

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## Tucker Calls for Complete Overhaul of Public Schools

In a plan labeled “far-reaching” and “ground-breaking,” education reform guru Marc Tucker is calling for the total overhaul of U.S. education by 2021 into a “national public school system.” He asserts that “it is the system that is the problem, it is the system that must be rebuilt.”

The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, headed by Tucker, received widespread publicity in December for a report called “Tough Choices or Tough Times.” It’s larded with criticisms that claim our “expensive elementary and secondary education system” produces “only mediocre results,” and that students can just slide through high schools because they know they can get into college with only “8th- or 9th-grade-level literacy.”

The report claims that the redeployment of resources by (1) recruiting smarter teachers (licensed by the state and paid up to \$95,000 for a school year), (2) putting all 4-year-olds and all low-income 3-year-olds into universal public pre-school, and (3) spending more on disadvantaged students, will enable us to “send almost everyone to college and have them do well there.”

To meet “the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy,” Tucker would abandon local funding of schools in favor of state funding on a uniform formula. He claims this would make funding more “equitable.” He would also increase total spending by an additional \$19 billion a year.

He would send a \$500 check to each child at birth, continue tax-funded contributions to the kid’s “Personal Competitiveness Account” until he is age 16, and make later payments if he then takes a low-paid job. The student could use the money to pay for any “work-related” (not purely academic) program of study.

The Tucker plan calls for schools to be operated by independent contractors and run by teachers, but with this caveat. “No organization could operate a school that was not affiliated with a helping organization approved by the state” which has “the capacity to provide technical assistance and training to the schools.”

The function of the local school boards would be to collect a “wide range of data,” forward them to the state, and connect schools to “a wide range of social services in the community.”

Then comes national economic planning. Tucker calls for federal legislation to get the states “to create regional economic development authorities” that would develop “goals and strategies for their regions,” and coordinate “the work of the region’s education and training institutions to make sure that each region’s workers develop the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in that labor market.”

Tucker is widely known in the education community as the author of a famous 18-page “Dear Hillary” letter written on November 11, 1992. Written just after Bill Clinton was elected but before he took office, Tucker’s letter spelled out

“Dear Hillary: I still cannot believe you won....”

11 November 1992  
Hillary Clinton  
The Governor's Mansion  
1800 Canter Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206  
Dear Hillary:  
I still cannot believe you won. But utter delight that you did pervades all the circles in which I move. I met last Wednesday in David Rockefeller's office with him, John Sculley, Dave Barram and David Haselkorn. It was a great celebration. Both John and David R. were more expansive than I have ever seen them — literally radiating happiness. My own view and theirs is that this country has seized its last chance. I am fond of quoting Winston Churchill to the effect that “America always does the right thing — after it has exhausted all the alternatives.” This election, more than anything else in my experience, proves his point.  
The subject we were discussing was what you and Bill should do now about education, training and labor market policy. Following that meeting, I chaired another in Washington on the same topic. Those present at the second meeting included Tim Barnicle, Dave Barram, Mike Cohen, David Hornbeck, Hilary Pennington, Andy Plattner, Lauren Resnick, Betsy Brown Ruzzi, Bob Schwartz, Mike Smith and Bill Spring. Shirley Malcom, Ray Marshall and Susan McGuire were also invited. Though these three were not able to be present at last week's meeting, they have all contributed by telephone to the ideas that follow. Ira Magaziner was also invited to this meeting.  
Our purpose in these meetings was to propose concrete actions that the Clinton administration could take — between now and the inauguration, in the first 100 days and beyond. The result, from where I sit, was really exciting. We took a very large leap forward in terms of how to advance the agenda on which you and we have all been working — a practical plan for putting all the major components of the system in place within four years, by the time Bill has to run again.  
I take personal responsibility for what follows. Though I believe everyone involved in the planning effort is in broad agreement, they may not all agree on the details. You should also be aware that, although the plan comes from a group closely

[http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/marc\\_tucker/](http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/marc_tucker/)

a master plan for the federal takeover of public schools. He laid out the road map by which the new Clinton Administration should “re-mold the entire American [public school] system” into “a seamless web that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone,” coordinated by “a system of labor market boards at the local, state and federal levels”

where curriculum and “job matching” will be handled by counselors “accessing the integrated computer-based program.”

The Tucker 1990s plan to restructure the public schools was based on specific

mechanisms of control: (1) bypass all elected officials on school boards and in state legislatures by redirecting the funding; (2) build a database (“a labor market information system”) into which school personnel would scan all information about every schoolchild and his family, and make it available to the school, the government and future employers; and (3) use the slogan “high standards” to cement national control of tests and assessments.

Tucker’s master plan, then presented by his National Center on Education and the Economy, formed the basis of a series of laws passed during the Clinton Administration, starting with Goals 2000 and School-to-Work in 1994. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 expanded and reinforced the School-to-Work design to pigeon-hole students into training for jobs selected by local workforce boards.

“School-to-work” became the code word for changing the mission of the public schools from teaching children knowledge and skills to training them to serve the global economy in jobs selected by workforce boards. Nothing in his plan had anything to do with teaching schoolchildren how to read or calculate.

## Missouri School Districts Sue for Funding Increase

*Committee for Education Equality v. State of Missouri* went to court in Jefferson City this month, bringing the issue of school funding into the courts in yet another state. Similar suits, seeking judge-mandated funding increases for public schools, have been filed in 44 other states.

In these lawsuits, school boards and teachers’ unions demand that judges de-

clare current funding levels unconstitutional, based on key words in state constitutions: most frequently, the word “adequate” or the word “equity.” Numerous judges across the nation have acquiesced, and have ordered dollar amounts of funding that they consider adequate or equitable. In 2005, for example, a judge ordered the Kansas legislature to put \$800 million in additional funds into the schools. Texas, Wyoming, Arizona, and other states have also experienced major financial consequences from such cases in recent years.

Like the others, the Missouri suit hinges on a few key words in the state Constitution; in this case, the words are “a general diffusion of knowledge.” The Committee for Education Equality, representing 260 school districts, claims that current funding does not allow for this “general diffusion” to take place.

The Missouri Constitution also specifies a proportion of the state’s budget that should go to education. In fact, lawyers fighting the suit on behalf of three Missouri taxpayers argued that the suit was unnecessary, since the legislature already spends the required 25% of its budget on schools. Judge Richard Callahan did not rule formally on the motion to dismiss the case, saying he will evaluate the constitutional issues during the six-week trial.

The Missouri Legislature adopted a new school spending plan in 2005, partly (See Funding Increase, page 4)

## Georgia Allows Bible in Schools

Georgia’s Board of Education adopted standards this month for the state’s two new Bible courses, which public high schools will offer as early as the fall of this year.

In 2006, Georgia became the first state to pass a law funding a public school Bible course and calling for statewide standards for the course. Although it is estimated that 8% of public schools nationwide offer a course on the Bible, no other state has a law establishing guidelines and funds for such a course. Written by Senate Majority Leader Tommie Williams, the law passed with bipartisan support.

Supporters of the new courses pointed out that the Bible is the bestselling book of all time, and has hugely influenced world history. The Bible courses will also provide students with much-needed background for understanding more recent history and literature — from Shakespeare to the Pilgrims to the Bill of Rights.

The classes, “History and Literature of the Old Testament Era” and “History and Literature of the New Testament Era,” will be offered as English district electives. Each school district will choose whether to offer them or not.

The legislation requires that the Bible curriculum “be taught in an objective and non-devotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or the falsity of the biblical materials.” Teachers may not “disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs.” Lawmakers also wanted to make sure that the courses would use the Bible itself as the textbook.

Sen. Williams wrote the bill with the hope that districts would choose the “Bible in History and Literature” curriculum, developed by the National Council On Bible Curriculum In Public Schools (NCBCPS). This curriculum uses only the Bible as the student textbook, and provides a

300-page Teacher’s Guide. Students read through the entire Bible during the school year. It is already taught as an elective in 379 school districts in 37 states, and this course has never been legally challenged anywhere.

Georgia activist Kay Godwin is leading a grassroots effort to educate local school boards about “The Bible in History and Literature.” So many districts have already expressed interest in offering the curriculum that she speculates half of Georgia high schools may implement it in the 2007-2008 school year.

For more information about NCBCPS, or to ask about Bible curriculum in your school district, call 1-877-ON-BIBLE or visit [www.bibleinschools.net](http://www.bibleinschools.net). Georgia residents may contact Kay Godwin at 912-282-2524 or [bibleingorgia@aol.com](mailto:bibleingorgia@aol.com).



# EDUCATION BRIEFS

**British students will benefit from single-sex classes and new teaching techniques for boys, concluded the government-backed 2020 Vision report this month.** The report suggests teachers can narrow the gender gap by using gender-specific curriculum materials, introducing competition into lessons for boys, and giving boys more nonfiction reading. The report also calls for more personalized learning for all students, extra tuition for those struggling in English or math, and advancing students by "stage" of learning attained, rather than by age. (*Telegraph*, 1-5-2007)

**The Cobb County, GA School Board ended the legal battle over its evolution disclaimer sticker,** by settling with the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The school board will remove stickers from 35,000 science textbooks, and pay \$166,659 toward the ACLU's and AU's legal fees. The sticker stated: "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered." (*Catoosa County News*, 1-6-2007)

**Cheerleaders in New York State must spend equal time cheering boys' and girls' basketball,** federal education officials recently ruled. Officials concluded that cheering only at boys' games would violate Title IX. The state's Public High School Athletic Association warned its members that the Education Department wanted cheerleaders at girls' games "regardless of whether the girls' basketball teams wanted and/or asked for" them. (*New York Times*, 1-14-2007)

**A Rhode Island high school cited the "zero tolerance" policy for weapons to prohibit a yearbook photo showing a student holding a prop sword.** Patrick Agin chose the photo of himself wearing chain mail and carrying a sword to express his interest in the Middle Ages. He participates in the Society for Creative Anachronism, a 35,000-member group that reenacts medieval entertainments and battles. The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit against the school in December, claiming the school violated Agin's right to free speech. It also says the zero tolerance policy is inconsistent, since the school sometimes allows its mascot to carry a prop weapon. (*Providence Journal*, 1-3-2007)

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Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>  
E-mail: [education@eagleforum.org](mailto:education@eagleforum.org)

## Remedial Education: The High Costs of Bad Schools

What happens when one in three of a state's public high school graduates lacks basic math and literacy skills? A study from the Alabama Policy Institute attempts to estimate the cost to the state. In the report, "The Cost of Remedial Education: How Much Alabama Pays When Students Fail to Learn Basic Skills," Dr. Christopher W. Hammons analyzes the financial impact that underachieving high school graduates have on both postsecondary education and industry.

Averaging five different strategies to calculate the cost, the study estimates the economic impact of unprepared students on the state of Alabama to be \$541 million annually. The study considers the costs of remedial education in colleges, remedial training businesses provide for employees, technologies to compensate for lack of skills (such as touch screens

with pictures of food items instead of words), losses of profit through lack of competent employees, and other factors. College professors gave anecdotal evidence to support the numbers. According to Troy State math professor Dr. Sergey Belyi, "about 50% of students entering college are not prepared for college level work." Other professors also indicated that among students who do not take remedial coursework, there are many who actually need remedial help.

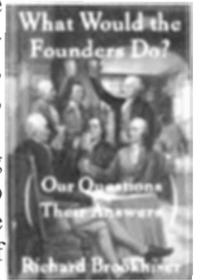
Surveyed employers also gave dismal reports of their new employees' skills. A large financial company wrote, "It has become increasingly difficult to find candidates that meet our minimum standards. Most instructions, policies, etc. must be written at a middle school

(See Remedial Education, page 4)

## Book of the Month



**What Would the Founders Do?** Richard Brookhiser, Basic Books, 2006, 261 pp., \$26



This engaging book attempts to answer many of the crucial questions of our times from the perspective of America's founding fathers. What would the founders do about terrorism, outsourcing, Social Security, Intelligent Design, embryonic stem cell research, school vouchers, or welfare? Brookhiser's book contributes to the discussion of the issues themselves and also to our understanding of the founders.

It would be all too easy for the writer of a book like this to color the founders with his own opinions, and to end with a portrait of them that bore an uncanny resemblance to himself. Thankfully, Brookhiser resists. He proceeds with obvious caution, and bases each response on what the founders actually said and did.

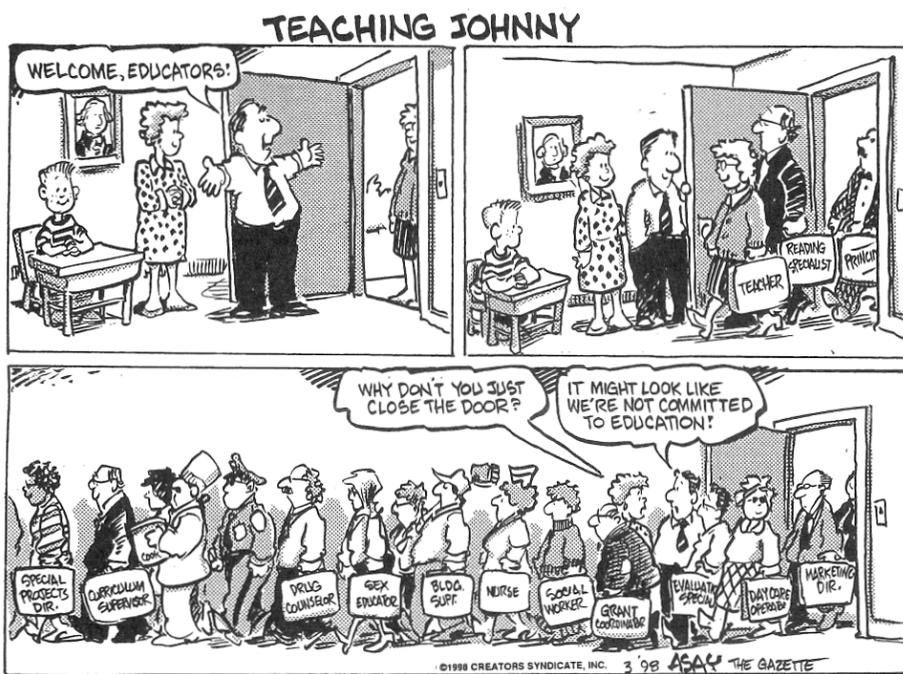
What would the founders do about rogue states? Brookhiser tells what they did about Tripoli and other nations that once extorted tribute from our ships on the Mediterranean. What would the founders have thought about tuition tax credits or school vouchers? Brookhiser describes education in America in their time.

Some of the questions require less application than others. About the death penalty, gun control, luxury taxes, school curricula, covert ops, and more, the founders' opinions are relatively easy to discern. They faced these same questions in their own context.

The book's many details bring the founders vividly to life. For example, in Benjamin Franklin's curriculum for the nascent University of Pennsylvania, he included gardening, mechanics, drawing, and swimming, alongside academics; but he promoted history as the most important subject. Studying history would bring up many controversial moral issues: the more, the better, in Franklin's view. "Publick disputes warm the imagination, whet the industry, and strengthen the natural abilities."

Brookhiser treats the founders' ideas and ideals with fairness and respect. He commemorates their strengths without ignoring their weaknesses, and always presents evidence of their opinions and beliefs. Since he speculates only cautiously about the founders' stances on divisive issues, the most likely criticism from readers will be that surely, in some cases, the founders would answer much more emphatically than the book suggests.

However, the book's approach is to say only what it can say for certain. It leaves readers with the inspiration of the founders' intellectual example, and the raw material of information about their lives and thoughts. It provokes us to continue asking, "What would the founders do? And what will we do?"



## John Stossel's Stupid in America report available on DVD

"The kids aren't stupid. The system is stupid," concludes one parent in an interview with 20/20's John Stossel. For this 2006 program, Stossel traveled around the country and beyond, to compile evidence against the current system and in favor of school choice. The results are compelling.

*Stupid in America* takes viewers inside typical public school classrooms, charter schools and alternative schools; to teachers' union rallies and protests; and into conversations with educational reformers, school officials, economists and parents. It contrasts the American system with systems that attach funding to the student, not to the school. For example, through school choice, the Belgian government spends less money per child, and the students consistently perform very well on international tests.

"They shut down bad schools. That's healthy," comments American reformer Kevin Chavous. "It says to people that incompetence won't work."

What role does money play in all of

this? "There's nothing that money can't fix," asserts one California teacher/protester. A school board chairman claims that \$30,000 per student per year would probably fix the problem in the schools.

Stossel counters with convincing evidence from alternative and charter schools that are doing much better with much less. He places the blame instead on the school system's unchallenged monopoly, and the unions that make it virtually impossible to fire inept teachers.

A South Carolina alternative school teaches children to read phonetically in the first grade on \$3000 per student per year. On the west coast, families cheered and burst into tears when their lottery number came up for the San Diego charter schools, where union rules do not apply. These and dozens of other examples bring home Stossel's advocacy of school choice.

Copies of Stossel's DVD are available from <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/shopping/> at \$29.95.



# FOCUS: Marc Tucker's New Education Initiative

By Allen Quist

On December 14, 2006, Marc Tucker released his new education proposal, "Tough Choices or Tough Times." His plan reads like a bad novel. It is mostly rhetoric, and the claims he makes are fantasy-land variety. If America adopts his plan, according to Tucker, the following will happen: "No one will fail," he says; and, "We can send almost everyone to college and have them do well there," Tucker insists; and "95% of our students will [be qualified for college]," according to Tucker. Such wild claims are not only unreasonable, they are bizarre. Any experienced teacher knows they are utopian, at best. And does Tucker offer any real evidence his plan can improve education? He does not.

What is Tucker up to? When reading his proposal, it becomes evident that Tucker has bigger things in mind than merely helping kids learn. The heart and center of his master plan is stated on page 1, paragraph 1, of his Executive Summary. Tucker there says that to compete in the world economy, the United States must "adopt internationally benchmarked standards for educating its students and workers."

## International Standards

Education "standards" mean curriculum standards, also called "content standards." What would occur if our nation were to adopt "international education standards"? It would mean that the United Nations decides what our children will learn. Stated another way, it means the UN will determine what our children will be taught, including specifying the attitudes, values and worldview. Most every government has its own education system. The Tucker proposal transforms our education system into what is essentially a UN government system.

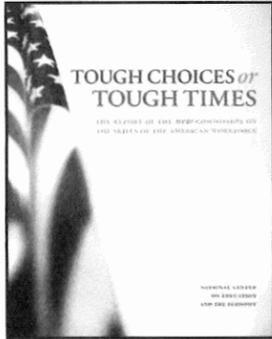
Can Tucker succeed in selling his radical system? He may. He is counting on business to help sell the proposal. Many of them will see the plan as a way of certifying the same basic job skills for all the workers of the world with the training done at taxpayer expense, no less. This way businesses can move skilled workers around the world the same way they move minerals, oil and technology.

Tucker's new proposal, like his earlier one, also makes all education vocational (Karl Marx saw education the same way). But will it work to reduce education to being good for vocation only, to define education merely as the provider of "human resources" for business? It will not. Kids will figure out that their worth is being measured in terms of being assets for large corporations. They will see that they have been reduced to being cogs on impersonal economic wheels.

## What Does It Mean To Be Human?

Kids haven't viewed vocational programs this way up to now. They will change because kids have had the free-

dom in high school to choose either a vocational or a college-bound track. They have been free to experiment, to try different things. Some in each track change their minds and switch over to the other. That is as it should be. Under Tucker's proposal, however, students who don't pass the 10th grade test have no choice.



They cannot go on to college. The door is closed. No one will be educated beyond his station in life. Doing so is seen as a waste of resources. Student freedom will be severely limited, and Tucker's statement that 95% will pass doesn't help, because fantasy offers no real solutions.

Under Tucker's plan even college is viewed as strictly vocational; college just prepares one for different vocations. Tucker's plan won't work because it severely limits our freedom and it defines people's worth only in terms of dollars and cents — the utilitarian philosophy of education. Kids are reduced to being resources whose lives will be directed by someone else. Kids will realize the whole philosophy of education has changed — they have become objects. Kids intuitively know they were made to be much more than that.

Kids have other aspirations such as marriage and family, hobbies and entertainment, understanding themselves and the world in which they live, music, art and athletics, freedom, being loyal Americans, serving in the military, being good citizens and good neighbors to those less fortunate. Kids have aspirations of what it means to be human. Tucker wants to control people the same way we control iron and coal.

We need to build on our strengths, not destroy them. The strength of our economic and education systems has been the degree to which they have been free — thus providing opportunities for people to be innovative and creative. You can't have freedom and innovation if you reduce people to being controlled objects. The Marxist view of education doesn't work because it treats people as less than human.

## The Next Big Step from NCLB

Marc Tucker's earlier proposal in 1990, which he admits didn't work, provided the framework for this new plan. That proposal was largely put into effect in the Goals 2000/School-To-Work Acts passed by Congress in 1994. School-to-work spawned the requirement that students be put in a career track by 8th grade. Goals 2000 shifted the decision-making authority for school content away from local school districts and states over to the federal government. It did so by establishing a de facto federal curriculum known as the "national education standards." These "national standards" were actually a national curriculum. (See the author's book *Fed Ed: The New Federal Curriculum and How It's Enforced*, EdWatch, 2002. For a detailed description of how the "national standards" have severely damaged our education program, see the

author's work *America's Schools: The Battleground for Freedom*, EdWatch, 2005.)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) solidified the federal government's role in controlling the school's academic program. It did so by (1) requiring all states to adopt state curriculum standards (which are mostly based on the Federal Curriculum), (2) requiring schools to eliminate achievement differences measured by "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), an impossible Marxist objective, and (3) requiring that the NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress) be given in all states to ensure that states don't deviate from the fed's lead. (The NAEP is based on the Federal Curriculum.)

The education radicals complained, however, insisting that states still had too much leeway in defining their academic program. Not any more. That already-limited freedom would disappear under Tucker's new proposal because it transfers the education-content authority away from local schools, states, and away from the federal government, over to the United Nations. Decision-making authority takes another giant step away from the parents and local communities. The education branch of the UN (UNESCO) has already been writing curriculum and has begun to write textbooks — much of it taking place under the UN education program known as International Baccalaureate (IB).

## UN Curriculum

What content will the United Nations decide must be taught? The UN has already made the content of its international standards perfectly clear. Required content will include "education for sustainable development," as defined by its Earth Charter, which includes abortion rights, gay marriage, indoctrination in Pantheism, universal disarmament, income redistribution between nations, and advocacy of all the UN environmental treaties, to identify just a few of its doctrines.

The UN's required content will also include its Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says that people have no "inalienable" rights but have only those rights the UN says they have. This UN document also clarifies that education must promote the UN and all its activities and says that the UN is the highest court of appeals on all human rights issues, higher even than our own Supreme Court. The UN's required content will also include the dictates of its Treaty on the Rights of the Child, which says that parents have no right to decide what their children will be taught. That right will now belong to the UN.

## New Plan of the Same Old Gang

Who is Marc Tucker? He founded the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE), a prime force behind the 1994 federal Goals 2000/School-to-Work education plan, which culminated in the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act. In 1992, Tucker described his plan as a "human resources development system for the United States" that "extends from cradle to grave." (This is the same view of education as that held by Karl Marx.)

Who are the Tucker supporters for this radical plan? They are the same old gang that gave us Goals 2000 and School-to-Work: former Michigan Governor, John Engler; former Clinton Secretary of Education, Richard Riley; former Clinton Under-Secretary of Education, Michael Cohen; former Carter Secretary of Labor, Ray Marshall; and Fordham Foundation President, Chester Finn to name a few.

How does Tucker propose to accomplish this massive shift of political power? He would:

1. Eliminate local school boards.
2. Shift teacher's employment and compensation from local boards to the state.
3. Require that students pass 10th grade tests, based on UN content standards, in order to be free to continue in a school.
4. Make free college preparatory education (based on UN content standards) available for all present workers.
5. Establish universal pre-school for all children (even though scientific research reveals that pre-school has no academic benefit past 3rd grade. Other programs are inserting the UN's curriculum into pre-school education, as well as child care).
6. Create regional development authorities that will plan economic development as well as education in areas larger than states. These authorities will be given the power to tax and will take over what little authority the states have left.
7. Have states take over teacher training which can be expected to require teachers to follow the UN value system. (Private colleges that train teachers will be out of luck. Private colleges will also lose their right to determine who may attend their colleges and who may not, because admission requirements will be dictated by, and measured by, the government.)
8. Establish merit-pay for teachers who best meet the goals of the plan.

(See *New Education Initiative*, page 4)



## Libraries Toss Out the Classics

So much for “deathless prose.” However immortal the words of Charlotte Brontë, William Faulkner, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Harper Lee may be, librarians in Fairfax County, Virginia are prepared to throw them out unless they’re being read. The library system has discarded thousands of books since initiating a program to weed out those that haven’t circulated in two years or more.

Many of those books were doubtless no great loss: yesterday’s beach reads or self-help books, or duplicates on the same topics. As the system director, Sam Clay, put it, “If you have 40 feet of shelf space taken up by books on tulips and you find that only one is checked out, that’s a cost.”

But what about *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, which one branch recently eliminated? Or Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*? Or Voltaire’s *Candide*?

The loss of titles such as these has provoked questions about the purpose of the modern library. Should it reflect consumer tastes like the local Borders or Barnes & Noble? Leslie Burger, president of the American Library Association, seems to think it should. “I think the days of libraries saying, ‘we must have that, because it’s good for people,’ are beyond us,” she says.

John J. Miller, for one, disagrees, and

said so in a recent editorial. Rather than competing with the mega-bookstores, he wrote, libraries should “seek to differentiate themselves among the many options readers now have,” by serving as “cultural storehouses that contain the best that has been thought and said.”

In Fairfax County and elsewhere, individual librarians cast the final vote on each book. Fairfax branches have rescued many unpopular classics from the heap, and say certain books will always make the cut.

The nearby Arlington County Public Library has its own idea. While responsive to patron demand, it has a new program to display under-circulated classics prominently in the library.

“Part of my philosophy is that you collect for the ages,” says Arlington library director Diane Kresh. “The library has a responsibility to provide a core collection for the cultural education of its community.”

With computers, audiovisual materials and meeting space requiring more room in libraries everywhere, the discussion about how to weed out books, and which should remain, will continue.

Meanwhile, if you live in Fairfax County and your favorite books aren’t topping any charts, go check them out. At least that will guarantee they’ll be there for others to discover until 2009. (*Washington Post*, 1-2-2007; *Wall Street Journal*, 1-3-2007)



## New Education Initiative (Cont. from page 3)

Tucker’s cost estimate for his plan is as ludicrous as the claims he makes for it. He says it will cost \$7.8 billion per year more than we are now paying. That estimate assumes that his goals, such as having 95% of students perform so well they will succeed in college, actually happen. If his fanciful objectives do not occur, the cost of his plan could mushroom to \$75 billion per year (EdWatch estimate).

### Giving Away our Freedom

Tucker’s plan is the next big step. All of education will be geared to “international standards.” That means the UN sets the standards. Since the tests are geared to the standards, the UN will also dictate the content of the tests. Do teachers teach to the test? Yes they do, especially when they are paid more when students conform to the international curriculum. Tucker puts it this way, “the old saw that what gets measured is what gets taught is essentially true.”

Tucker adds that the course syllabi (content) and the content of any private tests need to be controlled too. His new system dictates to teachers and schools what they shall teach, and test makers, including states, are told what they shall test. In addition, the states will be told what they must teach the teachers. It will be one unified, controlled, monolithic, worldwide education system.

The Tucker initiative claims to be about education, and in a sense it is; but it is more about control. The plan is all

about the question of who will run our schools. Under the Tucker plan, business becomes the customer and the UN sets the production standards and directs the show. How about the rest of us? We are the worker bees, the drones who get to provide the resources so the queen can exude her royal jelly.

*Allen Quist is adjunct professor at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. He served three terms in the Minnesota legislature and has authored three books on education: The Seamless Web, Fed Ed: The New Federal Curriculum and How It’s Enforced, and America’s Schools: The Battleground for Freedom.*

## Remedial Education (Cont. from page 2)

level.” A temp agency commented, “You would think that a high school graduate would know how many inches are in a foot. Sadly, a large majority cannot answer this question correctly.”

The situation is by no means unique to Alabama. For example, 44% of Alabama public school graduates who go straight to two-year community colleges take at least one remedial class; nationally, the average is 42%. “Alabama is not out of line with other states, but has the same problems that they do,” Hammons concludes.

However, commentators do point to features of the Alabama system that may make the problem worse. In his com-



## Controversy Follows Offer of Free Global Warming Documentary

The producers of Al Gore’s global warming documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, decided in mid-2006 to offer 50,000 free copies of the film to American schools. The distribution of the film has created more controversy than the producers expected.

To start with, the National Science Teachers Association declined to accept the free copies, saying they saw “little, if any, benefit to NSTA or its members” in the offer. Instead of giving the DVDs to the NSTA for distribution to schools, the producers then made them available online to individual teachers. Science and civics teachers could request copies of the film and download a free curriculum guide.

An incident this month in the town of Federal Way, Washington, has attracted national attention. After several parents complained about *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Federal Way School Board called for a “moratorium” on the film until school policy surrounding the issue could be clarified.

After discussion, the board concluded that teachers who show the film must also present a “credible, legitimate, opposing view.” David Larson, vice president of the board, explained that Federal Way schools already have a set policy on the teaching

of controversial issues. The policy states, “It is the teacher’s responsibility to present controversial issues that are free from prejudice and encourage students to formulate, hold and express their own opinions without personal prejudice or discrimination.” As Larson explained, “the principal reason for [this policy] is to make sure that the public



schools are not used for indoctrination.” In the first five days after the board’s decision, school board president Ed Barney received about 600 emails, many of them sharply critical. The parent who first complained about the film, Frosty Hardison, also received his share of abuse — including a flood of angry phone calls to his home.

Mr. Larson also pointed out that while Federal Way wants to show the documentary in the context of both sides of the debate, many school districts are declining to show it at all.

Nevertheless, *An Inconvenient Truth* is getting plenty of airtime. Teachers in many other schools have accepted and screened the free DVD. Schools in other countries have also made ample use of the film, although they don’t receive free copies. The governments of Norway, Sweden, and most recently, Scotland require all public high school students to watch the film.

## Funding Increase (Continued from page 1)

in response to the school funding lawsuit. This plan called for the state to spend \$800 million in additional funding for education over the course of seven years. Senate Majority Leader Charlie Shields expressed frustration at the lawsuit’s continuation. “What these school districts would define as adequate would cost the state \$2 billion,” he said. “I just don’t think that’s realistic.”

Also at issue in the case is the relationship between property values and local school tax revenue. 25 wealthier districts among the 260 represented want more funding, but want to prevent an outcome that would reapportion money from wealthy districts to poor ones.

The outcome of the Missouri case will be especially interesting, in light of the surprising results of similar litigation in

New York and Massachusetts.

Over the course of 13 years, judges in the lower New York courts had approved the demands of New York teachers’ unions, and ordered increases of up to \$5.6 billion per year in new state funding. The case was *Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York*. New York City public schools already spend more than \$11,000 per student per year.

Then, at the end of 2006, New York’s highest court surprised everyone by reversing the lower state court decisions, and limiting to \$1.93 billion the additional taxpayers’ funds that the state must spend each year on New York City public schools. The court not only declined to order more funding; it also made a strong statement through these words of Judge Eugene F. Pigott, Jr.

“The judiciary has a duty to defer to the legislature in matters of policymaking, particularly in a matter so vital as education financing, which has as well a core element of local control. We have neither the authority, nor the ability, nor the will, to micromanage education financing.” Judge Pigott further affirmed, “devising a state budget is a prerogative of the legislature and executive; the judiciary should not usurp this power.”

In 2005, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (the same court that ordered same-sex marriage licenses) handed down a similar decision, tossing out a lawsuit that the legislature put more money into the public schools.

It remains to be seen whether the Missouri case will affirm legislative authority, or instead exercise judicial supremacy in matters of school funding.