

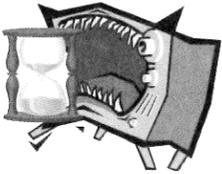
EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 232

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

MAY 2005

Electronics Eat More of Kids' Day



American children spend about 6 ½ hours a day watching TV, using computers and enjoying other electronic activities, a Kaiser Family Foundation survey reported in March.

They watch about the same amount of TV — almost four hours per day — as five years ago, but new technologies such as downloading music and instant-messaging are increasing their exposure to electronic entertainment media. A record 68% have TVs in their bedrooms, according to the survey of 2,000 children in grades 3 through 12. Unsurprisingly, those children watch about 90 minutes more television a day and do less reading and homework than those without their own TVs.

These trends have caused experts to express concern about obesity, the impact of glorified violence, and changes in young brains from the constant multi-tasking. (*USA Today*, 3-10-05)

Less computer time = better test scores

A large-scale British study reported in March that the less pupils use computers at school and at home, the better they do on international tests of reading and math. "Computer use in schools does not seem to contribute substantially to students' learning of basic skills such as maths or reading," concludes the study by the Royal Economic Society.

In fact, the more pupils used computers, the worse they performed, a conclusion that casts doubt on the wisdom of the U.K. government's spending on school computers. (See article on related study in *Education Reporter*, Feb. 2005.)

TV, sex and drugs

To make matters worse, a steady diet of sex-saturated television may encourage teens to start having sex earlier, a national survey of 1,762 youths reported last September in the *Pediatrics* online journal.

"It's social learning: 'monkey see, monkey do,'" said the author, psychologist Rebecca Collins of RAND Corp. "If everyone's talking about sex or having it, and something bad hardly ever comes out of it, because it doesn't on TV, then they think, 'Hey, the whole world's doing it, and I need to.'" (*USA Today*, 9-7-04)

Moreover, teenagers with a TV in their bedroom are more likely to take drugs, binge drink, smoke cigarettes and have sex, according to a separate study of more than 1,000 teens by researchers at the University of California. (news.scotsman.com, 3-29-05)

(See *Electronics*, page 4)

Public Cyberschools Take Flight as New School Choice

Online courses enhance public school offerings

Cyberspace is the new frontier of the school choice movement.

Online schooling and other distance-learning approaches are rapidly expanding in the public school sector, providing a boon to families frustrated with the limitations of regular public school. The trend takes the form of online courses offered by a regular public school to supplement its offerings, or full-blown virtual schools that take the place of attendance at a bricks-and-mortar school. The federal Department of Education noted in January that online public schools are experiencing "explosive growth."

Students in one-third of the nation's school districts took distance education courses in the 2002-03 school year, according to a report released in early March by the National Center for Education Statistics. Some 238,000 enrollments were reported in courses conducted over the internet or through video- or audio-conferencing between teachers and students regularly attending public schools. Nearly one out of 10 public schools had students enrolled in such courses.

Online courses allow students to take Advanced Placement and other high-level courses not otherwise available to students, and to reduce scheduling conflicts with other courses or activities. Such courses are more popular in the Southeast and central regions of the U.S. and in rural districts. They also help rural districts staff courses with "highly qualified" teachers as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Most distance-learning courses are taken by high school students. (*Education Week*, 3-9-05)

'800 lb. gorilla of choice'

More than 100 internet-based public schools have been founded in recent years, often in partnership with private companies. "Cyberschools are the 800-pound gorilla of the choice movement, although vouchers and charter schools get a lot more attention," Colorado education commissioner William Moloney told the *New York Times* (2-9-05). Colorado has increased state financing for online schools by a factor of 20 in five years, now covering 3,585 students.

Online schools can be an attractive alternative for homeschooling families, students who hold jobs, or disabled students. Highly motivated students are likelier to thrive than slackers.

"It's not a good plan for 90% of kids," Colorado's Huerfano School District superintendent Glenn Davis told the *Times*. "They don't have the discipline or the parental support to make it work." In Florida, students at tax-supported online

schools run by corporate managers made slower progress last year on standardized math tests than did students at most traditional schools.

On the other hand, "There's a large pool out there of people who, for whatever reason, are not finding the traditional education system meeting their needs," said Tom Young, a science teacher with iQ Academies at Wisconsin. "There are things we can do very well for students and things we can't do well." (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 3-5-05)

iQ is a virtual high school operated by Wisconsin's Waukesha School District. Nearly 11,000 students statewide have applied to attend the high school this fall. Under the state's open-enrollment public school choice program, state aid is transferred from the students' home school districts to the Waukesha district to pay for their education. Instruction is done remotely over district-paid computers sent to the students' homes, so space is not an issue.

Wisconsin has two other open-enrollment virtual schools, serving elementary and middle school students. They have also seen enrollment soar for next year. One, Wisconsin Connections Academy, has worked well for 8-year-old Heather Drake, who had negative experiences with public schools, parochial schools and homeschooling and suffers from some disabilities. (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 7-31-04).



Hybrid approach controversial

Cyberschools tend to attract families who have tried and struggled with both homeschooling and traditional schools. As a hybrid of those two approaches, online schooling remains controversial with both teachers unions and some homeschooling groups.

Teachers unions resent the loss of jobs and tax money from regular schools, while some homeschooling advocates lament that parents are relegated to a subsidiary role. Learning takes place in the home and involves a parent, but curricular materials and teacher feedback are provided. (See *Education Reporter*, Mar. 2004 for earlier reporting on virtual schools.)

Homeschooling success stories

Homeschooling was also controversial when it first became popular decades ago, but it has achieved an irrefutable general success in comparison to public schools. Homeschoolers typically rank between the 65th and 80th percentile on basic skills tests, according to the National Home Education Research Institute.

In 2004, the 7,858 homeschoolers taking the ACT scored an average of 22.6, com-

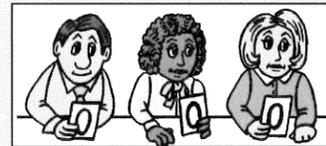
(See *Cyberschools*, page 4)

Questions for School Board Candidates

Here are some suggested questions to ask candidates running for school board — or would-be superintendents — in your public school district. State laws and district practices vary, so not all questions will be relevant in every district.

Fiscal and Personnel Issues

1. Do you plan to support a tax increase?
2. Can you think of any district expenses that should be cut?
3. Would you support suing the state for more money as hundreds of school districts have done or threatened to do in about half the states?
4. Do you support retaining teacher tenure rules that make it nearly impossible to fire teachers?
5. Do you support merit pay for teachers?
6. Do you support market-based incentives to make it easier to hire teachers for hard-to-fill positions such as in math



and science? Or do you think math and science teachers should be paid the same amount as gym teachers?

7. Would you rather hire a teacher with an education degree or one with a degree in the subject he or she will teach?

Curriculum

8. Are you in favor of phonics or whole-language instruction for reading in elementary school?
9. Will you insist that elementary schools drill students in math facts, multiplication tables and long division, or will you let them rely on calculators to do arithmetic for them?
10. Do you support grouping students by ability in classes as is commonly done on sports teams?
11. Will you demand sanctions for teachers who use the classroom for electioneering purposes?

(See *Questions*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Spelling bees are popular!

A Lincoln, RI district that canceled its annual spelling bee drew a firestorm of denunciation, prompting the new superintendent to reinstate the bee in March. (See *Education Reporter*, Mar. 2005.) Nationwide, bees have expanded substantially over the past decade and have been featured in film, television, books and theater. "They're like apple pie in America," said Paige Kimble, director of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The sports TV network ESPN has aired the national competition live since 1994 because of the appeal of youngsters in competition. (Associated Press, 3-15-05)



For every 100 9th-graders, only 18 graduate from college on time. Only 68 graduate from high school on time, 40 immediately enroll in college, 27 are still enrolled sophomore year, and 18 graduate from college within six years, according to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. (*Education Week*, 3-16-05)

Boarding school rocked by sex scandal. Milton Academy, a prestigious Massachusetts prep school, expelled



five male students in February for receiving oral sex on several occasions from a 15-year-old sophomore girl. The girl was placed on administrative leave. The 200-year-old alma mater of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy costs \$32,700 a year for boarders and has a 5-to-1 student-teacher ratio. (*Boston Globe*, 2-20-05, 3-3-05)

Students protest foreign-language Pledge. The Pledge of Allegiance was broadcast in a different foreign language each day of National Foreign Language Week in March at Old Mill High School in Millersville, MD. A 9th-grader and several other students sat down in protest, and his father pulled him out of school for the duration of the week. "It's like wearing a cross upside down in a church," said the father, Charles Linton. (Associated Press, 3-10-05)

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Liza Forshaw. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois. Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org> E-mail: education@eagleforum.org

Zero-Tolerance Policies Wreak Havoc, Prompt Reassessments

Would Not Have Stopped Minnesota Shootings

After the Columbine school shootings in 1999, schools began greatly expanding zero-tolerance policies against student misbehavior, and nearly half the states now mandate that schools expel and often call the police on students for fighting, possessing weapons of any kind or even disrupting class. Thousands of students have been kicked out of school or taken away by cops for violating zero-tolerance policies, which may also cover legal drugs.

Yet it is questionable whether such policies make schools appreciably safer.



Jeff Weise

No zero-tolerance policy would have stopped Jeff Weise, the Minnesota teenager who killed nine people and then himself on a rampage on an Indian reservation in March.

The troubled youth wasn't even attending the high school where he slew seven people, which had a metal detector, security guards and a crisis-management plan. Depressed and on Prozac, he was being taught at home by a public school teacher due to unspecified medical problems.

Four states revisiting policy

In four states — Indiana, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and Texas — legislators are trying to reverse the trend toward one-size-fits-all harsh discipline, saying that zero-tolerance policies have gone too far.

Unlike traditional criminal laws, which require a showing of criminal intent, zero-tolerance policies generally disregard the student's intent. A 12-year-old Texas boy found this out the hard way when he inadvertently wore a coat containing his Boy Scout pocket knife to school two years ago.

A friend he consulted turned him in, and police arrested him and took him to a juvenile-detention center without contacting his parents. He was forced to attend an alternative school for juvenile offenders for 45 days despite being a First Class Boy Scout, a youth leader at church, and the winner of an outstanding-student award, according to recent testimony in the Texas senate.

No leniency for 'honest mistake'

"All the teachers knew it was an honest mistake, but none of that mattered because of the school's policy," said the boy's father, who said his son contemplated suicide. Infractions that merit expulsion now range from spitting to swearing to skipping school. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 3-31-05)

Moreover, schools with strict zero-tolerance policies may be pushing more and more students into the juvenile-justice system, says a new report from the Advancement Partnership. Reviewing schools in Denver, Chicago and Palm Beach County, FL, the report contends that schools are overreacting and calling

on law enforcement to deal with minor infractions that could be better handled by parents. In Denver, the study found that most of the incidents leading to referrals to law enforcement were nonviolent.

The latest instances of students given Draconian punishments for seemingly minor infractions include:

- ▶ a 10-year-old Kansas City boy given an in-school suspension for bringing a toy gun to school which he found in the ground near his bus stop and turned over to the principal on arrival (thewmurchannel.com, 2-2-05)

- ▶ a straight-A captain of the state-champion quiz team at a Virginia high school who was suspended because his father's car contained a rusting Boy Scout pocketknife and a bottle of Bailey's Irish Cream liqueur (*The News Virginian*, 2-3-05)

- ▶ a Texas 5th-grader handcuffed, arrested and taken to juvenile detention for the weekend on a state jail felony charge for setting off a school fire alarm (accidentally, according to his parents) (*The Courier*, 2-2-05)

Butter knife for apple

- ▶ A 13-year-old Texas girl suspended for packing a butter knife in her lunch in order to cut an apple as recommended to protect her braces (foxnews.com, 2-10-05)

- ▶ an 11-year-old North Carolina boy charged with a weapons violation, removed from his home and placed in a group home for months for possessing a BB gun in his book bag which he immediately turned in to a principal (*Wall Street Journal*, 3-11-05)

- ▶ a 5-year-old Florida girl arrested, cuffed and put in back of a police car after a violent temper tantrum at school (PalmBeachPost.com, 3-28-05)

- ▶ an 11-year-old Texas girl arrested, handcuffed, escorted off campus, charged with misdemeanor assault, and ordered to attend an alternative school for a scuffle with another girl after the other girl's parents felt that suspension wasn't enough and contacted law enforcement (*Houston Chronicle*, 2-3-05)

Gorilla costume on roof

- ▶ a Pennsylvania National Merit Finalist wearing a gorilla Halloween costume on the roof of his high school as a prank, who triggered a major emergency response including dozens of police, the FBI, dogs and a bomb squad, and was taken at gunpoint to the county prison on reckless endangerment and other charges, then suspended for 10 days; about eight classmates subsequently wore T-shirts to school stating "Zero Tolerance Makes Zero Sense," which school officials confiscated (*The Morning Call*, 2-16-05, 2-17-05)

- ▶ A New Jersey junior high school student suspended indefinitely after school

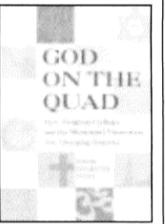
(See *Zero Tolerance*, page 4)



Book of the Month



God on the Quad: How Religious Colleges and the Missionary Generation Are Changing America, Naomi Schaefer Riley, St. Martin's Press, 2005, 262 pp., \$24.95.



This book is a refreshing follow-up to *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, which was reviewed in this space in the Feb. 2005 issue. Tom Wolfe's novel, recommended by President George W. Bush to his friends, paints a bleak though riveting portrait of the current culture of secular colleges.

Religious colleges are a different story. Naomi Schaefer Riley has done her homework, visiting 20 campuses and logging countless interviews with students, faculty members and administrators.

Colleges with strong religious identities are unquestionably becoming more popular and their academic standards are rising. Enrollment in the more than 100 member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (which hire only professors who share the faith) jumped 60% from 1990 to 2002. This trend mirrors a rise in evangelical and Jewish day schools and homeschooling (for which religion is a strong motivating factor).

Riley profiles six colleges in depth — Brigham Young, Bob Jones, Notre Dame, Thomas Aquinas, Yeshiva and Baylor — representing Mormon, fundamentalist, Catholic, Jewish and evangelical/Baptist traditions. Her respectful observations about the distinctive character of each campus paint a colorful portrait of religious diversity and vitality in the U.S.

Brigham Young, for example, is run top-down by the Mormon Church, while at Notre Dame the Catholicity of the campus is more palpable in the 85% Catholic student body than in the faculty or administration. Thomas Aquinas takes a monastic approach, secluding the students from the larger world while they debate Plato vs. Aristotle in a unified curriculum shared by everyone. Such an approach would seem alien at either Brigham Young or Notre Dame, larger universities that, despite their robust religious rules, are very much engaged with the larger world.

Especially interesting are the methods each college employs to manage student social life — dormitory arrangements, restrictions on dating and sex, encouragement of marriage between students, and limits on drugs, alcohol, clothing, dancing, movies and rock music. They vary in their appeal and effectiveness, of course, but visitors to many of the campuses mentioned cannot fail to note the wholesome, courteous, friendly atmosphere that usually results. Tom Wolfe's fictional DuPont University they aren't.

God on the Quad makes an excellent primer for parents or college applicants interested in a religious college — or for administrators open to learning more about what works and what doesn't in such an environment.

FOCUS: Are Your Children Crazy?



by Jane Orient, M.D.

Congress and President Bush apparently think that a lot of children have a "mental health" problem. Or that enough of them do to justify taking millions of dollars from taxpayers to fund a universal "mental health screening" for children, and eventually for everyone.

Personally, I think — from the perspective of a person who never had any — that almost all children act crazy. Those who don't are, by definition, abnormal, because they don't act like the others.

The main problem with about half of them is that they are boys. Such children are obviously made of snips and snails and puppy dog tails. On the farm there is a solution for that: a procedure for turning boy lambs into non-ram lambs. After a quick little operation, they act like peaceful little lambs instead of aggressive, disruptive rams.

We don't do surgery like that on little boys, of course, but we do have our methods: such as behavioral therapy and chemicals.

There are those who argue with some passion that society has to do something. Bad, disruptive, antisocial or depressed little kids make lots of trouble for parents and schoolteachers. Worse, they can grow up into dysfunctional, unhappy or troublemaking adults. That snotty little boy might become a dissenting nonconformist or even a rebellious man, who could throw a monkey wrench into our smoothly functioning society. We have to catch them early — for their own good.

Teams of experts are awaiting the infusion of cash. They'll be ensconced in your child's school before you even know it. A bonus is that your little darlings will probably give them quite a bit of information about you also, and then you too can receive therapy you didn't know you needed.

Do you sometimes raise your voice? Ever spank them? Hug them inappropriately? Have politically incorrect attitudes? Use forbidden words? Own a gun? Smoke cigarettes, especially indoors? Read extremist literature? Refuse to recycle? Prepare for a knock on the door.

There are many tools at the disposal of the mental health squad. Counseling sessions. Drugs (Ritalin, antidepressants, tranquilizers, maybe some new ones that need to be tested on some experimental subjects of your child's age). Group therapy. Removing the child from the home. (This may be a "last resort," but often the mere threat can accomplish wonders.)

If an interview with a child raises concerns, the next step might be a home visit. This could discover poor parenting skills, inadequate housekeeping, harmful literature, or a baby who is crying or has a bruise (signs of abuse?).

It is true that some interventions have potential side effects, say drug dependence or suicide, but to assure the health of the population some shared sacrifice and risk are needed. We will have excellent means of tracking outcomes to improve future therapies. The mental health workers' impressions will all be recorded in the school records. An added benefit could accrue to would-be employers or college recruiters.



Dr. Jane M. Orient

Some cautions are in order. Democrats might think that potential future Republicans are crazy. Republicans might think the opposite. Should an extremist Christian be one of the screeners, he might think that nonbelievers are possessed by the devil. And an extremist secular humanist (if such exist) might think that an overly religious child is at risk for mental illness if not already impaired.

In fact, parents ought to be asking some very serious questions before the government experts interview the first child.

What are the credentials of the screeners? Most importantly, how many children have they raised to adulthood, and with what outcome?

What are the criteria for possible abnormality? What is the scientific validation? How often do different observers agree? Have any long-term studies shown a solid correlation with adult performance in life? Do today's oddball children fail, or might they turn into our greatest achievers?

Will you be allowed to get a second opinion? Can you see the record and enter corrections if indicated? Will the record at any point be

destroyed, or will the stigma of a diagnosis such as "personality disorder" follow the child throughout life?

What will happen if your child fails the screen? What sort of treatment will be given? Who will supervise it? What if you don't approve of it?

What's the very worst thing that the program will have the power to do to you or your child, say if your worst enemy were to gain control of it?

Who might profit from the program (perhaps discoverable by asking who lobbied for it)? Do drug companies expect to have a large number of new consumers

of their psychoactive drugs?

What are the results of studies of long-term use of drugs like Ritalin, which has effects on the brain similar to those of cocaine? Have there even been any such studies?

Can you refuse to participate in the program? If you do refuse, what are the repercussions?

What is the evidence that the program, at best, will be anything other than a waste of millions of dollars? Miraculously,

throughout human history most of those crazy children have become stable, productive adults without federally mandated psychiatric treatment. Still more amazingly, their parents have managed also.

Psychiatry in the hands of government, instead of independent physicians who are working for patients, reeks of Orwell's 1984 or the Soviet era. The very need to ask the questions should tell us the right answer for this program: It's crazy.

Dr. Jane M. Orient is an internist practicing in Tucson, AZ and executive director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons. Copyright 2004 United Press International. Reprinted with permission.

Parents ought to be asking some very serious questions before the government experts interview the first child.

Study Gives States a D Average for Math Content Hits Overreliance on Calculators

States earned an average grade of a "high D" for their mathematics content standards in a study by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation published in January. While California, Indiana and Massachusetts earned As, the study concluded that "the overwhelming majority of states today have sorely inadequate math standards."

Most states' math content standards show the following problems, according to the study:

- ▶▶ "excessive emphasis" on calculator use
- ▶▶ failure to make students memorize basic number facts
- ▶▶ absence of standard algorithms of arithmetic
- ▶▶ inadequate standards for student understanding of fractions by late elementary and early middle school
- ▶▶ "obsessive" focus on requiring students to identify "patterns"
- ▶▶ overemphasis on estimation at the expense of exact arithmetic calculations
- ▶▶ overemphasis on statistics and probability at the expense of algebra and geometry

The study recommends using true math experts to develop revised standards, rather than relying on "math educators" or "curriculum experts."

'Forth grade' math guide

Such "curriculum experts" were likely used for the math test preparation

materials recalled by New York City officials in March because the guides were riddled with math and spelling mistakes. The word "fourth" was even misspelled on the cover of the 4th-grade manual. (yahoo.com/news, 3-25-05)

Disputes over the best way to teach math continue to roil school districts and state boards across the country. Despite Massachusetts's A grade in the Fordham report, parents there have complained that there are insufficient math drills in elementary schools. The focus on "picturing" a problem, talking about it and coming up with several different approaches to solving it frustrates parents who believe that calculating the answer is given short shrift. (*Boston Globe*, 3-13-05)

New York State's Board of Regents recently threw in the towel on the controversial "integrated math" approach it adopted in the 1980s, deciding to reorganize the subject into the traditional three one-year courses, each with a single focus. (*New York Times*, 3-15-05) (See *Education Reporter*, Feb. 2005 and Dec. 2004 for background on math teaching controversies.)

As President Bush and the governors focus on improving the nation's high schools (see *Education Reporter*, Feb. 2005), math is emerging as a big hurdle. A majority of 62 high school dropouts in the federal Job Corps program surveyed by the United Negro College Fund gave "math" as the reason they quit school.

On the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress test in math, only

17% of high school seniors scored at the "proficient" level — less than half the percentage scoring proficient on the reading test. Moreover, 22% of college freshmen are identified as needing remedial math, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. (*Education Week*, 3-23-05)



Science/engineering decline

The dropoff of Americans studying math-related subjects in college and graduate school has alarmed observers. "By 2010, 90% of all Ph.D. physical scientists and engineers in the world will be Asian living in Asia," says Nobel laureate R.E. Smalley of Rice University.

The U.S. now ranks 17th worldwide in the number of undergraduate engineers and natural scientists it produces. In 1975, it was No. 3. Many successful engineers in Silicon Valley cannot persuade their own children to enter engineering fields, in part because their children are concerned that those jobs will be outsourced overseas. (*Wall Street Journal*, 3-29-05)

Gates 'terrified' for U.S. workers

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates issued a dire warning to a governors' conference in a February 26 speech: "When I com-"
(See *Math*, page 4)

Electronics (Continued from page 1)

PBS show in hot water

The U.S. Department of Education is taking a critical look at the Public Broadcasting System, which is supposed to run educational programs funded by tax dollars as an alternative to less-high-minded commercial television. However, some such programs focus less on academic skills than on "diversity" issues with a potential for offending parents.



One PBS program aimed at preschoolers, "Ready to Learn," was sharply criticized by newly appointed Education Secretary Margaret Spellings earlier this year for portraying a lesbian-headed household in an episode of "Postcards from Buster." She promised a more stringent review of department grants for public broadcasting programs.

Cyberschools (Continued from page 1)

pared to the national average of 20.9, the institute reports. (mailtribune.com, 9-12-04) Homeschoolers are regularly accepted by Harvard, Yale and Princeton universities.

The prestigious Oxford University moot court team was defeated by two former homeschoolers from the four-year-old Patrick Henry College last December, in a fierce three-day competition. (Washington Times, 12-11-04) In the same month, a 16-year-old homeschooler from New York became the youngest U.S. chess champion since Bobby Fischer. (New York Post, 12-7-04)

Last year's state champion in the National Geography Bee was a homeschooler who was disqualified from competing again this year because of an obscure rule change restricting participation by homeschoolers in public school competitions. (New Hampshire Union Leader, 3-18-05)

Homeschoolers may avail themselves of a wide array of educational options supplementing parental instruction, from online courses produced by the private sector to classes and extracurricular ac-

tivities geared to homeschoolers.

Homeschooled students taking an extra class with New Jersey lawyer Andy Schlafly organized an exciting dinner-debate on March 10 featuring Republican gubernatorial candidates Steve Lonegan, Bret Schundler and Todd Caliguire, who faced tough questions by students on key issues. A local cable television station aired the debate three times, and 140 New Jerseyans attended the event.



Steve Lonegan

Belying the popular image of homeschoolers as shortchanged on extra-curricular activities, the AAA Band of homeschoolers in Aiken, SC garnered three all-state band awards and numerous regional and county awards this spring. The band, which has played at the state capitol and in many Aiken civic events, hopes to raise \$25,000 for a missions trip to Trinidad this fall.

Questions (Continued from page 1)

- 12. Do you think sex education courses should encourage abstinence until marriage? Should they include demonstrations on how to put on a condom?
- 13. Will you permit programs that advocate same-sex marriage?
- 14. Are you open to forming a parental task force to review books assigned to children or purchased by school libraries and advise principals whether the books are appropriate? Will you allow interested parents to review curricular materials in advance of their use by schoolchildren?
- 15. Do you like spelling bees, or do you think competition is unhealthy?
- 16. What is your position on social promotion? On allowing bright children to skip grades?

Discipline

- 17. Are you in favor of zero-tolerance policies even if they mean that students with hunting guns in their car trunks must be expelled? Or that girls taking pain relievers for cramps without going through the nurse must be suspended?
- 18. Do you believe police officers should be used to handcuff and arrest very young children who are unruly? Or use a stun gun?

- 19. Do you think our schools have enough recesses and allow enough physical activity so that kids can let off steam?
- 20. What security measures do you support to keep students and teachers safe from attacks by other students?

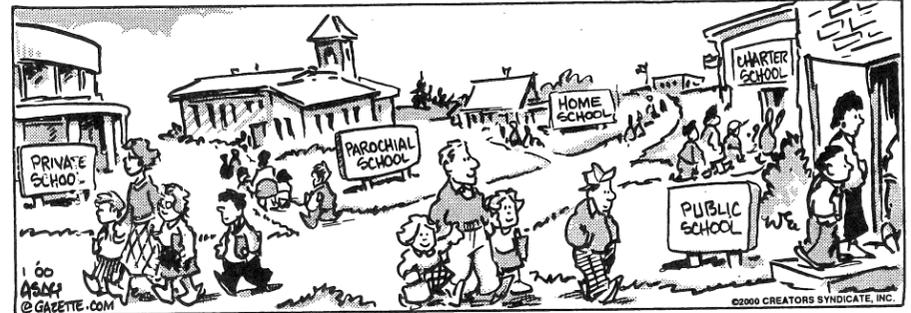
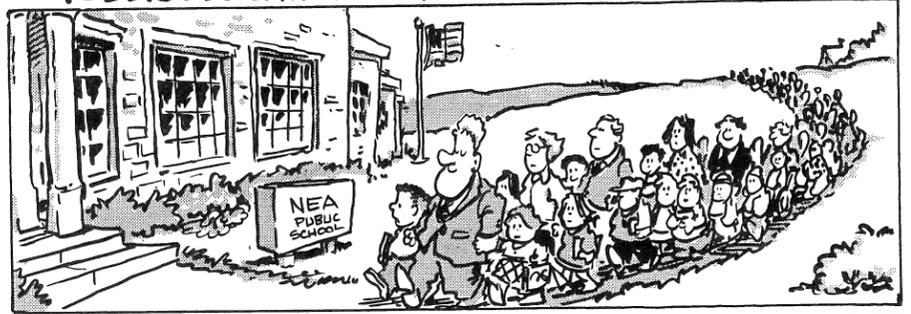
Parental Rights

- 21. Will you allow nosy questionnaires to be given to children without prior parental consent?
- 22. Will you ask schools to obtain prior parental consent before releasing children for off-campus medical services? Before conducting mental health screening?
- 23. Do you think it is a proper function of schools to expose students to Channel One's racy television programming and corporate ads for junk foods and medications?
- 24. Will you push for a policy against requiring parents to put their children on Ritalin or other psychotropic drugs?
- 25. Are you open to online schooling options?
- 26. Are you open to participation by homeschoolers in school activities?

Religious Freedom

- 27. What is your position on singing or playing Christmas carols at school events?
- 28. Will you require principals to enforce students' constitutional rights to pray or raise religious viewpoints?

PUBLIC EDUCATION: WHICH PLAN DO YOU LIKE?



Zero Tolerance (Continued from page 2)

officials discovered a model rocket engine in his locker (Asbury Park Press, 2-16-05)

► A Florida 5th-grader arrested and suspended for allegedly bringing a plastic toy gun to school (local6.com, 2-3-05)

Felonies for drawings

► Florida 9- and 10-year-old boys charged with second-degree felonies and taken away in handcuffs by police because they drew stick figures depicting violence against a third student (ocala.com, 1-26-05)

► a 13-year-old Georgia girl charged with disorderly conduct and suspended for five days for creating a list of students she wanted "eliminated," which she mentioned to other students and then tore up (opinionjournal.com, 1-27-05)

► a California high school soccer star suspended for two months for carrying a pocket knife to a school dance, to which he walked from home at night (mercurynews.com, 1-12-05)

► a 14-year-old Oklahoma girl suspended for a year after a drug-sniffing dog

found prescription hormones in her locker; after intervention by the ACLU on the ground that there was no clear policy, her suspension was reduced to five days (Associated Press, 1-12-05)

Pain relief for cramps

► a Pennsylvania honor roll high school student suspended for taking the over-the-counter pain reliever Anaprox offered by a fellow student for relief of menstrual cramps, without a written order from a physician and administration by the school nurse; the offense was classified as a level 5 violation, applicable where a student "possesses drug-related paraphernalia and/or possesses, uses or is under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or mood-altering substances" (delcotimes.com, 1-28-05)

► a Pennsylvania high school honor student expelled for bringing a pocket knife to class, after 10 1/2 years of schooling with no demerits or detentions (kyw.com, 12-14-04)

(See Education Reporter, Sept. and May 2004 for numerous other examples of zero-tolerance policies in action.)

Math (Continued from page 3)

pare our high schools to what I see when I'm traveling abroad, I am terrified for our work force of tomorrow. In math and science, our 4th-graders are among the top students in the world. By 8th grade, they're in the middle of the pack. By 12th grade, U.S. students are scoring near the bottom of all industrialized nations."

"The percentage of a population with a college degree is important, but so are sheer numbers," he continued. "In 2001, India graduated almost a million more students from college than the United States did. China graduates twice as many students with bachelor's degrees as the U.S., and they have six times as many graduates majoring in engineering. In the international competition to have the biggest and best supply of knowledge workers, America is falling behind." (New York Times Magazine, 3-3-05)

Indeed, even within the U.S., Asian immigrant families dominate the high levels of math and science. A 2004 study by the National Foundation for American Policy found that 65% of the top math students and 60% of the top science students in the U.S. are children of immigrants

mainly from India and China. Foreign-born high school students are disproportionately represented among the high scorers on national math and science contest.

More than 50% of the engineers with Ph.D.s in the U.S. are foreign-born, as are 45% of math and computer scientists with Ph.D.s as well as life scientists and physicists, according to the National Science Foundation.

Lousy texts, unqualified teachers

Robert J. Herbold, a retired senior executive of Microsoft and a member of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, blames unqualified teachers and weak curricula in math and science. "In 2003, the American Association for the Advancement of Science rated less than 10% of middle school math books to be acceptable, and no science books," he said in a speech at Hillsdale College (5-25-04) "The National Commission on Math and Science Teaching for the 21st Century noted that 56% of high school students taking physical science were being taught by 'out of field' teachers" in 2000.