

## Charges Against Massachusetts Parent Dropped

The Massachusetts Middlesex County District Attorney announced in Court on October 20 that her office would not prosecute David Parker for criminal trespassing.

Parker is the Lexington, Massachusetts parent who was arrested and charged in April after insisting to school district officials that under Chapter 71, Section 32 A of Massachusetts state law he had a right to be notified in advance of issues regarding human sexuality curriculum, and receive an opportunity to opt out of any discussion of homosexuality instruction for his kindergarten son. He refused to leave the school meeting unless district officials provided assurance that his request would be honored. Parker was charged with criminal trespassing, handcuffed, jailed overnight, and banned from school sites. He has steadfastly maintained that no crime was committed.

David Parker and his wife, Tonia, objected to the book *Who's in a Family?* It was included in a "Diversity Book Bag" that their kindergarten son brought home from school. The book by Robert Skutch illustrates same sex couples and contains descriptions about them, such as "Robin's family is made up of her dad, Clifford, her dad's partner, Henry, and Robin's cat, Sassy." It is listed on the book list published by the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

The Superintendent of Schools, Paul Ash, announced in September that he had ordered all teachers not to notify parents in advance when discussing homosexual relationships because they are teaching about diversity and citizenship. According to Ash, "You're either a full-time student or you're not a student." He is determined to advance what he views as tolerance education, and make certain that the public school system is in charge: "Parents can't pick and choose what they want their kids to study." (*Los Angeles Times*, 10-20-05)

Gary Wambolt, of Lexington Parents for Respect, characterizes what is occurring as an "attack on values." He has stated that his organization considers the school district curriculum and methods "an arrogant intrusion into the privacy of family values and parental rights." He claims that it is also "a colossal misuse of instructional time and resources."

Under the deal accepted by the court, Parker will be under pretrial probation for a year during which time he will not be allowed on school property, after which the trespassing charge will be dropped so long as he does not violate any laws. The school has not retreated from its position that it has the right to overrule the parents about what is taught to the children.

## Report Questions Preschool and Kindergarten Benefits

While efforts at the national and state level encourage an expansion of universal early education programs, the benefits of increasing government-regulated programs are questionable.

A 2005 Goldwater Institute report brings valuable information to the public discussion. The report — *Assessing Proposals for Preschool and Kindergarten: Essential Information for Parents, Taxpayers, and Policymakers* by Darcy Olsen — includes investigations of the research and findings conducted on preschool and kindergarten programs. Based on the evidence reviewed, there is sufficient reason to challenge the notion that widespread preschool and kindergarten will improve student achievement or benefit all children.

In exploring claims promoting the advantages of early education, Olsen's examination of the research cited by proponents found it was often "limited in its applicability to mainstream students and plagued by methodological shortcomings, including small sample size, high attrition rates, infrequent random selection, and infrequent use of comparison groups. Some of the research has been wholly discredited."

Poor quality research design was also found in studies used to promote full day versus half-day kindergarten programs.

### Little or no benefit

Where studies offered evidence that disadvantaged children may initially be

helped by preschool and kindergarten programs, the benefits were shown to either disappear when a child leaves a program or fade as a child progresses through school.

For "mainstream children," scant evidence exists "to support the contention that formal preschool and kindergarten are necessary for school achievement or more advantageous than learning in a traditional setting, and there is some evidence that day care and preschool can be detrimental."

### Trends are not encouraging

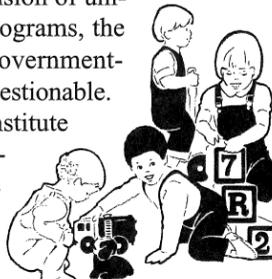
Even though enrollment in early education programs has grown, there is little proof to verify academic improvement.

As explained in the report: "The preschool enrollment rate of four-year-olds has climbed from 16% to 66% since 1965. Despite the change from home education to formal early education, student achievement has stagnated since 1970."

Regarding the length of day for kindergarten programs, "The National Center for Education Statistics' longitudinal study of 22,000 children finds no lasting reading, math, or science achievement differences between children who attend half day and full-day kindergarten."

A state experience — Georgia's ten-year results with universal preschool — is not encouraging. At a cost of \$1.5 billion to serve over 300,000 children, student test scores have remained the same.

[See page 3 for excerpts from the Goldwater Institute's report]



## Animal Studies Behind Promotion of Early Childhood Education

Brain-based studies are used to promote early childhood education. Examination of the neuroscience research applied towards early education disclosed that animals were the test subjects in 95.76% of studies. Children were involved in less than 1% of the research.

In *An Early Childhood Research Agenda: Voices from the Field* (2001), researcher Marilyn Fler cites Loraine Corrie's investigations that were published in "Neuroscience and early childhood? A dangerous liaison," *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, Vol. 25, 2000, 34-40: "...Corrie...argues that the majority of research that is used to support the importance of the early

years has been conducted on animals. She states that approximately one



percent of studies since the 1970s listed in *Psychlit* involve children (the number of studies reviewed was 12,395). In addition, she states that a breakdown of subjects in the studies reported between 1990 and 1999 shows that 62 percent of studies were performed on rats, 3.3 percent on adults, and only .94 of a percent on children. In examining the studies conducted on humans, she concludes that in most cases the sample sizes reported in individual studies were around four to five children. In addition, some articles drew upon the same original piece of scientific research, thus reducing the number of total studies further. Corrie concludes that it is still too early to be persuaded that the neuroscience research offers definitive evidence for the importance of early childhood education."

Fler also points out that researchers have questioned claims made by those using brain-based research to promote early education. Criticism of "methodological integrity of the claims" includes limited studies with humans, "over-citation of a limited few neuroscience studies," small sample sizes involving humans, and more.

14. Do you — or does anyone you live with — have a gun or carry a gun around?
17. Have you ever had sex (with women, men or both)?
18. Have you ever been tested for or diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease (VD) (herpes, gonorrhea, Chlamydia, genital warts, PID, syphilis)?
19. Are you — or do you ever wonder if you are — gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender?
20. Have you ever had thoughts about killing yourself?
22. Have you ever been physically or sexually abused or mistreated by anyone (kicked, hit, pushed, forced or tricked into having sex, touched on your private parts)?

## Nosy TeenScreen Questionnaire

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health identifies Columbia University's TeenScreen Program as a model for early detection and intervention. The program is recommended in the Commission's report *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America* (July 2003) that encourages strengthening mental health programs in schools and recommends universal mental health screening for all Americans.

According to the report, Columbia University's computer-based questionnaire is a "valid and reliable" screening instrument that "identifies and refers for treatment those who are at risk for suicide or suffer from an untreated mental illness."

Screening programs like TeenScreen will expand school involvement with mental health care. Of public concern is whether or not there is a need for universal mental illness screening of all school children. Additionally, there are issues of personally identifiable data collection, confidentiality and access, ability of schools to determine and regulate "mental health" needs, and use of public funds to establish programs.

### Do you...? Have you...? Are you...?

TeenScreen questionnaires are reminiscent of nosy surveys conducted nationwide in public school classrooms in recent decades. The following questions are excerpted from a TeenScreen 22-item screening tool prefaced with "Your answers are a confidential/private part of your medical record. However, for your safety, we are required by law to share information involving physical/sexual abuse and suicide. Every situation is individual and our staff will always talk with you before sharing any of this information."

Possible responses for each question:

### Yes, Sometimes, No, and Want More Info:

1. In general, are you happy with the way things are going for you?
2. Do you get along with your family?
8. Do you ever use laxatives or throw up on purpose after eating?
11. Do you smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco?
12. Do you drink alcohol?
13. Have you tried any drugs (pot, crack, cocaine, heroin, acid, speed, etc.)?

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**Over the past two decades, "college textbook prices have risen at double the rate of inflation"** according to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office. At state universities, course supplies account for 26% of all student costs, including tuition. The G.A.O. report faults the development of "CD-ROMs and other instructional supplies." However, Yale Law School professor Ian Ayres cites the lack of price competition as the main culprit — noting that 80% of the textbook publishing market is controlled by the five largest publishers.

**Retaining struggling kindergarten pupils does more harm than good,** concludes a report published in the fall issue of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. The report was based on data from a national sampling of young children included in a federal database known as the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study.

**An estimated 58,780 students are homeschooled in North Carolina** and a record number of home schools were opened in the state this past year. The national estimates for homeschooled students range anywhere from 1.1 million to 2.1 million.

**Maine's state officials plan to replace their state high school assessment with the SAT** college entrance exam. Students will take the SAT in 11th grade. Passing the exam will not be a graduation requirement. The state would cover the \$41 cost per student the first time the test is taken. Currently, all Maine 10th graders take the PSAT and about 75% of the state's high school students take the SAT. (*Boston Globe*, 8-31-05)

**ACLU fights abstinence-only programs.** On September 22, the ACLU began a campaign to urge officials in 18 states to reject abstinence-only sex education programs. The group claims these programs discriminate against homosexual youth, contain false or misleading information, and promote religion. The ACLU is targeting Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Wyoming.

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## Idaho Students, Parents and Educators Say 'NO!' to Reform

As national efforts proceed to build public support for redesigning American high schools, Idaho citizens are speaking out against the plans.

From October 5th through the 19th, six state hearings were held throughout Idaho with thousands of students, parents, and teachers in attendance. The public testimony has been overwhelmingly against reforming the state's high schools.

### More cradle-to-grave controls

Idaho Eagle Forum president Jane Lesko, who has researched and followed federal education reforms for eleven years, is at the forefront of efforts to inform Idaho citizens about the restructuring of U.S. education. She testified at the October 12th hearing in Boise where an estimated 500 people attended.

Lesko explains that the National Governors Association's *Getting It Done: Ten Steps to a State Action Agenda* released last January, "starts with early childhood, K-12, thru higher education and ends with all children having a career pathway and an industry certificate." Lesko asserts, "We are being revisited by Goals 2000 and School-to-Work. How many parents were told that the State of Idaho had signed a contract with the U.S. Department of Labor in 1995 guaranteeing them that all ninth graders in Idaho would have a career pathway?"

Area high school and college students publicly stated they "do not want career pathways or to lose their art and music classes in order to be loaded down with math and science."

### Not a state plan, but a national and international plan

Retired educator and former high school principal F. Willard Robinson, Ed.D, also testified at the Boise hearing. Robinson's notable career includes piloting the first advanced placement program in 1968 at Beverly Hills High School, California, and chairing numerous high school evaluation programs for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. He was the only public school administrator west of the Mississippi River nominated as a member of America's oldest

professional education association: the Headmasters Association.

With his distinguished background, Robinson's analysis of the Idaho plans are particularly troubling: "Citizens should be concerned when a major education reform program, which has national and international implications, is again presented to the State of Idaho ostensibly as an Idaho program. Such an educational reform program was presented by Governor Kempthorne, the State Board of Education and representatives of the Bill Gates Foundation at a general meeting held at Boise State University on August 23, 2005. The new plan is titled *Redesigning Idaho's High Schools to Reflect the World-wide Economy*."

Robinson further adds, "The wisdom of thrusting this extensive education reform program on the State of Idaho without the professional input from school teachers and administrators responsible, and the parents of our young people needs to be questioned. The approach is troublesome, especially when it is not an Idaho program as presented, but rather, again, a national program financed by a one-billion dollar grant from the Bill Gates Foundation through UNESCO, the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored by the National Governor's Association."

State officials presented plans with the claim of strengthening mathematics and Science, but Robinson explains that far more is involved: "Not so well advertised are some international education programs they tried to get the State Legislature to endorse earlier this year. These include the Global Education program (of which Green Cross is a part), the European-based International Baccalaureate program, the Center for Civic Education program, and the Idaho Human Rights program sponsored by UNESCO. Also, an integral part of the new reform plan is the old discredited School-to-Work program, later to come in as Worklink. Now it is reemerging in the Idaho School Redesign Summit. Aspects of these programs were in Goals 2000 and the No Child Left Behind Act. Now these programs are camouflaged under the guise of the national mathematics and science programs."

## Judge Strikes Down Pledge Again

A federal judge in California ruled on September 14 that public-school-led recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance are unconstitutional as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The case was the second lawsuit brought by atheist Michael A. Newdow, who objects to the words "under God," and hopes to silence all schoolchildren from reciting the Pledge.

Newdow won his first lawsuit against the Pledge in 2002 in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, but the Supreme Court last year ducked deciding it by saying that Newdow lacked standing because of custodial issues with his daughter's mother. When Newdow filed his second suit this year, he bolstered his cause by including two other sets of parents as co-plaintiffs.

Attacks on the Pledge have prompted a rebuttal from Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington. He said, "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."

When Congress adjourned for the year 2004, the U.S. Senate had failed to vote on the Pledge Protection Act sponsored by Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO). The bill was passed by the House of Representatives in September by 247 to 173. The bill uses Congress's Article III power to withdraw jurisdiction over the Pledge from the courts.

## Book of the Month



**Hoodwinked: How Intellectual Hucksters Have Hijacked American Culture,** Jack Cashill, Nelson Current, 2005, 273 pp., \$24.99.



The premise of *Hoodwinked* is a familiar one: that members of the "cultural establishment"—a cadre of intellectuals comprised of professors, journalists, novelists, playwrights and scientists—hold views that are more liberal than those of most Americans and use their influence to persuade the masses, or at least college students, to agree with them. In pursuit of their goals, many of these intellectuals have abandoned their commitment to the truth. Faith in the "progressive" creed and their eagerness to proselytize the rest of us have made them careless and even unscrupulous. This book documents the most egregious cases of duplicity by these self-proclaimed guiding lights of society.

One area in which progressive academics have often sacrificed truth for propaganda is sexual morality. Throughout the twentieth century, the leftist establishment has supported sexual freedom, and consequently it has embraced any scientist whose work seems to provide a justification for promiscuity or homosexuality. Some of these scientists, it turns out, biased their data so much that their results cannot be taken seriously.

For instance, in his famous study of male sexuality, Alfred Kinsey collected data from the gay underworld of Chicago and mixed it indiscriminately with the data he had obtained earlier from random samplings of Indiana University students, thus skewing his results to suggest that homosexuality was more common than it actually is. Kinsey was guilty of worse things than bad science, however, including condoning the abuse of hundreds of children. Yet in spite of various exposés, the cultural establishment has remained favorably disposed towards him: in a *New York Times* review of the recent sympathetic film *Kinsey*, this pseudo scientist is hailed as a "Promethean figure, liberating Americans from ignorance, superstition and hypocrisy."

This and numerous other cases of academic dishonesty, including the works of Margaret Mead, Alex Haley and Ward Churchill, fill the pages of *Hoodwinked*. The perpetrators are different in each instance, but the stories share a common theme—the willingness of progressive "luminaries" to condone mass deception if it will promote their agenda.

The value of this book lies not so much in its thesis, which is widely accepted by conservatives, but rather in its meticulous assemblage and documentation of the worst cases of intellectual malfeasance. *Hoodwinked* is passionate about the importance of truth in academia and public discourse.

# FOCUS: Research Disputes Benefits of Early Education

## Assessing Proposals for Preschool and Kindergarten: Essential Information for Parents, Taxpayers, and Policymakers

by Darcy Olsen, with research assistance from Jennifer Martin

### Introduction

Arizona's move toward more government preschool and kindergarten programs is not unprecedented. In France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, there is nearly universal enrollment of three- and four-year-olds in center-based institutions. A few states across the country have adopted similar systems. Georgia created the first state-wide universal preschool program for four-year-olds in 1993, and Oklahoma, New York, and West Virginia have moved in a similar direction. In 2002, Florida voters adopted a constitutional amendment requiring the state to provide free preschool for every four-year-old child.

Conservative estimates show that Arizona currently spends more than \$410 million annually on various day care and early education programs, including Head Start, preschool, and kindergarten. This estimate does not include funds for tribal and migrant worker programs or multiple funding streams used by school districts to fund all-day kindergarten. As policymakers consider early education proposals, we have the opportunity to examine research on preschool and kindergarten, review experience and findings from domestic programs, and look to international data.

We find strong evidence that the widespread adoption of preschool and full-day kindergarten is unlikely to improve student achievement. For nearly 50 years, local, state, and federal

governments and diverse private sources have spent billions of dollars funding early education programs. Some early interventions have had meaningful short-term effects on disadvantaged students' grade-level retention and special education placement. However, the effects of early interventions routinely disappear after children leave the programs. The phenomenon known as "fade out" is important because it means that early schooling may be immaterial to a child's later school performance, or that the current school system as structured is unable to sustain those early gains.

For mainstream children, there is little evidence to support the contention that formal preschool and kindergarten are necessary for school achievement or more advantageous than learning in a traditional setting, and there is some evidence that day care and preschool can be detrimental.

From 1965 to the present day, the United States has undergone a sea change in formal early education. Preschool and kindergarten, which were rarely used, are

now the norm. Despite increased enrollment in formal early education programs, student achievement has shown little to no improvement. To the degree that international test data are instructive, America's decentralized early education system is outperforming the European model and excels in equipping students for superior achievement in the elementary years.

Implicit in Governor Napolitano's plan is the presumption that the state should take more responsibility for educating young children. A large majority of "child advocates" envision something similar, with almost seven of 10 saying government policy should move toward a universal, national system similar to those of many European countries. Most parents feel otherwise. More than 70% of parents with young children say it is their responsibility to pay the costs of caring for their children, and only one in four would move toward a universal system paid for by the government. Also, a majority of low-income parents (those earning no more than \$25,000 per year) believes that bearing the cost is their responsibility and not society's. The public opinion research organization, Public Agenda, reports, "At the most basic level, parents of young children believe that having a full-time parental presence at home is what's best for very young children, and it is what most would prefer for their own family."

The Governor attempts to address parents' concerns by saying participation in the programs will be voluntary. Yet it is difficult to square that rhetoric with a plan intended to make early education "a lockstep component of public schooling."

Today, all 50 states have compulsory attendance laws, applying generally to children between the ages of five and 18, and many policymakers have been forthright in calling for extending compulsory education to preschoolers.

For example, in 2001, District of Columbia councilman Kevin Chavous proposed the "Compulsory School Attendance Amendment Act" to make school compulsory for every preschool-aged child in the nation's capital. The Honorable Zell Miller, former U.S. senator and Georgia governor, has also expressed a preference for mandatory enrollment, saying, "If I had a choice of pre-K or 12th grade being mandatory, I'd take pre-K in a second." For many people who are convinced that preschool is a necessity, mandatory attendance becomes the next logical step. As one prominent Vermont legislator explained when he proposed a study on the cost of compulsory preschool for three- and four-year-olds, compulsion is the only way to guarantee that children have an equal opportunity for education.

Fundamentally, the preschool and kindergarten debate is not about the effectiveness or expense of the programs. At heart is the question of in whose hands

the responsibility for young children should rest. On that question, plans to entrench the state further into early education cannot be squared with a free society that cherishes the primacy of the family over the state.

### What Do We Know? Understanding the Research

Policymakers are interested in early education for several reasons. Some proponents see preschool and kindergarten as a politically palatable way to subsidize day care. The primary argument made by Arizona policymakers, including governor Janet Napolitano, state superintendent of public instruction Tom Horne, and the State School Readiness Board, is that more early learning will provide the experiences and environment necessary to promote the healthy development of children, leading to subsequent school achievement. For example,

- State superintendent of public instruction Tom Horne writes, "Studies show that a dollar spent on academically oriented all-day kindergarten can equal more than \$7 or \$8 spent in later grades in producing the same academic progress."
- Governor Janet Napolitano writes, "Extensive research shows that full-day kindergarten improves students' reading, writing and math skills, and it contributes to lower dropout rates."
- The State School Readiness Board writes, "Full day kindergarten can lower grade retention, improve language and math skills, lead to higher achievement test scores in eighth grade, and improve attendance and social skills."

Unfortunately, most of the research informing those statements is limited in its applicability to mainstream students and plagued by methodological shortcomings, including small sample size, high attrition rates, infrequent random selection, and infrequent use of comparison groups. Some of the research has been wholly discredited.

For instance, Superintendent Horne suggests that one dollar invested in full-day kindergarten can save seven dollars in later years. Although he does not specify, this figure appears to be based on a flawed cost-benefit analysis from one study of 123 children conducted from 1962-1965, which independent peer reviewers found to be compromised by significant sampling and methodological errors. It also lacks the ability to inform the preschool discussion for mainstream children because it included only children at risk of "retarded intellectual functioning." Further undermining confidence in the results is the fact that its findings have never been replicated.

Taken as a whole, a review of the research shows that some early interventions have had meaningful short-term ef-

fects on disadvantaged students' cognitive ability, grade-level retention, and special education placement. However, most research also indicates that the effects of early interventions disappear after children leave the programs.

This finding helps explain why two researchers can look at the same study and reach different conclusions: the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) studies, for instance, which have received significant press coverage and are discussed later in detail, show a slight advantage for full-day kindergartners over half-day kindergartners as measured at the end of the kindergarten year. Critically, however, they show no differences in academic achievement

**"There is no evidence that ...early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm..."**

between the two groups by the end of third grade.

The phenomenon known as "fade out" is important to discussions of preschool and kindergarten because it means that early schooling may not measurably affect a child's later academic performance. However, if fade out occurs, not because programs are ineffective, but because the schools children later attend are unable to maintain those gains, then it is reasonable to conclude that preschool and kindergarten will not result in lasting gains unless or until elementary and secondary schools are significantly improved. Either conclusion points invariably to the need for reform within the current school system.

As will be discussed later, the few instances in which research has shown the potential of early intervention for improving children's long-term outcomes, the research has been conducted on severely disadvantaged children only in intense settings involving a level of intervention far different from either preschool or kindergarten. For instance, in the widely cited Abecedarian program, children were placed in the program as infants, at the average age of just over four months old. . . . The studies that have been conducted on mainstream children generally do not show benefits from early education programs. According to David Weikart, past president of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation responsible for Perry Preschool, "For middle-class youngsters with a good economic basis, most programs are not able to show much in the way of difference."

A significant body of research shows that formal early education can be detrimental to mainstream children. David Elkind, professor of child development at Tufts University and author of numerous books on cognitive and social development in children and adolescents, explains:

The image of child competence introduced in the 1960s was intended to remedy some of the social inequalities visited upon low-income children. But the publicity given the arguments of child competence was

(See Focus, page 4)

# Thanks-living Time

## The Extraordinary Example of the Pilgrims

by Deborah Brezina

It has been well-said that *education* is what one generation transmits to the next generation in order to make them successful. Results of a recent survey conducted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni entitled “Losing America’s Memory — Historical Illiteracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” revealed not one course in American History was required for graduation in any of America’s top 55 colleges and universities — not one. The survey’s dismal findings prompted the council’s President, Anne Neal, to state: “We are now defending our civilization and a generation does not know *what* to defend or *why* to defend it.”<sup>1</sup>

A few years ago, a school district in Wisconsin published a directive on holidays for teachers: “Thanksgiving is a national custom. Please try to avoid religious connotations.”<sup>2</sup> This directive falls right in line with an absurd statement published in several textbooks used by first-graders across America regarding the “real meaning” of Thanksgiving: “The Pilgrims gave thanks to the Indians.”

As never before, it is vital we know the origins of our unique holiday of Thanksgiving.

Americans have always been taught that the Pilgrims came to the New World exclusively for freedom of religion. This is only partly true. Why? Because they already had it! A decade prior to their voyage on the *Mayflower*, the little band of Separatists fled Britain under persecution and settled in Holland. There they enjoyed a measure of religious freedom, but had become increasingly concerned about the influences on their children by a more libertine Dutch society. Upon their return to England, the group of pilgrims seeking a new world sought permission from King James to embark for the shores of America. Departing on two ships from Southampton in August 1620, the Pilgrims were turned back eight days later due to the unseaworthy *Speedwell*. On the third attempt, the Pilgrims and the crew of the *Mayflower* set sail in September of 1620. For two and a half months, 102 men, women, and children lived most of the journey *below the decks* in a space about the size of a volleyball court.<sup>3</sup> No hatches open due to continuous storms, dimly lit by a few lanterns, no cooking of meals, no sanitation, day after day, night after night they tossed in the belly of a small ship alone in the North Atlantic.

Midway through the voyage, a fierce storm arose. The *Mayflower* was on her side, her main beam cracked. The little wooden world threatened to break apart. Even the captain and crew feared it was the end. The Pilgrims helped in the only way they could. They prayed. Then, Pastor William Brewster remembered one vital piece of cargo. To shore up the main beam, the Pilgrims ingeniously used the giant screw from their printing press! The ship was saved.

On November 9, 1620, the Pilgrims heard the jubilant cry “land ho!” On No-

vember 11 the *Mayflower* dropped anchor inside a natural harbor. Knowing they had blown off course and were now set to embark onto uncharted land under the jurisdiction of no one, they had to make a crucial decision. Under whose authority would they be governed? Before a single man stepped off the ship, they signed in unison what we now know as *The Mayflower Compact*. Here in its first lines, the Pilgrims tell us *why* they came to America:

*In the Name of God. Amen...Having undertaken for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith...*

The weary band of travelers knew they had mere weeks to clear land and build shelter before the onset of winter. By December, many Pilgrims began dying. Sometimes at the rate of 3 or 4 a day, the “general sickness” would continue through the following March. By Spring, one-half had been buried in their “promised land.” This served to bind them together as never before.

Not long after, the “turning point” for Plymouth Colony presented itself in the form and face of an unlikely visitor. On a “fair Friday” in the middle of March, a cry was heard, “Indian coming!”<sup>4</sup> Walking up the main path of the village, a tall well-built figure clad only in loin cloth boomed out in flawless English, “Welcome!” The startled Pilgrims replied back, “Welcome!” Here was Samoset, a visitor from a northern tribe of Algonquins and a guest of the local chief, Massasoit. The Pilgrims offered him their very best. He ate and was satisfied. He told them of the Patuxets, a fierce and murderous tribe who had lived in the area. Every member had mysteriously died the year before. The Pilgrims heard nothing else from Samoset until he returned the next week with another Indian.

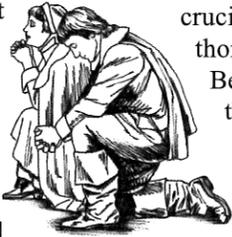
His name was Squanto. The Pilgrims would come to call him “God’s Instrument.”

Squanto taught the Pilgrims stalking, hunting, fishing, planting, and trapping. Their wonderful friend showed them how to fish for cod by using traps. Soon they were not just fishing, but *harvesting* this necessary source of nourishment. Fields of corn and pumpkins, vegetables not known in England, supplemented their staples of carrots, onions, and cabbages. Crops were now flourishing because “God’s Instrument” taught them to fertilize each row with small fishes.

He showed them which herbs and berries were good to eat and good for medicines. He taught them how to hunt beaver, deer, and turkeys and even how to glean maple syrup from the generous supply of trees. The land of plenty was providing not only needs, but abundance.

In November, a full year after their arrival, Governor Bradford called for a day of prayer and thanksgiving:

*To set apart this day of Solemn Thanksgiving...that the Lord may behold us as a people offering praise and thereby glorifying Him.<sup>5</sup>*



The Pilgrims invited their new friends for a feast. Chief Massasoit and Squanto came — along with 90 braves! Bearing gifts of five dressed deer and a dozen fat wild turkeys, the guests helped with preparations, teaching the Pilgrim women how to make hoecakes from the corn and a tasty pudding with sweet maple syrup. The women showed their guests how to make delicious fruit pies with the bountiful berries. The Indians taught the Pilgrims how to roast corn kernels till they popped fluffy and white — popcorn!<sup>6</sup>

The settlers and their guests participated in games with bow and arrow, musket shooting, foot races, and wrestling matches. With great joy and merriment, the first Thanksgiving lasted three days because Massasoit did not want to go home!

*Of Plymouth Plantation* is the account of the life of the Pilgrims written by Governor William Bradford. His message is to all generations who would follow the example of those who marked the way:

*As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light kindled here has shown unto many, yea in some sort to your whole nation...we have noted these things so that you might see their worth and not negligently lose what your fathers have obtained with so much hardship.*

The example of the Pilgrims is ageless and unchanging. Sealed in the collective memory of Americans for four centuries, they are cherished not because of

what they preached, but for how they *lived*. The Pilgrims gave thanks to God not only FOR all things, but IN all things. They achieved something no one or no group of individuals had ever achieved in history. The result would be what Benjamin Franklin would one day call “the Divine Experiment.”

The celebration of the holiday of

Thanksgiving is basic to who we are as a people. It provides the reasons our nation came to be. Does it have “religious connotations”? The historical record leaves no doubt.

This Thanksgiving, as we gather around tables filled to overflowing with the bounty of the most blessed nation in the history of man, *let us remember who we were so we may be who we ought.*

Deborah Brezina authored a high school curriculum on history, law, and government entitled *A Legacy of Liberty*. Her book, *The Spirit of Churchill*, is due out in March.

### Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> *US News and World Report*, December 1999
- <sup>2</sup> *Breakpoint*, Charles Colson, 2001
- <sup>3</sup> *The Light and the Glory*, Peter Marshall and David Manuel, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1977
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Thanksgiving Proclamation, 1621, *America’s Providential History*, Providence Press, Charlottesville, VA
- <sup>6</sup> *The Light and the Glory*, Peter Marshall and David Manuel, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1977

### Focus (Continued from page 3)

read and heard by educators and middle-class parents as well . . . For this reason it was uncritically appropriated for middle-class children by parents and educators. While the image of childhood competence has served a useful function for low-income children and children with special needs, it has become the rationale for the miseducation of middle-class children. . . .

Elkind explains that children who receive academic instruction too early — generally before age six or seven — are often put at risk for no apparent gain. By attempting to teach the wrong things at the wrong time, early instruction can permanently damage a child’s self-esteem,

reduce a child’s natural eagerness to learn, and block a child’s natural gifts and talents. He concludes,

There is no evidence that such early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm . . . If we do not wake up to the potential danger of these harmful practices, we may do serious damage to a large segment of the next generation. . . .

Darcy Olsen is President and CEO of the Goldwater Institute. The full report (*POLICY report*, Goldwater Institute, No. 201, Feb. 8, 2005) is available with footnotes at: <http://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/pdf/materials/542.pdf>

