned for use on children in June 2003 by the United Kingdom licensing body. She concluded that both drugs were effective and well-tolerated.

Nevertheless, the UK medicines and healthcare products regulatory agency said a re-analysis of the data on the Paxil trials showed an increase in the numbers of children who became suicidal on the drug. The study of Zoloft found that 9% of the children taking the drug became suicidal. One, a 13-year-old boy, killed himself, and his family is suing Zoloft's manufacturer, Pfizer.

While defending the drugs' effectiveness, Dr. Wagner, when asked whether she still believed both drugs are safe, told *The Guardian*, "I think it requires further investigation and looking at the entire database of these medications." (society.guardian.co.uk, 10-1-03)

### A-B-C (Continued from page 1)

schools that usually managed to recognize other faith traditions. At Clover Creek Elementary School in Bethel, WA, a music teacher changed the lyrics in a concert carol to omit the possibly offensive word "Christmas." Dale Wood's "Carol from an Irish Cabin" contains the line "The harsh wind blows down from the mountains, and blows a white Christmas to me." "Christmas" was changed to "winter." Conservative talk radio station KVI blasted the district's action. (tribnet.com, 12-5-03)

Meanwhile, New York City schools did not allow Christmas Nativity scenes, but did encourage the display of the Jewish menorah during Hanukkah and the Islamic star and crescent during Ramadan, according to the Thomas More Law Center. The public-interest law firm filed a federal civil rights lawsuit on behalf of a New York City family questioning whether public school officials can enforce a policy that shows preference for Judaism and Islam but disfavors Christianity.

Briefs filed by the city school system actually disputed that a Nativity scene depicts a historical event, according to the More Center.

The word "God" was temporarily removed from a song to be performed this spring in a Pleasant Valley, CA school production. Two hundred students are scheduled to sing "God Bless the U.S.A.," a patriotic anthem popularized by Lee

Greenwood during the Gulf War. The show's directors decided to use the words "I love the U.S.A." instead. However, the school board president pointed out that that the law does not forbid reference to God. "It was a misguided attempt to be politically correct, and it has been rectified," said Ron Speakman. (VenturaCountyStar.com, 12-4-03)

Allegations of anti-Christian bias surface even at Christian institutions. The student bar association at Gonzaga University, a Jesuit school in Spokane, WA, has refused to recognize a pro-life law caucus because its bylaws stipulate that only Christians may hold leadership positions in the organization. The university administration agrees with the ruling.

"We live in a strange age, indeed, when a Catholic, Jesuit university would deny a Christian pro-life group recognition because its religious nature is considered discriminatory," Greg Lukianoff of the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education told the *Seattle Times* (12-21-03). The foundation recently fought Rutgers University for attempting to revoke the group charter of a student Christian group over the same issue. The case was settled last spring in favor of the student group.

The *Education Reporter* first reported on the Byron, CA unit on Islam in the Feb. 2002 issue.

### Briefs (Continued from page 2)

35% of college students in 2000 took at least one year of remedial coursework, according to a report from the National Center for Educational Statistics. Five years ago, only 28% spent that much time in remedial classes. (*Education Week*, 12-10-03)



Four private university presidents received more than \$800,000 last year, according to a survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education. Twelve public university presidents will earn more than \$500,000 this year.

## Class-Size Fallout: Florida Drops History Mandate



Squeezed by a voter-approved class-size limit, Florida has dropped the requirement that high-school students study American history, American government, world history and economics. The legislative action last spring facilitates a three-year high-school diploma.

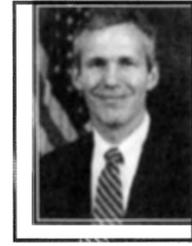
Congressman Jim Davis (D-FL) wants to return American history and government to the curriculum, even if it takes an act of Congress. He announced in November that he plans to introduce a bill forcing states to require those subjects for a high-school diploma as a condition to receiving federal education dollars. He said it is embarrassing that immigrants must learn more about U.S. history to pass the citizenship exam than is required by Florida schools.

"I am appalled that as soldiers are fighting in Iraq to protect our freedoms, the Florida Legislature has decided that it is not important for students to learn how

these freedoms were won in the first place," he told the *Palm Beach Post* (11-18-03).

Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment in November 2002 to limit class sizes in public schools. (See *Education Reporter*, Oct. 2003.) Offering an option to skip senior year is one of a number of responses by Florida legislators to comply with the voters' mandate.

The idea of eliminating senior year is spreading. Colorado lawmakers have asked state education officials to study the possibility of replacing 12<sup>th</sup> grade with a year of preschool. Supporters think such an approach would better prepare students for college by giving them an early start and could save money. (AP story at customwire.ap.org, 11-18-03) Unlike the Florida plan, which is optional to the student, the Colorado proposal contemplates a statewide approach for all students.



Rep. Jim Davis

## Top Ten Campus Follies of 2003

A "gender blind" dormitory and a professor who required her students to write anti-war letters to President Bush made the list of top ten most shameful campus events in 2003, issued by the Young America's Foundation.

- ① Wesleyan University in Connecticut offers a "gender blind" dormitory floor for students who aren't sure about their sex. Students who request the floor will have roommates appointed without regard for their sex.
- ② The second most shameful event was the statement of a Columbia University professor that he would like to see "a million Mogadishus," referring to the deaths of 18 American soldiers in Somalia in 1993.
- ③ Third on the list is a professor at Citrus College in Glendora, CA, where a speech professor forced students in a required course to write anti-war letters to President Bush and penalized those who refused. When some students asked for permission to write supportive letters instead, the teacher refused and threatened them with lower grades. The college disciplined the professor and apologized to the students.

The fourth through ninth rankings on the list include

- ④ a college's freezing of funding for a

conservative campus group for criticizing two guest speakers

- ⑤ the suspension of a 14-year-old student for drawing a stick figure of a Marine shooting a Taliban fighter (see *Education Reporter*, Dec. 2003)
- ⑥ a movement to rename an elementary school named after Thomas Jefferson
- ⑦ a ban on a tradition of throwing tortillas to celebrate a university commencement on the ground that the tradition is disrespectful to minorities
- ⑧ a student vote to remove feminine pronouns from the all-female Smith College's constitution and replace them with gender-neutral pronouns
- ⑨ a ban (since reversed) on the wearing of a military base T-shirt at an elementary school.
- ⑩ The tenth spot goes to Gonzaga University officials, who censored a flyer advertising a Young America's Foundation-organized lecture because the word 'hate' was used on the flyer. The flyer advertised a lecture entitled "Why the Left Hates America." Professors complained to the administration about the use of the word 'hate.' In response, the office of student activities informed the sponsoring student group that the flyer was "discriminatory." (CNSNews.com, 12-23-03)

College Republicans have been banned from campus at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington for refusing to adopt clauses in their bylaws demanded by the university. The student group objected to the clauses because they could be read to require opening up

membership to non-Republicans. (townhall.com, 11-19-03)

Two Louisiana students were arrested January 12 and accused of planning to recreate the Columbine high school massacre on its five-year anniversary in April.