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Texas Evolution Battle Ongoing: One Board Member at a Time

The Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS) high school Biology standards require students to critique scientific explanations, including hypotheses and theories, as to their strengths and weaknesses using scientific evidence and information. The minutes and audio recordings of this bipartisan requirement clearly show that the intent of the standards is to teach weaknesses of evolution to Texas students and thereby foster critical thinking.

State Board of Education member Terri Leo says biology books to date do not include scientific weaknesses of the biologic theory of evolution. The cen-

sorship of the “weaknesses” by militant Darwinists who want evolution taught uncritically is an ongoing battle, and the field of battle has taken a new direction.

One battle won by conservative Board members deals with drawings of embryos published by German embryologist Ernst Haeckel in 1874 — that’s not a typo — the drawings were made just after our Civil War! Haeckel virtually worshipped Charles Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and wanted to help Darwin prove it. Haeckel’s drawings, which purported to show that embryos of various animals “recapitulated” or replayed their evolutionary history as they developed in the womb or egg, were even called the very best evidence for evolution by none other than Charles Darwin himself.

The drawings were fraudulent. Haeckel, in his zeal to “prove evolution”, had carved a single wood block “ink stamp” and by inking it slightly differently, or rolling it slightly differently, got ever so slightly different “drawings” from the same block of wood. Embryologists, who knew what the embryos actually looked like, immediately challenged his drawings as faked and inaccurate. Haeckel was a fraud. But with no real evidence to support their idea of a godless creation, Darwinists clung to the discredited drawings. The faked drawings of fish, chicken, pig, human, and other embryos remained in textbooks as part of the Darwinist propaganda.

When the Texas State Board of Education discovered that these very same fraudulent embryo drawings (or modern artists’ redrawing in color of the same fraudulent ones) were in the proposed textbooks, the Board said no. Most publishers listened and removed the drawings in favor of using actual pictures. This was in spite of the Darwinists being on record (including on camera) as saying it was essentially OK to continue to use the faked drawings since they so clearly showed stu-

dents the “truth of evolution”! Using lies to prove truth?

Playing the semantics game, some textbook publishers tried to change definitions to dodge TEKS requirements. For example, one publisher declared that evolution was just “change over time” and used the example of automobile car style changes to prove it. Another Darwinist said evolution was as well proved as gravity — thereby intentionally conflating the law of gravity that Sir Isaac Newton discovered and everyone on our planet recognizes with the unproved hypothesis of what causes gravity, all with the goal of artificially and falsely elevating the status of evolution.

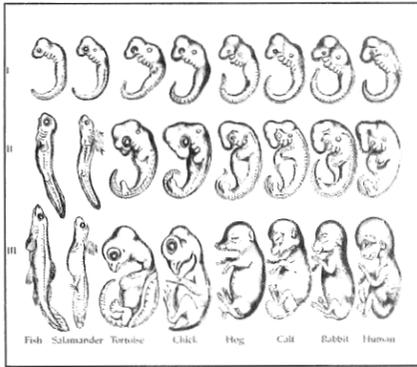
In spite of all this, liberal SBOE members voted down conservative members’ attempts to reject Biology textbooks that failed to adequately meet TEKS standards of showing both strengths and weaknesses of Darwinian evolution.

To remedy this, Terri Leo has worked to change the conservative/liberal balance of membership of the Texas State Board of Education by recruiting conservative candidates who could be trusted not to “cancel out all credible science that opposes Darwinian evolution.” In 2004, Barbara Cargill successfully ran against an incumbent who had voted against conservative Board members’ efforts to improve Biology textbooks. During the same election cycle, pro-evolution supporters targeted Terri Leo and two other board members, Gail Lowe and David Bradley, but failed to defeat them. All three conservatives won landslide victories, giving them a clear mandate to continue their efforts.

In the March 2006 primary, Terri Leo once again hit the recruitment trail, and Ken Mercer and Cynthia Dunbar agreed to run, Ken against a pro-evolution incumbent and Cynthia in a vacated seat previously held by one of the members who voted against the conservative SBOE members’ proposals. Both conservative candidates won their primaries, again by large “mandate-sized” margins, and face little opposition in solidly Republican districts in the general election this November.

Texas’ battles against pro-evolution censorship have national implications. Publishers generally propose textbooks acceptable to their biggest customers, such as Texas and California. With the Texas State School Board’s diligent oversight in continuing to demand a high standard of objectivity toward all scientific theories, all states reap the benefits.

Texans are realizing that “victory” is



(See Evolution, page 4)

Math Teachers Reverse Course Is the 17-year math war over?

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics issued a report on September 12 called “Curriculum Focal Points for Pre-kindergarten Through Grade 8 Mathematics.” The report made national headlines because it rejects previously endorsed curricula such as “New New Math,” “Connected Math,” “Chicago Math,” “Core-Plus Math,” “Whole Math,” “Everyday Math,” “Interactive Math,” and “Integrated Math.”

These curricula imbedded the notion that estimates are acceptable in lieu of accurate answers to math problems so long as students feel good about what they are doing and can think up a reason for doing it. These curricula used discussion, coloring, playing games, and early use of calculators. Children were encouraged to “discover” math on their own, construct their own math language, and flounder around with their own approaches to solving problems. This was based on the notion that children can develop a deeper understanding of mathematics when they invent their own methods for performing basic arithmetic calculations.

The 1989 report, which had been the standard for 17 years, flatly opposed drilling students in basic math facts, taught that memorization of math facts was bad, and failed to systematically build from one math concept to another. For 19 years, parents have been demanding back-to-basics and deriding these curricula as “fuzzy math” or “rainforest math.”

In October 1999 Bill Clinton’s Department of Education officially endorsed ten of the new math courses that were based on the 1989 “standards” for grades K-12, calling them “exemplary” or “promising.” Local school districts were urged to adopt one of them, and were baited with federal money inducements.

One of these department-approved “exemplary” courses, “MathLand,” directed the children to meet in small groups and invent their own ways to add, subtract, multiply and divide. The kids weren’t told that wiser adults have already discovered how to do all those basic computations rapidly and accurately.

Nobel Laureates opposed New Math

It wasn’t only parents who sized up fuzzy math curricula as subtracting rather than adding to the skills of schoolchildren. On Nov. 18, 1999, more than 200 prestigious mathematicians and scholars, including four Nobel Laureates and two winners of the Fields Medal (the highest math honor), published a full-page ad in the *Washington Post* criticizing the “exemplary” curricula. But Clinton’s Education Secretary Richard Riley refused to back away from the Department’s endorsements and the 1989 “standards.”

With such vague parameters for courses in math, trendy instructors began advancing their political agenda by injecting ethnic studies into math textbooks.

(See Math Wars, page 2)

California Students Must Study Islam

The U.S. Supreme Court on Oct. 2 refused to consider an appeal from a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision by parents who objected to their 7th graders being required to take a 3-week course in Islam indoctrination in the California public schools. The pro-school, anti-parent case is *Eklund v. Byron Union School District*.

The Excelsior public school in Byron, California was teaching 7th graders how to act like Muslims, using a student guide stating, “From the beginning [of this module], you and your classmates will become Muslims.”

The students were given Muslim names and told to recite Muslim prayers. They were required to give up things for a day to recognize the Islamic practice of Ramadan, and students said that the teacher gave extra credit for fasting at lunch too. Students were told to recite from the Koran, encouraged to wear Arab clothing, told to pretend they were making a pilgrimage to Mecca, and earned points for using Muslim religious phrases such as one

meaning “God is great.” For the final exam, the students had to write an essay about Islamic culture. The essay assignment warned students as follows: “BE CAREFUL HERE — if you do not have something positive to say, don’t say anything!!!”

The school district argued for the court’s approval of this course in order to give the teachers assurance they would not be sued for teaching about the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving or Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

The Byron school district still continues to make the same instructional materials available for use by teachers. In 2003, this public school received a Distinguished School Award from the California Department of Education, declaring it to be one of the state’s “most exemplary and inspiring public schools.”



EDUCATION BRIEFS

13 years of public schooling cost \$100,000 per student on average, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. During the 2003-04 school year, the national cost per-pupil for one year of public education averaged \$8,310, ranging from \$13,338 in New Jersey to \$4,991 in Utah. Spending on all elementary and secondary education topped more than \$500 billion in 1003-04, or 4.7% of the entire economy as measured by GDP.

New Jersey students can receive an excused absence on any one of 76 religious holidays listed by the state board of education. New York's state legislature passed a bill requiring schools to consider religious holidays when scheduling mandatory tests. The board of education in Hillsborough County, Florida, tried removing all religious holidays from the calendar, but after receiving 3,500 emails restored the original calendar with days off for Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Yom Kippur. According to Kathryn Lohre of Harvard University's Pluralism Project, "'Choose your own holiday' has become more popular. It takes pressure off the school boards."

Parental choice fizzled in NCLB. The No Child Left Behind Act requires schools that get federal poverty aid and fall short of their yearly progress goals for two straight years must offer transfers to students; and after three years of failure, schools must offer parents a choice of tutors. Of more than 2.2 million children eligible for tutoring, only 19% got it in 2004-05, and only 2% of those eligible transferred to another school.

The price of one year at a public university increased more than 500% from 1981 to 2003, while all other consumer costs rose by only 140%. Newt Gingrich said on Aug. 28 that when he was a college professor 25 years ago, the average cost of a public university was \$1,600 a year and \$3,600 at a private college. Today, the averages are \$12,000 at a public university and \$29,000 at a private college.

(See Briefs, page 4)

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Fuzzy Math at the Local Level

Rhonda Thurman, School Board Member of Hamilton County, Tennessee, posted this comment after the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics issued its 2006 report:

Once again, Hamilton County School System students have been used as guinea pigs and the experiment has failed. For those parents who have questioned the math being taught to your students, you have been vindicated. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has finally gotten their head out of the fog and admitted that maybe students should not be using calculators in kindergarten and students should memorize their math facts. Eureka! The NCTM has also admitted that it was time students got the right answer and not just a "guesstimate." Imagine! . . .

In 1998, Everyday Math (one of the "fuzzy" math curriculums) was adopted in Hamilton County Elementary Schools and Connected Math (another one of the "fuzzy" math curriculums) was adopted in Hamilton County Middle Schools. Before the curriculum adoption, I urged parents through neighborhood meetings to oppose the "new new math" teaching because it relies heavily on the use of calculators beginning in kindergarten. The "new new math" also uses the "spiraling method" to teach instead of the building block method that had always been used.

The building block method teaches students to master one concept before moving on to the next more complicated

step. For instance, first, students memorize and master addition and subtraction facts, then they move on to multiplication and then division.

The spiraling method, however, teaches several concepts in one week. If the concepts are not mastered, students move on. Teachers, students and parents are told not to worry if a concept is not understood because students will have another chance to "get it" when the concept "spirals" back around later. . . .

The new approach puzzled many parents. For example, to solve a basic division problem, 120 divided by 40, students might cross off groups of circles to "discover" that the answer is three.

The Council's controversial 1989 standards called on teachers to promote estimation, rather than precise answers. For example, an elementary-school student tackling the problem 4,783 divided by 13 should instead divide 4,800 by 12 to arrive at "about 400," the 1989 report said. The council said this approach would enable children using calculators to "decide whether the correct keys were pressed and whether the calculator result is reasonable." . . .

The main reason Everyday and Connected Math curriculums were adopted in Hamilton County was because we received a \$5 million National Science Foundation Grant from the federal government. So, HCDE (who has never seen a grant they didn't like) decided to gamble on an unproved math program and lost.

NEWS ITEM: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS ISSUES NEW GUIDELINES FOR CURRICULUM!



Math Wars (Continued from page 1)

Some taught what Diane Ravitch called "ethnomathematics," the far-out notion that traditional math is too Western-civ and therefore students should be taught in ways that relate to their ancestral culture.

The diversion of math into the teaching of political correctness was illustrated by the "anti-racist multicultural math" curriculum adopted in Newton, Massachusetts. Test scores dropped after this curriculum's top priority became "Respect for Human Differences."

During the Fuzzy Math era, 300 public schools adopted Singapore Math and those students are turning in good scores. Homeschoolers are successful with Singapore Math, too.

The new National Council report tries to finesse its dramatic switch back to memorization by recommending that the curriculum focus on "quick recall" of multiplication and division, the area of two-dimensional shapes, and an understanding of decimals.

Before the 1989 mistake, U.S. students ranked number-one in international mathematics tests. Since then, U.S. students have dropped to fifteenth, far behind the high performance of Singapore, Japan, and most industrialized countries.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Recommended Standards: www.nctm.org/focalpoints/

Book of the Month



The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism and Western Success by Rodney Stark, Random House, 2005, 235 pp.



Religious historian Rodney Stark presents a powerful argument that Christianity, Catholicism, and related institutions were directly responsible for the most significant intellectual, scientific, political and economic breakthroughs of the last millennium. Stark persuasively refutes the politically correct version of history that the fall of the Roman Empire was followed by hundreds of years of Dark Ages stagnation, after which civilization broke out of religious darkness and emerged with the Renaissance.

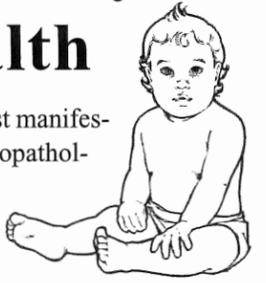
Stark provides a mountain of evidence that the so-called Dark Ages were really a time of great technological advance. Industrious Dutch engineers built thousands of windmills to reclaim land from the sea — so many, in fact, that lawsuits alleging stealing of one's wind were common! Other innovations included the effective shoeing and harnessing of horses for agriculture (something the Romans never accomplished), fish farming in man-made ponds on a continental scale, and the invention of eyeglasses and accurate timepieces.

Many other authors have stated that capitalism is what drove the West's progress. But, Stark asks, what made capitalism possible? He makes a compelling case that Catholic theology provided the framework and template for the great superstructure of Western science. And it is science that led to the supremacy of the West.

Stark explains how Christian theology is so very different from the religious thinking of non-Western cultures. The Greeks and Romans filled their heavens with quarreling gods, and that was not the sort of worldview to encourage a systematic study of nature's secrets. Islam believed God was a free actor, and any attempt to divine His ways was considered blasphemy. The Chinese had a mystical view of God as an amorphous presence, so they sought enlightenment, not explanations.

Historians often point to China and the Greeks as great innovators, but the Chinese turned inward and stagnated for centuries; their religion did not celebrate innovation and discovery. While the Greeks were famous in logic and mathematics, they were not oriented toward experiment and observation. It was the outward, heavenly focus of Christianity, as well as its belief in the importance of the individual, that propelled the West toward invention. The reader can learn much from this exuberant work.

FOCUS: Government *Shrinks* in the Nursery — Infant and Toddler Mental Health



By Karen R. Effrem, M.D.

Did you know that there is a crisis in infant and early childhood mental health? According to the academic elites, bureaucrats, and front groups for the pharmaceutical industry that are promoting a cradle-to-grave mental health screening, labeling and intervention system, mental illness is rampant even in our youngest children.

For instance, the Florida Strategic Plan for Infant Mental Health says, "Even before their first birthday, babies can suffer from clinical depression, traumatic stress disorder, and a variety of other mental health problems."

A study from Yale University tells us, "Pre-K students are expelled at a rate more than three times that of children in grades K-12, according to a primary study by researchers at Yale on the rate of expulsion in pre-kindergarten programs serving 3- and 4-year-olds."

Because this purported problem is so severe, these same elites have many suggestions to deal with it.

The report of the President's New Freedom Commis-

sion on Mental Health (NFC) says, "Since children develop rapidly, delivering mental health services and supports early and swiftly is necessary to avoid permanent consequences and to ensure that children are ready for school." Their goal to deal with this crisis is to make sure that, "Early Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Referral to Services Are Common Practice." Within that goal, the report lists the following recommendation: "Promote the mental health of young children."

The NFC report recommended a model program for dealing with this infant mental health crisis called the Nurse Family Partnership. The program is described as follows: "A nurse visits the homes of high-risk women when pregnancy begins and continues for the first year of the child's life. The nurse adheres to visit-by-visit protocols to help women adopt healthy behaviors and to responsibly care for their children." Do Americans really want to establish government as arbiters of what is "healthy behavior" and how mothers, even dysfunctional ones, "responsibly care for their children"? These programs are being pushed in Congress as not only a solution for "at risk" families, however arbitrarily that is defined, but for **all** families.

This emphasis on "healthy social and emotional development" and on children entering school "ready to learn" is derived from a 1994 federal law called the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. The law mandated eight national education goals that had very little to do with promoting academic objective knowledge, but rather had much to do with psychosocial indoctrina-

tion. It also unconstitutionally expanded the federal role in education that was designed to be a state and local function.

The first mandate on the list is: "All children will start school ready to learn." As will be explained below, rather than dealing with learning the alphabet, numbers, colors, and shapes, this goal deals with forming attitudes about controversial non-academic topics, such as gender identity and careers.

The last mandate on the list says, "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." This goal puts academics, supposedly the main mission of schools, below subjective and arbitrary social and emotional growth. It also puts public schools in charge of setting government norms for the social/emotional status of our kids.

These government norms have also been the justification for the mental health screening of all children. It has resulted in the promulgation from preschool to high school of nonsensical and indoctrinating social and emotional outcomes that are placed on an equal plane with academic standards in reading and math.

The Federal Mental Health Action Agenda (FMHAA) is the implementation plan for the New Freedom Commission report, and it has many recommendations and plans. For instance the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that is overseeing this agenda is funding grants to develop and expand "mental health promotion and early intervention services for infants...in mental health care settings and other programs that serve children and adolescents..." Apparently government involvement in the mental health of preschoolers as described in the NFC report was not early enough — the Federal Action Agenda had to lower the age to infancy.

One of the grant programs being promoted by the federal SAMHSA is called the State Early Childhood Comprehensive System. 48 states and several territories have received federal funds to implement these grants. The Minnesota program is described as a "federally-funded grant project to coordinate and integrate early childhood screening systems to assure that **all children ages birth to five are screened early and continuously for the presence of health, socioemotional or developmental needs**. Children and their families should then be linked to mental health services, **early care and education**, . . . so that all eligible children . . . enter school ready to learn." (Emphasis added.) A mission statement from South Dakota for this type of program said, "All children

in South Dakota, are supported by the community through a comprehensive system of care that meets their social, emotional, physical, and *spiritual* needs." (Emphasis added)

Notice in the quote above that preschool education is a means of improving the mental health of young children. The FMHAA explicitly promotes this when it says, "HHS and ED have launched a 5-year research effort to find the best ways to prepare preschool children for later success in school. In the initiative's first year, eight institutions across the country will receive \$7.4 million in research grants to test preschool curricula . . ."

As already mentioned, the outcomes for these preschool curricula have little or nothing to do with academic improvement. Instead, both the national Head Start and many identical state preschool outcomes deal with such topics as "gender identity," "jobs," "the environment," and acceptance of various differences, such as "genders, race, special needs, culture, language, and family structure." Aside from being controversial and outside the accepted role of government, inculcating these standards will do absolutely nothing to close the achievement gap between poor "at risk" children and middle-class children or promote academic achievement.

In fact, a 2005 study by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley said, "Attendance in preschool centers, even for short periods of time each week, hinders the rate at which young children develop social skills and display the motivation to engage classroom tasks, as reported by their kindergarten teachers." So, in fact, preschool does not improve children's social interaction and development; they harm them. The proposed government solution is creating the very crisis it purports to solve.

Sadly, the other major and even more dangerous way for intervening in the mental health of young children is using powerful psychiatric drugs as a chemical straitjacket. A 2000 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* revealed a 300% increase in the use of these drugs in 2-to-4-year-old children between 1991 and 1995. And key child psychiatric opinion leader Dr. David Willis said, "Psychopharmacology is on the horizon as *preventive therapy* for children with *genetic susceptibility* to mental health problems." (Emphasis added)

Yet, the science behind the diagnostic criteria, the screening instruments, and the treatments, whether drug or educational and social interventions, is appallingly bad. Dr. Benedetto Vitiello, chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at the National Institutes of Health acknowledged the "diagnostic uncertainty

surrounding most manifestations of psychopathology in young children." The technical information for one

of the most commonly used screening instruments for young children admits that it is wrong 73% of the time. There are no studies showing long-term safety and effectiveness or effect on the developing brains and bodies of any psychiatric drug in children.

Yet, two of the three classes of these drugs are under the FDA's most stringent warnings short of bans, called Black Box Warnings, for suicide, violence, and increased death rates. They also interfere with learning, causing violence, neurological problems, obesity, diabetes, and heart attacks. The vast majority are not FDA approved for use in children, but children are put on them by the millions, most often as members of a captive clientele, such as the welfare, foster care or juvenile justice systems. They are often medicated in untested, unapproved combinations. Dr. Vitiello also said, "Little research has been conducted to study the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions in young children, and the long-term risk-benefit ratio of psychosocial and pharmacologic treatments is basically unknown."

What can be done to stop this horrific, unscientific, ineffective, and dangerous government invasion into the minds and values of our most vulnerable citizens?

We must refuse to submit our children to any of these unscientific screenings and surveys, no matter where or by whom they are proposed. We must demand that the federal government quit funding the programs that carry out this invasion of parental authority and family autonomy. We must demand better information regarding the dangers and side effects of these drugs. Instead of drugging, we must demand the promotion of strong two-parent families and tax policies that do not force mothers into the workforce.

Most importantly, we must view our children, and insist that government mental health industry also view them, as unique individuals "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," not sick people with broken brains that may only be fixed by a toxic drug or government program. (See www.edwatch.org for more information and specifics on how to fight this system in your own state)

Dr. Karen Effrem is the mother of three children, a pediatrician and policy analyst who serves on the boards of EdWatch, the Alliance for Human Research Protection, and the National Physicians Center.

All children ages birth to five are screened early and continuously for the presence of health, socioemotional or developmental needs.

"The long-term risk-benefit ratio of psychosocial and pharmacologic treatments is basically unknown."
 — Dr. Benedetto Vitiello

EdWatch Conference Covers Global Education, Psych Testing

BLOOMINGTON, MN — EdWatch, the Minnesota-based education think tank, featured International Education and psychological testing at its 2006 conference on October 14. The former is found primarily in public schools, but also influences private and home schools. The latter mandates its authority over all children.

Michael Chapman, of EdWatch and American Heritage Research, explained the Global Classrooms curriculum now used in many classrooms. It was hatched out of the United Nations Association of Minnesota. Its website states, "At the heart of UNA-USA's Global Classrooms program is Model United Nations." Global Classrooms unabashedly promotes world citizenship and UN governance.

Allen Quist, author of *FedEd* and *America's Schools*, and Dave Eaton, former Minnetonka, MN school board member, addressed the hot-button International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Using IB documents, Quist showed how IB and its UN partner in an international education system promotes the United Nations and global governance, while undermining America's founding principles. IB invests millions in misleading advertising.

Dave Eaton followed with specifics, such as real IB costs. Reading requirements teach pantheism and New Age spiritualism, using authors such as Joseph Campbell and Carl Sagan who directly attack Christianity and the traditional western worldview.

Three speakers addressed the ascent of psychological testing into the care and education of America's children: Dr. Karen Effrem of EdWatch, Alliance for Human Research Protection, ICSP, and the National Physicians Center; Larry Pratt of Gun Owners of America, and Carol White of African Americans Concerned Together. Universal psychological testing is mushrooming as a mandate to test, label, and frequently medicate children starting in infancy.

Larry Pratt described how concerned citizens can stop universal psychological testing laws. Because child mental health labeling, no matter how subjective or scientifically invalid, quickly becomes a bar to an adult owning a firearm, a coalition of groups in Texas, including EdWatch, Eagle Forum and GOA defeated universal psychological testing legislation in Texas.

Dr. Effrem described how state and federal laws are merging universal psy-

Evolution (Cont. from page 1) — a continuing series of hard-fought battles, and that overcoming Darwinist censorship often is achieved one textbook — or one board member — at a time!

It is ironic that Darwin's Theory of Evolution cannot stand "competition" and remains protected (some would say on life support) by government policy and liberal academics. Conservatives say teach more, not less evolution theory — strengths and weaknesses — and let the fittest theory survive.

chological test results with preschool through K-12 outcomes and routine medical visits. Illinois and Indiana provide the roadmap every state is facing, and she suggested tools to challenge them.

Carol White described the sordid history of minorities used as guinea pigs for psychological labeling and treatment with dangerous prescription drugs. She called for help in stopping a plan of the University of Minnesota for a Mental Health Research Center that will use minority children in the north Minneapolis neighborhood for more mental health research linking genetics with such things as criminal activity.

Twila Brase, President of Citizens' Council on Health Care, rounded out the conference by describing merged health and education data-collection systems. The database now includes genetic testing conducted at birth, stored on a "private" component of birth certificates.

DVDs of the presentations are available to order by phone (952-361-4931) or on-line at the EdWatch.org shopping cart. The two IB powerpoint presentations are on-line at:

www.edwatch.org/ppts/Quist-IB-10-14-06.ppt

www.edwatch.org/ppts/Eaton-IB-10-14-06.ppt

— reported by Julie M. Quist

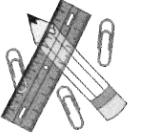
'Free Speech'

On Oct. 2, CBS-TV Evening News aired a "Free Speech" Segment with Brian Rohrbough, the father of a boy killed in the Columbine school massacre of 1999. Katie Couric was hit with a storm of protests from people who objected to anyone telling the truth about what is going on in public schools. The following night, Rohrbough was interviewed on Bill O'Reilly's TV show where he did a good job of defending his remarks. Here is part of Rohrbough's statement:

"When my son Dan was murdered on the sidewalk at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, I hoped that would be the last school shooting. Since that day, I've tried to answer the question, 'Why did this happen?' This country is in a moral free-fall. For over two generations, the public school system has taught in a moral vacuum, expelling God from the school and from the government, replacing him with evolution, where the strong kill the weak, without moral consequences and life has no inherent value. We teach there are no absolutes, no right or wrong. And I assure you the murder of innocent children is always wrong, including by abortion. Abortion has diminished the value of children. Suicide has become an acceptable action and has further emboldened these criminals. And we are seeing an epidemic increase in murder-suicide attacks on our children."

Which do you think critics found most objectionable in Rohrbough's criticism of the public schools: (a) expelling God from schools, (b) endorsing evolution, (c) teaching there is no right or wrong, (d) condoning abortion, (e) making suicide acceptable, (f) all of the above?

Single-Sex Education Making Inroads in Public Schools



By Michael J. Gerardi

To help combat low levels of achievement in public schools, especially among boys, more and more school districts are experimenting with single-sex classrooms and academies, despite criticism from feminists and civil liberties groups claiming that the schools reinforce negative stereotypes.

Since 1998, the number of public school districts that either run single-sex schools or offer single-sex classes within coeducational institutions rose from 4 to 228. Students in these classes often improve their academic performance. For example, in DeLand, Florida, an elementary school that introduced single-sex classes alongside its co-ed classes reported in 2005 that 91% of boys and 83% of girls in the single-sex classes scored at grade level or higher on Florida's standardized tests, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*. Only about half of the students in the co-ed classes achieved comparable scores. Positive outcomes have also been reported in South Carolina, Mississippi, Ohio, and other states.

How to explain the improvement? Dr. Leonard Sax, whose 2005 book *Why Gender Matters* brought the single-sex education debate to the forefront, said that neurological research over the last ten years has unearthed "hard-wired differences in the ways girls and boys learn" in an article for *Education Week*. Male and female brains develop in different orders at different rates; for instance, when learning math, a 12 year-old girl's brain resembles that of an 8 year-old boy. The gender advantage is reversed when reading and writing tasks are presented. There are also empirically established differences in boys' and girls' eyesight, hearing, and response to aggression and risk. These findings suggest that the ideal classroom environment and curriculum for boys and girls may be radically different. Single-sex classes are the best way to accommodate each sex's unique needs.

The movement for single-sex education has resonated in light of the poor academic performance of boys relative to girls, a phenomenon dubbed the "gender gap." The *Maine Sunday Telegram/Press Herald* recently completed a four-part investigation of the "gender gap" in Maine, where the problem is especially pressing. In 4 out of 5 Maine middle schools, eighth grade girls score better than boys on standardized tests in reading and writing. Girls have erased or significantly reduced the traditional edge boys had over them in science and math. The "gap" exists at both ends of the achievement spectrum — boys compose two-thirds of special education classes in Maine, while girls take the overwhelming majority of spots among the top ten students in high school class rank. Once they arrive at college, women graduate at higher percentages than men and matriculate to graduate school more often.

Some experts believe that boys' struggles in school can be attributed to a classroom environment in public schools

that compromises their particular needs in favor of girls. Co-ed classrooms tend to gravitate towards a more "feminine" learning environment, if for no other reason than most teachers are female. The *Sunday Telegram* reported that females outnumber males in Maine's public school teaching ranks by a 3 to 1 margin. Many boys may be discouraged from school simply because the classroom is stacked against them from the start.

However, groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) remain opposed to any experimentation with single-sex classrooms. In response to a package of bills in Michigan's legislature that would allow schools to experiment with single-sex education, NOW president Kim Gandy said, "We strongly oppose these bills because the separation of boys and girls, and the underlying (and false) assumption that girls and boys are so different that they shouldn't even be educated together, introduces harmful gender stereotypes into public education." The ACLU is assisting NOW in challenging the first of these Michigan laws, which was recently signed by Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Dr. Sax finds much of this opposition ironic. In co-ed schools, boys are afraid of playing the flute and girls shy away from studying physics, but in single-sex schools they embrace these activities wholeheartedly. Claude Monet and Leonardo DaVinci went to boys' schools; Sally Ride, America's first female astronaut, wasn't interested in science until she transferred to an all-girls high school. "That's the irony of co-education," Dr. Sax said in an interview with Canada's *Globe and Mail*. "It reinforces gender stereotypes."

Despite its momentum, single-sex education is still a fledgling idea. Not all districts that have tried it have succeeded, and Dr. Sax himself admitted in *Education Week* that "a set of well-established best practices for gender-specific education" does not yet exist. However, the strong evidence of substantive difference in the ways boys and girls learn and the promising results in many single-sex classrooms suggest single-sex education will be part of America's education debate for the foreseeable future.

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The Philadelphia School District declared October as "Gay and Lesbian History Month" on its 2006-07 school calendars, printed 200,000 of the calendars, and sent them to parents and others who have ties to the district. This touched off a wave of protests. Cecelia Cummings defended the district, saying, "When you deal with diversity, there are some hot-button issues that emerge."