

NJ Mayor Endorses Homeschooling

A group of 31 students taking an economics course designed for high school-level homeschoolers organized a dinner on June 17 in Chester, NJ attended by more than 200 people and the town mayor. Mayor Dennis Verbaro issued the following proclamation — believed to be the first of its kind in the nation — recognizing the value of homeschooling:

Proclamation

Whereas, the growing homeschool movement includes approximately two million students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, and

Whereas, our nation has a tremendous home school heritage; all of the founding fathers received their education at home. Famous Americans who were educated at home by their parents include George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Edison, and

Whereas, home school families and their children have proven to be vital participants in our communities, serving in elected and appointed volunteer positions in many areas of government, the church and the community, and

Whereas, it has been observed and documented that home school children are having great success academically and socially, and

(See Proclamation, page 4)

John Kerry on Education

As the November 2004 presidential election approaches, the *Education Reporter* has compiled the following list of Democratic nominee John Kerry's positions on various educational issues:



Sen. John Kerry

Preschool: Senator Kerry has said he wants to make preschool universal, but in the interest of keeping deficits under control, has backed away from a specific proposal.

K-12: Kerry proposes a massive 10-year \$200 billion entitlement to the states for educational spending, to be financed by raising taxes. Ideas for how to spend the money include teacher and tutor training, dropout prevention measures, smaller high schools, mentoring for middle school students, pairing college students with poorly performing middle schools, and paying teachers more to work in disadvantaged schools and to teach math or science.

(See Kerry, page 4)

Homeschooling Continues to Grow, Reflecting Parents' Dissatisfaction with Public Education

Almost 1.1 million students were homeschooled last year, an increase of 29% since 1999, according to new Education Department figures released August 3.

In surveys collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, parents offered three main reasons for educating their children at home:

- concerns about the environment of regular schools
- the flexibility they have to teach religious or moral lessons
- dissatisfaction with academic instruction in schools.

Homeschooled students now account for 2.2% of the U.S. school-age population. The government numbers may underestimate the true number: The National Center for Home Education asserts there are 2 million homeschoolers.

"There's potential for massive growth," center spokesman Ian Slatter told the Associated Press (8-3-04). "Homeschooling is just getting started."

The federal government counts as

homeschoolers students who spend at least part of their education at home and no more than 25 hours a week in public or private schools. More than 4 out of 5 homeschooled students spend no time at traditional schools.

Pennsylvania lawsuits filed

Two Pennsylvania families recently filed lawsuits challenging that state's homeschool reporting requirements, considered among the most stringent in the nation. The suits rely on the state Religious Freedom Protection Act, which allows challenges to laws that impose "substantial burdens upon the free exercise of religion without compelling justification. Similar laws were passed in 11 other states after a federal religious freedom law was declared unconstitutional in 1997.

Pennsylvania's homeschooling regulations require parents to submit notarized affidavits at the start of each school year for children 8 years and older about what they plan to teach. The parents must keep a log and chart their children's progress

in preparation for an end-of-year report signed off by a third party that must be submitted to school superintendents. Parents also are required to submit medical information about their children and attest that they have never been convicted of crimes. (Associated Press, 8-2-04)

New Tolkien curriculum

As homeschooling has achieved greater acceptance, curricular materials and supplementary courses aimed at that market have proliferated. (See accompanying article on the activities of a homeschoolers' economics class in Chester, NJ.) Capitalizing on the success of the "Lord of the Rings" movies, a North Carolina teacher has developed a one-year curriculum called "Literary Lessons from *Lord of the Rings*" for students aged 12 to 18.

The course includes background on classic epics such as *Beowulf*, *The Iliad* and Arthurian romances but focuses on J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy trilogy. Amelia Harper designed the \$125 620-page text-

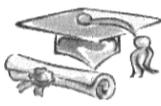
(See Homeschooling, page 3)

Exit Exams Too Easy, Study Finds

Good News: They Don't Increase Dropout Rate



High school graduation exams required for more than half of American students largely test material taught in the 9th and 10th grades, according to a study by Achieve Inc. released in June. Moreover, the mathematical material on the tests is often taught at the middle school level in other industrialized countries.



The study found that the tests measure very basic skills, insufficient for success in university courses or in jobs paying salaries above the poverty level.

The study examined high school exit exams in language arts and math from six states — Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio and Texas — and writing tests from four of those states. Achieve Inc. is a nonprofit organization created by state governors and business leaders.

While high school exit exams have been criticized for increasing dropout rates, a new study by the Manhattan Institute concluded that the exams do not significantly affect dropout rates. Moreover, neither reducing class size nor increasing spending on education increases graduation rates, according to the study, which was released April 28.

Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia either have high school exit exams or plan to implement them in the near future. (nytimes.com, 6-10-04)

Legal challenges to exit exams brought by disabled students are demanding special accommodations, some of which arguably undermine the very purpose of the exams. In August, Alaska announced a settlement of one such suit. The accommodations include reading out loud a test that is supposed to measure reading ability; permitting the use of word processors or calculators; and allowing severely disabled students to graduate without ever passing the exam, if their other work is deemed adequate by experts. (nytimes.com, 8-3-04)

Graduation requirements suffered another setback in California last spring. Less than a year after the state postponed until 2006 a controversial requirement that seniors pass an exit exam, more than a third of California's high school districts applied for waivers of a requirement that 2004 graduating seniors pass an algebra class. Some 14,000 students would not have graduated if the legal requirement had been enforced. (sfgate.com, 5-24-04)

Bush pushes 12th-grade testing

President Bush in April endorsed a proposal to require states to test 12th-grade students by using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a relatively uncontroversial test that does not determine school sanctions or funding and is not used as an exit exam. The proposal, which would require congress-

sional approval, faces uncertain prospects in Congress because of complaints about the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

By law, all states currently test 4th- and 8th-graders in reading and math every other year. Several states already test high school seniors voluntarily. (washingtonpost.com, 4-7-04)



Pres. Geo. W. Bush

G.E.D. displaces diploma for more teens

As states have adopted testing and other requirements for graduation, the percentage of teenagers using the G.E.D. (which is administered by the General Educational Development Testing Service) to obtain a high school-equivalent diploma has soared from 33% in 1992 to 49% in 2002. The figure has doubled since 1989. About one out of seven high school diplomas granted in the U.S. now goes to someone who has passed the G.E.D. instead of completing high school.

The G.E.D. testing system was originally devised to help World War II veterans earn the equivalent of a high school diploma. Most educators do not consider it truly equivalent. Students who transfer to G.E.D. programs are dropped from school rolls but are not counted as dropouts in many states. (New York Times, 5-15-04)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

'Waste, fraud and abuse' plague federal program. A government program to provide internet services to schools was the subject of a House subcommittee hearing June 17 on a growing list of "waste, fraud and abuse concerns." The "E-rate" program has spent more than \$12 billion over the last six years, financed through a surcharge on telephone bills. Problems with the program include \$23 million worth of telecommunications equipment sitting in a government warehouse years after it had been bought; the installation of a \$1 million network server for a 650-pupil elementary school; and indictments and felony guilty pleas for defrauding schools. A nonprofit corporation run by telecommunications service providers doles out the money with minimal oversight by the Federal Communications Commission.

Illinois eliminates state writing and social studies tests as a money-saving measure in light of testing requirements in reading, math and science mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind law. Some educators predict writing instruction will change as a result. The Illinois legislature's decision comes at a time when more states are adding, not deleting, writing in their standardized exams and the SAT and ACT national college entrance exams are preparing to require a writing sample. (*Chicago Tribune*, 7-27-04)

10% of K-12 students endure sexual misconduct by school employees, according to a report to Congress. The misbehavior ranges from verbal to physical acts; more than 4.5 million students are affected. The most common offenders are teachers, coaches, bus drivers and teacher aides. The report, issued by Hofstra University professor Charol Shakeshaft at the end of June, was based on 2,065 student interviews in two studies conducted for the American Association of University Women in the past 10 years and was required by the No Child Left Behind law. (Associated Press, 7-1-04)

(More Briefs on page 4)

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Pledge Issue Won't Go Away

The phrase "one nation under God" will remain intact in the Pledge of Allegiance as recited by millions of school children in public schools, under a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court decision in June, but the majority's use of a technical issue to duck a decision on the merits virtually ensures that the Pledge issue will rise again in the courts.

In the *Newdow* case, the majority held that a California atheist lacked standing to ban the Pledge from his daughter's custody because he lacked sufficient legal custody of the child. Three justices wrote separately that the Pledge does not violate the Constitution's Establishment Clause. The decision overturned a highly controversial ruling two years ago by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals that the teacher-led Pledge was unconstitutional.

After both houses of Congress voted overwhelmingly to condemn the 9th Circuit decision, it seems safe to say that the liberal justices on the Supreme Court were happy to have a reason to avoid deciding the issue. It is inevitable, however, that other atheist parents will bring similar challenges in court. "This case will be back," *Newdow* promised, saying he had heard from people around the country asking him for help in challenging the Pledge. He added that he hopes challenges will be filed in every federal judicial circuit except the 7th Circuit, which upheld school-led recitations of the Pledge in 1992. (*Education Week*, 6-23-04)

The Supreme Court held in 1943 that schools cannot compel students to recite the Pledge (which did not then contain the words "under God"). The *Newdow* case challenged the constitutionality of voluntary participation by students when the Pledge is led by a teacher.

Michael *Newdow*'s discomfort with his daughter's participation in the Pledge prompted an eloquent rebuttal from Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington. "Unbelievers do not have to recite the pledge, or engage in any religiously tainted practice of which they disapprove. They also, however, do not have the right to impose their atheism on all those Americans whose beliefs now and historically have defined America as a religious nation." (*Wall Street Journal*, 6-16-04)

92% believe in God

Huntington cites statistics showing that 92% of Americans believe in God, 84% to 88% of Americans identify themselves as Christians, and only 49% would be willing to vote for an atheist presidential candidate. Citing a long history of statements by Congress and the Supreme Court affirming the U.S.'s status as a Christian nation, he contends that the purpose of the Establishment Clause was not to establish freedom from religion but to establish freedom for religion—especially for the remarkable diversity of Christian denominations that have thrived here in comparison to European nations, which were historically dominated by one state-endorsed version of Christianity.

"The proportion of Christians in America rivals or exceeds the proportion of Jews in Israel, of Muslims in Egypt, of Hindus in India, and of Orthodox believers in Russia," notes Huntington, who thinks U.S. atheists should get used to living in a Christian country.



Daniel Henninger subsequently argued in the *Journal* that "God, whether He exists or not, is good for summoning national pride, communal bonds and the martial spirit." When schoolchildren recite that their nation exists under God, "they are admitting an organizing force in life other than their cute, little selves." (*Wall Street Journal*, 6-18-04)

When the link between national purpose and God is broken, "the U.S. will start to become, well, France—smart, sophisticated, agnostic and safe for nuclear bombs, inexorably weak," Henninger concludes.

In 1940, when public schools included daily prayer, teachers reportedly rated the top disciplinary problems as follows:

- Talking out of turn
- Chewing gum
- Making noise
- Running in the halls
- Cutting in line
- Dress code violations
- Littering

In 1990, teachers listed the top disciplinary problems as:

- Drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Pregnancy
- Suicide
- Rape
- Robbery
- Assault

(See www.teenhelp.us/ot/index.php?web_code_wc0197, which does not describe the survey methodology or ultimate source.)

Public schools already "godless"

The Southern Baptist Convention held in June in Indianapolis considered a resolution urging members of the nation's largest Protestant denomination to pull their children out of public schools and either homeschool or use Christian schools. The resolution failed but garnered major media coverage for the sponsors, who called public schools "officially godless."

Indeed, while the 9th Circuit decision against the Pledge in *Newdow* became a lightning rod for criticism, some observers fault Supreme Court precedents on religion in public schools rather than the 9th Circuit court. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas opined in *Newdow* that the teacher-led Pledge cannot be squared with previous decisions of the high court such as *Lee v. Weisman* (which barred invocations and benedictions at public school graduations), and the only solution is to overrule those precedents.

In the Pledge case, the Supreme Court dodged a political hot potato, leaving to lower courts the unenviable task of wrestling with its own unpopular precedents. As other legal challenges to the Pledge work through the system, it will be interesting to see how judges, faced with the groundswell of support for the Pledge, follow or distinguish those precedents.

Book of the Month



Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care, John McWhorter, Gotham Books, 2003, 254 pp.



Berkeley linguistics professor John McWhorter has written a fascinating analysis of the decline of American respect for the English language over the last hundred years. Combining an acute ear for pop culture with a polymathic familiarity with languages and musical styles, McWhorter convinces the reader of the relentless trend to more casual usage with countless examples of oratory, poetry, songs and random quotes.

Modern America "is a country where rigorously polished language . . . is considered insincere," he writes. This trait "is only a few decades old and leaves us culturally and even intellectually deprived." It is also culturally anomalous; French, Russian, Turkish, British and tribal societies today show much greater appreciation for well-crafted language than do Americans.

Some of the blame for hastening the deterioration of our relationship to English is laid at the feet of educators with an ideological animus against teaching excellence in writing, vocabulary words or challenging literature. Textbook editors "exist in a culture of language teaching in which, since the late sixties, to celebrate English would be morally backward." Elitism, drill and literary craftsmanship are out; multiculturalism, political correctness and uninhibited self-expression are in. It is apparently too much to expect immigrants and disadvantaged children to learn good English.

The author makes it clear, however, that the education establishment did not cause the degradation of American English; it simply reflected the *Zeitgeist* prevailing since anti-authoritarian attitudes took hold in the 1960s beginning with the civil rights movement. Before and since then, technological changes such as the microphone, telephone, television, cell phone and e-mail also weakened our connection to the written word and enhanced the position of unvarnished oral expression.

Unfortunately, McWhorter is not the man to lead the charge to restore a more-elevated use of English. As a linguist, he doesn't believe in grammatical rules, and he blithely ignores many such rules in his writing. As a hip young professor on the Berkeley campus, he has no desire to appear old-fashioned, and he believes little can be done about the trend against formal English anyway.

"The times have changed, permanently," he concludes. English has become a tool for easy global communication, the new Esperanto—but no longer a source of national pride or esthetic pleasure.

FOCUS: 'D' Doesn't Stand for 'Disrespect'

by Linda Schrock Taylor

One day a friend and I were discussing the virtual explosion of special education students who are being labeled as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and assigned to our caseloads. My friend mentioned that the state in which she was teaching had created a new label — O.D.D. — and explained that it stood for “Oppositional and Defiant Disorder.” We found it ironic that the word “odd” would become the label for children who refuse to comply with simple requests for decency; who refuse to respect themselves and others; who stay so “at odds” with simple expectations for acceptable behavior.



Linda Schrock Taylor

I asked my friend to explain the diagnostic difference between ADD, ADHD, and ODD students. Her description was comical: “Well...the ADD and ADHD kids are the ones you want out of your room. The ODD kids are the ones you want *out of your school!*”

I have worked with many of these ODD children and I can describe most of them as “two-years olds whose parents never took the time to get them under control.” Tantrums, manipulation, throwing of objects, refusals to comply with appropriate requests from adults, stomping of feet, and other such immature behaviors, typify the actions of little ones going through that notorious “two-year-old phase.” Busy parents and broad usage of daycare may be much to blame for these unruly and unmanageable children. I suspect that such behavior began when, as two-year-olds, these children were righteously angry about their

Almost all of the “learning disabled” students are, in truth, “teaching disabled.”

parents leaving them with strangers. When parents fail to take charge of their children; fail to come home to parent their children, the rage within some of these youngsters must just build to a breaking point.

Our new assistant principal, a long-term committed employee of our district, is a dedicated advocate for children. Recently I requested his assistance in “counseling” a new student who still, after about six weeks, refused to accept that I allow *nothing and no one* to distract me from teaching/students from learning. While in my room, this man spoke words of wisdom to this middle school boy. The boy was giving his excuses for why he is how he is, and why he cannot change. One of the items on his practiced and lengthy list was, “I’m ADD.” This child-advocate gently explained, “I’m familiar with the ADD and ADHD labels, and I know that neither “D” stands for “DISRESPECT.” The boy reacted with meekness, with respect, and maybe even with a little relief that this time no one was going to buy into such a phony, overplayed show.

Are such labels valid and do they describe actual physical or mental disabilities? I do not believe that they do, except in very rare instances. I agree with Dr. Patrick Groff, that almost all of the “learning disabled” students are, in truth, “teaching disabled.” I join him in asking, “Is Dyslexia Scientifically Confirmed? Or Is it Caused By the Ineffective Teaching of Reading?” If dyslexia is truly real, why have I read that the word never appeared in any dictionary until 1965? “Dyslexia” merely means “bad with words.”

Dr. James J. Campbell, in his article entitled “A Teachin’ Deficit Disorder,” says, “Whole Language reading instruction...is manufacturing countless reading disorders and creating a group of children who are so confused that they are mistakenly regarded as being disabled with attention deficit disorder, learning

disabilities, hyperactivity disorder, and other behavior problems. In many instances, the children don’t need Ritalin — they need to be taught how to read.” In my experience, the “many” could easily be defined as “most.”

Regna Lee Wood explains, “Special Education...is producing thousands of illiterate adults. Yet more than 80% of all Special Ed students have normal sight, hearing and intelligence — they simply haven’t been taught how to read.” Based on 1995 figures from the Oklahoma Department of Special Education finance office, Mrs. Wood points out that “Oklahoma taxpayers will provide nearly 600 million in local, state and federal tax dollars this year for two unsuccessful remedial education programs in which nearly 40% of Oklahoma’s public school students are now enrolled. Both programs depend on the continuing failure of instructors to teach many normal children to read.”

In many instances, the children don’t need Ritalin — they need to be taught how to read.

Regna Lee Wood could not say it more clearly when, in this same article, she stresses, “It is time for the decision makers to do their homework. When they do, they will reach these conclusions:

- Reading comes first. Instructors can’t teach anything to illiterate students of any age except how to read. The horse comes before the cart.

- Second, the argument about reading methods is over. Flat-earth proponents had little to say after ships came back to Spain by sailing west all the way. The empirical and physiological evidence that reading students must learn to spell sounds is just as overwhelming.

- Third, everyone must focus on all the carrot-and-stick ways to persuade reading teachers — whether in public or private schools, libraries, prisons or industry — to teach beginning readers how to match sounds with letters that spell

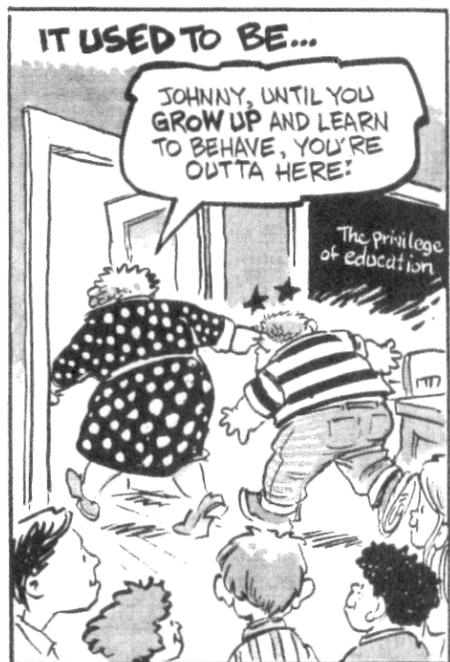


them. If they don’t, this country’s highly touted ‘bridge to the 21st century’ will be a dead-end tunnel.”

Dr. Fred A. Baughman Jr. is even more forthright in his lengthy, well-researched paper, “Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) As Fraud.” “With no proof that ADHD is a disease with a confirmatory, physical abnormality, the ADHD ‘epidemic’ has grown from 150,000 in 1970 to 5 million in 1997. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, Ritalin production in the U.S. rose 700% between 1990 and 1997 ... Few, if any, questions about ADHD can be answered without an honest answer to the question: ‘Is ADHD a disease with a confirmatory physical (including chemical) abnormality, or isn’t it?’”

Every schooling is in deep trouble. I see it every day on a small scale in the school where I teach. These researchers see it on a national scale as they continue their studies and try to get the word out to the people of America, and especially to all parents. The issue is not simply an issue of Disrespect. The issue is the coming downfall of our way of life. Read, study, listen to Regna as she explains, “Ignorant and Free? School-Produced Illiteracy Fuels Social Problems, Threatens Republic’s Survival.” We are talking about our children and our future and it is time that we stop waiting for “someone else” to grab the bull by the horns and turn the mis-educated herd of reading teachers in America! We must turn them in the right direction and give them the skills that our teacher training colleges *are refusing to provide!*

Linda Schrock Taylor lives in Michigan. She is a free-lance writer and the owner of “The Learning Clinic,” where real reading, and real math, are taught effectively and efficiently. This article first appeared at LewRockwell.com and is reprinted with permission.



Homeschooling (Continued from page 1)

book and teacher’s edition for homeschooled students, including her own son, and has also used it in pilot courses taught in public schools in Kentucky and Colorado. (*Washington Times*, 7-19-25-04)

Avoiding Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood’s presence in Sarasota County, FL public schools is an example of the kinds of school practices that drive parents to homeschool their children. The pro-abortion organization is teaching portions of a mandatory course on basic life skills, covering the topics of human sexuality and pregnancy prevention. The district received so many complaints from parents last spring that it has decided to allow parents to keep their

children out of the Planned Parenthood portions in the coming year.

“Why do Sarasota County public school leaders insist on choosing one of the most divisive, politically extreme organizations in the country to come into the schools and teach classes on sexual relations and birth control?” asks columnist Rod Thomson of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (7-16-04).

U.S. homeschoolers still have it better than their counterparts north of the border. In British Columbia, homeschooling parents “are fuming after the B.C. Education Ministry ordered thousands of them to stop using faith-based materials — or any other ‘unofficial’ resource — when teaching their children at home,” according to the *Vancouver Sun* (4-22-04).

'Zero Tolerance' = 'Zero Thinking'?

The latest pupils to fall victim to schools' rigid "zero-tolerance" policies against drugs and weapons include:

- An 11-year-old Maryland boy suspended for 10 days for including a steak knife in a decorated shoebox of items he took to class for an assignment to show "What would you take on a camping trip and why?" The boy never threatened anyone. (*The Star Democrat*, 5-27-04)
- A 13-year-old Utah boy suspended for 45 days for giving his cousin a cold pill that had been prescribed for both children. (*Associated Press*, 5-30-04)
- A 5-year-old Ohio boy suspended for 10 days for bringing a small pocketknife to school. The knife, which included a file, toothpick and spoon, was given to the boy by his grandfather's best friend. He may face expulsion. (*Associated Press*, 5-1-04)
- A Florida senior girl expelled for unintentionally bringing a stun gun into her high school parking lot in her mother's car. (*naplesnews.com*, 4-29-04)
- A 15-year-old Alabama girl sentenced to 15 days in an alternative school for taking an ibuprofen pill at school to relieve menstrual cramps. However, a judge ruled in July that the discipline was "both excessive and unfair." (*Associated Press*, 7-15-04)
- The 4th-grade class in Washington State that lost a teacher-supervised project to build a pioneer-style gun. Now, the project can be completed only by combining the pieces off campus and it may not be considered a student activity. (*TheSpokesman-Review.com*, 4-11-04)
- A 16-year-old Texas girl sent to 3½ months in a discipline school for allegedly drinking at a high school football game. (*houstonchronicle.com*, 4-18-04) A concerned group of parents in her community has organized a web site devoted to over-the-top school discipline, called *katyzerotolerance.com*.

Texas state senator **Jon Lindsay** (R-Houston) tried unsuccessfully during the 2003 legislature to remove the zero-tolerance requirements from state law. "I have not been a fan of zero tolerance because it implies or requires zero thinking," state Rep. Harold



Rep. Jon Lindsay

Dutton (D-Houston) told the *Houston Chronicle*.

Policies against sexual harassment also cast a wide net. A 9-year-old Connecticut boy was suspended for three days for grazing a girl's backside during a game of tag. (*WTNH.com*, 4-2-04)

Where's discipline when we need it?

The harsh penalties in public schools for the seemingly minor offenses listed above coexist incongruously with extraordinarily lax discipline for other behavioral problems. In her new book *Brief Intervals of Horrible Sanity*, Elizabeth Gold describes her year of teaching 9th-grade English in 2000 in a "progressive" New York City "New Visions" high school. Small size, student empowerment and a relevant curriculum were supposed to improve education. They didn't.

The classroom chaos brought Gold to the edge of a nervous breakdown. There were no consequences, for example, to a student who would reply "Kiss my ass" to a teacher.

On the other side of the country this spring, a Phoenix high school teacher got so fed up with a student's vulgar behavior that she went to court to request an injunction to stop the harassment. Her court petition alleged that the 15-year-old student daily told her in front of other students "to go (expletive) myself." (*arizonarepublic.com*, 4-10-04)

Another new book, *Judging School Discipline* by Richard Arum, traces classroom chaos to the student-rights revolution of the 1960s, when elite lawyers began suing schools for disciplining students, abetted by the federal Legal Services Corp. and foundation money. In the early 1970s a judge actually required a New York principal to allow a senior girl who had struck and threatened him during school race riots to attend her graduation ceremony.

Courts are overwhelmingly more likely to overturn a disciplinary decision if the student is African-American. Black students win 91% of challenges to expulsion, versus 38% of whites. (*Wall Street Journal*, 3-25-04) Yet, as columnist Heather Mac Donald points out, minority students are the biggest losers in the disruptive environment of inner-city classrooms.



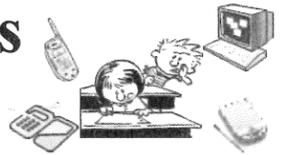
Rep. Harold Dutton

Briefs (Continued from page 2)

Utah drama student wins right not to recite profanity. The University of Utah in July settled a lawsuit by a Mormon student accusing it of violating her right to freedom of speech and religion. The university agreed to reimburse her tuition, let her re-enroll and let students opt out of activities that conflict with their religious beliefs. After refusing to recite lines containing the f-word and taking the Lord's name in vain during the 1998-99 school year, she feared theater department professors would retaliate against her, so she withdrew from the university. (*Associated Press*, 7-14-04)

Princeton battles grade inflation, shoplifting. The Princeton University faculty voted in April to establish an expectation that each academic department will give A's for no more than 35% of its grades. A's have been granted 46% of the time in recent years, up from 31% in the mid-1970s. (*seattletimes.com*, 4-12-04) Grade inflation may not be the campus's most serious problem, however. Twelve students have been arrested for shoplifting from the university store since installation of new security cameras in the middle of the last academic year, and students have reportedly been unapologetic during their court appearances. (*newsday.com*, 5-23-04)

Technology Catches Up With Cheaters



As plagiarism of assigned papers has grown in the internet age, human ingenuity is making it easier to detect copycats.

The software product Turnitin by iParadigms is used by about 2,500 high schools and colleges in the U.S. and 1,000 more abroad to make a digital fingerprint of an entire document and compare it against material on the internet and in other sources. Other plagiarism-detection providers include Glatt Plagiarism Services, MyDropBox LLC, and CFL Software Development. Wcopyfinder is a free program that compares strings of words only.

In a survey of 30,000 undergraduates at 34 colleges, 37% admitted to plagiarizing from the internet, up from 10% in 1999. (*Associated Press*, 4-06-04) Essays and term papers are now available

for sale from at least 150 web sites. Colleges are responding with efforts to educate their students about "academic integrity," and faculty members routinely vet suspect passages of student work by searching them on Google.

Computer technology can be exploited not only to plagiarize papers but also to cheat on tests. Cell phones, calculators, pagers and personal data assistants all can serve as tools of academic fraud. Students have been known to send answers silently from one personal data assistant to another during tests and bring in notes stored in calculators. (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 2-8-04) E-mailing from one cell phone to another is another avenue for sneaky students. (*contracostatimes.com*, 2-24-04)

Proclamation (Continued from page 1)

Whereas, the Home School Legal Defense Association advocates for tens of thousands of families on Capitol Hill, in state legislatures and in the media, and [is] defending and advancing the constitutional right of parents to direct the education of their children, and

Whereas, it is only fitting to recognize Michael P. Farris, Esq., chairman and general counsel of the HSLDA and President of Patrick Henry College, as one of the leading pro-family activists in our nation, and

Whereas, for parents who home school, it is not a job but a way of life. Home school parents assume direct responsibility for educating their children and preparing them for society. They invest time and financial resources, spending their own money rather than taxpayer funds, and

Whereas, Andy Schlafly, Chester attorney, invests his time in teaching high school age home school students, motivating them to think, learn, grow and achieve, and

Whereas, the thirty-one students of Mr. Schlafly's economics class took their studies and their teacher's challenge seriously enough to host an event, arranging the location, catering, service ticket ad sales and Mr. Farris as guest speaker, demonstrating both ability and commitment...

Now, therefore, be it resolved, I, Dennis Verbaro, Mayor of the Borough of Chester do hereby proclaim and acknowledge that home schooling is an effective means by which our children can not only receive a quality education but further receive instruction in our traditional values.

Kerry (Continued from page 1)

After-school: Kerry proposes expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program from \$1 billion to \$2.5 billion and shifting the focus from exclusively academic benefits to include values and decision-making skills.

Higher education: Kerry has advocated expanding tuition tax credits for most households from \$1,500 to \$2,500 and making them available for four years instead of two. More recently, he has proposed to award \$4,000 in public funds to every college student who signs up for a period of national service. (Sources: Brookings Working Paper 6-23-04 at *brookings.edu*; *nytimes.com*, 5-4-04; *nationalreview.com*, 5-6-04 and 7-26-04; *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 9-3-04)

In 1998 Kerry said, "We must end teacher tenure as we now know it" and urged that every public school become "essentially a charter school." He even expressed openness to government-funded vouchers for private school tuition, in an interview with the *New Republic*. (*townhall.com*, 6-29-04)

No such talk has emerged on the

campaign trail this year, when Kerry has instead pushed "fully funding education, no questions asked." Not coincidentally, Kerry has received the endorsements of the two major teachers unions.

In sum, candidate Kerry wants to spend vastly more federal money on education without requiring structural reform — on the heels of unprecedented federal spending on education by the Bush Administration. Yet an analysis by the *Wall Street Journal* found "virtually no link between spending and performance" in schools. (7-30-04)

Between 1997 and 2002, state and local governments increased K-12 spending by 39%, according to a study released in late July by the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. After adjusting for inflation and growth in enrollment, real spending went up nearly 17%, and went up in every state. The percentage increase in spending in each state showed no correlation with reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the *Journal* concluded.