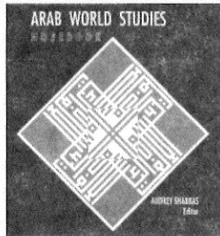


The Arab World Studies Notebook

The 540-page *Arab World Studies Notebook* has been distributed to over 10,000 teachers, according to editor Audrey Shabbas, thereby reaching about 25 million students (*Daily Star* (Lebanon), 4-22-04). While other teacher training materials — and some world studies textbooks by major publishers — set forth some claims similar to those in the *Notebook*, the content of the *Notebook* is especially interesting given its



known funding links to Saudi Arabia.

The *Notebook* teaches Muslim beliefs about the origins of Islam and the Koran as established facts, although these origins involve supernatural elements, and most non-Muslims do not accept them. Instead of teaching about the various existing opinions on Middle Eastern history and politics, the *Notebook* presents only those views held by the MEPC.

The *Notebook* also ignores or explains away problematic aspects of Islam and Muslim culture. For example, it claims that the Koran condemns wars of territorial conquest, and then sidesteps a long history of such conquest, noting only that Arabian Muslims built a great empire that spanned three continents, never directly stating how they did so.

Nor does the *Notebook* reconcile the supposed condemnation of territorial conquest with the life of Mohammed or the concept of *jihad* (as the word is used by foreign policy establishments, academics, and terrorists; in more and more textbooks, *jihad* is defined as an internal, personal struggle). In traditional Muslim thought, the world is divided into two parts: the *Dar al-Islam* or “domain of Islam,” and the *Dar al-Harb* or “domain of war.” Apparently, the *Notebook* would have American students and teachers believe that all Muslims hope to bring the *Dar al-Harb* into the *Dar al-Islam* by purely peaceable means.

On the subject of women, Shabbas said that “in the Koran, God has no gender, nor does the Koran consider women inferior to or subservient to men. Indeed, Islam is deeply committed to social justice and knowledge for understanding” (*Daily Star* (Lebanon), 4-22-04). The *Notebook* avoids the important issue of women’s limited legal and political rights in many Muslim nations.

The *Notebook* also makes the startling claim that Muslims sailed across the Atlantic and “discovered” the New World in the year 889. Al-

(See *Arab Notebook*, page 4)

K-12 Courses on the Middle East: Are They a ‘Stealth Curriculum’?

The need to educate primary and secondary students on Islam and the Middle East has far outpaced teachers’ own knowledge since September 11, 2001. Teachers find that they need new materials to educate themselves and their students.

What one critic calls a “stealth curriculum” is filling the gap. Strongly pro-Muslim, anti-Israel groups have provided supplementary curricula on the Middle East for American classrooms. Muslim groups financed by the Saudi Arabian government have poured money into the creation and adoption of materials that reflect their point of view.

Stanley Kurtz analyzes this development in a *National Review* article titled “Saudi in the Classroom: A fundamental front in the war.” The trail follows alternative pathways to curriculum adoption that bypass safeguards and public oversight.

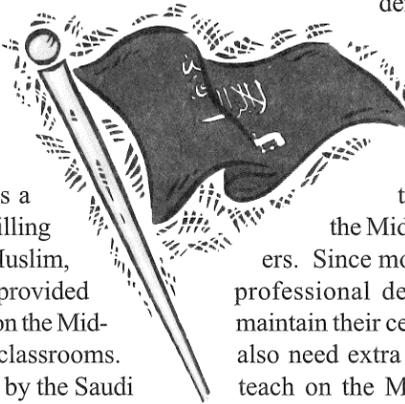
Under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, the federal government subsi-

dizes Middle East Studies centers and programs at a number of American universities. Centers receiving federal funds under Title VI must partici-

mate in “public outreach” through designing and/or distributing lesson plans and teacher training materials on the Middle East to K-12 teachers. Since most K-12 teachers need professional development credits to maintain their certification — and most also need extra training if they are to teach on the Middle East — teacher training materials and seminars on this topic serve a dual purpose. But such professional development could affect teachers’ perspectives on the issues, especially if the materials present information from a subtle but definite bias.

Saudi Arabian groups currently fund several organizations that create curricula and teacher training materials for K-12 social studies classes in the United States. As Stanley Kurtz reveals, “outreach coord-

(See *K-12 Courses*, page 4)



Controversial Maryland Sex Ed Curriculum Is Adopted

The final version of a supplementary sex education curriculum called “Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality” received approval from the Maryland Board of Education, and will now be offered to 8th- and 10th-graders in Montgomery County, Maryland. The curriculum has been under revision for five years, amid much controversy among groups that disagree on teaching about sexual orientation in public schools.

Montgomery County attracted national attention in 2005, when a federal judge sided with parents against the original version of the curriculum (see *Education Reporter*, June 2005). It was very unusual for a judge to rule against a school board’s adopted sex ed curriculum. It was also unusual that the lessons chided specific Christian denominations for condemning homosexual acts, and applauded other denominations for “address(ing) the homophobia of the church.”

The original curriculum contained statements on homosexuality and spirituality such as this one: “Myth: Homosexuality is a sin. Facts: The Bible contains six passages which condemn homosexual behavior. The Bible also contains numerous passages condemning heterosexual behavior.” What the curriculum meant by this latter claim became clear later on, when it asserted its own view of normal

sexual behavior: people “form a variety of [sexual] relationships lasting from one night to many years.”

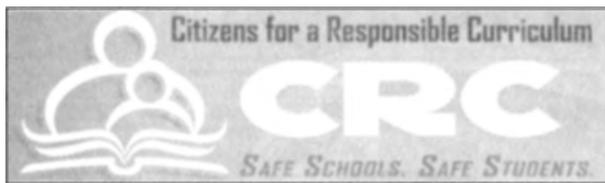
“A family is two or more people who are joined together by emotional feelings or who are related to one another,” the curriculum preached.

The new version of the curriculum does not criticize any religious group or specifically mention the Bible’s view of homosexuality. Instead it attempts to focus on tolerance and to teach students that it is wrong to bully others. However, the curriculum presents only a wholly favorable view of homosexual or transgender behaviors.

It also says that such behaviors are “innate” and unchangeable. Groups such as Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum have argued that this is inappropriate, since the public school district thus presents and endorses only one side of an issue about which many people disagree.

Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum led an appeal to the Maryland Board of Education based on these concerns and relevant First Amendment and parental

(See *Curriculum*, page 4)



NBC Will Partner with Channel One

Channel One, the controversial ad-supported TV broadcast that about 7 million teenagers watch at 11,000 schools each day, recently changed hands for the second time in its 18-year history. Primedia, which bought the channel in 1994 for \$250 million, sold it this year for just \$10 million to Alloy Media & Marketing, a youth-culture marketing specialist. Alloy plans to spend another \$12 million to update the technology of its new acquisition.

As the numbers show, Channel One is not what it once was. Alloy, however, hopes a new partnership with NBC News may improve both Channel One’s image and its profits. NBC will produce original content for Channel One, and may also provide news clips from NBC’s nightly broadcasts. In turn, NBC hopes to reach a younger audience and turn young people into “consumers of news.”

Although Channel One’s mission is ostensibly to expose middle and high school students to current events, analyst William Hoynes found that news content made up only slightly more than half of Channel One’s airtime. And 80% of the “news” airtime covered sports, weather, plane or train crashes, or features or profiles unrelated to breaking news. That left only about 10% of the total broadcast for world and political news.

The channel has drawn the strongest criticism, however, not for its relatively light treatment of the news, but for its advertising. Each 12-minute broadcast includes two minutes of commercials. Advertisers such as Clearasil, Gatorade, Taco Bell and the Army pay about \$200,000 for each 30-second ad spot. Pro-family groups often protest when Channel One advertises R-rated movies to middle schoolers. Aside from advertising, the regular content sometimes features music groups famous for sexually explicit lyrics or for promoting gang violence. Some groups have protested any commercials appearing in schools, no matter what their content.

The American Academy of Pediatrics reported last year that children who watch Channel One remember the commercials more clearly than the news. Massachusetts is currently considering a bill that would ban advertising in public schools. Various school districts and states, including New York, California and Rhode Island, have banned Channel One at different times.

In July’s *Advertising Age*, Simon Dumenco offers his opinion that Channel One may be “an idea whose time has come and gone.” Dumenco believes that with consumers more conscious of corporate responsibility than ever before, companies that advertise on school time may find it’s not worth the money. “There are plenty of other avenues for marketers to reach teens effectively on their own time,” he writes.

EDUCATION BRIEFS

The ADHD drug Ritalin stunts children's growth, a recent study showed. After three years on the drug, children are on average an inch shorter and 4.4 pounds lighter than their peers who don't take Ritalin. While researchers and others had noticed the effect before, many thought that ADHD itself was responsible. The study negating that theory also confirmed that the helpful effect of Ritalin compared to behavioral treatment wears off over the same time period so that, after three years, children treated with Ritalin have no advantage over those who receive behavioral interventions. (CBS, 7-20-07)

The U.S. House voted to discourage states from mandating the HPV vaccine. About half of the states have considered legislation to make the vaccine for HPV, a sexually transmitted disease, mandatory in order for girls as young as eleven years to attend school (see *Education Reporter*, March 2007). The House voted in favor of an amendment to an appropriations bill that would prohibit states that mandate the vaccine from using federal funds to implement the mandate.

Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-GA), the amendment's sponsor, warned the House that "excluding children from school for refusal to be vaccinated for a disease spread only by sexual intercourse is a serious, precedent-setting action that trespasses on the right of parents to make medical decisions for their children, as well as on the rights of the children to attend school. A mandatory HPV vaccine program improperly and unnecessarily inserts the government into the lives of children, parents, and physicians." (house.gov, 7-18-07)

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Minority Enrollment Nearly Doubles in Thirty Years

A recent government report shows major changes in public school student demographics between 1972 and 2005. While in 1972 minority students made up 22% of public school enrollment, in 2005 they made up 42%. Hispanic students mainly drive the change; their enrollment has risen from 6% to 20% of the student population.

Representation in schools of African-Americans, the nation's third-largest racial group, has changed little: from 14.8% in 1972 to 15.6% in 2005.

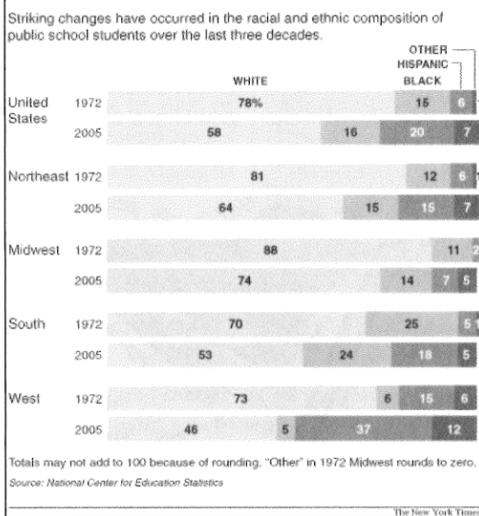
The racial composition of student populations varies greatly by region, the report found. While in 1972 the South was the most diverse region, with 70% white, 25% black, and 5% Hispanic students, today the West is most diverse. There, 46% of students are white, 5% are black, 37% are Hispanic, and 12% are of other races including 7% Asian. The Midwest

remains the least diverse region, with 74% white students, compared to 88% in 1972.

The congressionally commissioned study, "The Condition of Education," comes out annually and looks at a variety of indicators. The study also found that students today spend more time doing homework and are more likely to take advanced courses in high school. 37% of public school 10th-graders reported doing ten or more hours of homework a week in 2002, up from just 7% in 1980. The percentage of 10th-graders who reported doing less than five hours of homework a week decreased from 71% to 37%.

The increase in advanced coursework occurred across the board ethnically and racially. Twice as many minority students took Advanced Placement courses in 2005, for example, as did in 1987. (<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/list/index.asp>)

Shifts in the Nation's Schools



R.I.P. Norma Gabler: A Legend

Norma Gabler, who with her husband Mel challenged inaccuracy and bias in textbooks beginning in 1961, died on July 22nd. The Gablers became an amazing example of what just two people can do, taking on huge publishers and bringing serious problems with their books to the attention of Texas decision-makers. Since the Texas state board of education chooses books for the entire state, Texas is the second-largest textbook market in the country after California. This fact helped the Gablers to influence textbook content and selection nationwide, since publishers were often willing to amend mistakes rather than lose the important Texas market.

Norma and Mel first became involved with textbooks when they noticed that a history textbook omitted the words "under God" from the Gettysburg Address.

They began searching through other books and found a shocking number of factual errors and examples of liberal bias. Soon they were traveling annually to Austin to let the state board and others know about problems in the books. They incorporated their effort formally as Educational Research Analysts in 1973.

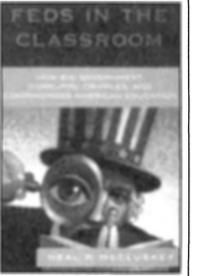
By 2001, they had compiled a 54-foot long "scroll of shame" of mistakes in textbooks. In 1992, Texas fined publishers nearly \$1 million for hundreds of errors the Gablers had found in ten U.S. history books.

Educational Research Analysts' work will go on under the capable leadership of longtime textbook reviewer Neal Frey. Their website (www.textbookreviews.org) provides the latest textbook reviews and ratings, and standard review criteria.

Book of the Month



Feds in the Classroom: How Big Government Corrupts, Cripples, and Compromises American Education, Neal P. McCluskey, Rowman Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007, 209 pp., \$19.95



"Those doing the selection [of curriculum] bring with them their own politics," reasoned the 1984 Republican Platform on education. "Therefore, the more centralized the selection process, the greater the threat of tyranny." *Feds in the Classroom* chronicles the increasing centralization of American education, and the fact that "massive increases in federal spending on and entanglement in education have failed to achieve positive results for students and parents."

Many people benefit from the public school monopoly, says the author, but students aren't among them. Centralization seems inexorable even when no one can claim that big government's interventions solve the problems that serve to justify increasing control. McCluskey believes that centralization and big government have disastrously escalated the "math, reading, cultural, religious, political, and countless other 'wars' already besetting our public schools." Although diversity is one of our nation's strengths, an increasingly national education system attempts to make one size fit all.

McCluskey warns of a growing willingness among traditionalists to accept centralization and federal control if they believe they will be in charge of a new national curriculum. "Federal intervention in education is unconstitutional whether it is by progressives or conservatives," he writes. Further, it is naive to think that power centralized for an apparently good cause will not end up in the wrong hands at some time in the future. Far better to work for local and parental control, and let good pedagogy like phonics speak for itself through its success wherever it is adopted.

A firm believer in the free market and its ability to inspire creativity and excellence among competing schools, McCluskey advocates vouchers and tax-based school choice, as well as sending a strong message to the federal government that unconstitutional meddling in local schools is unwelcome and won't be tolerated.

"Reformers must teach the public that as much as politicians will make it sound as if they can deliver educational services for free, they cannot. Quite simply, for every reading remediation, school nutrition, and basket-weaving program people might want for themselves, they will have to pay for thousands of programs in which they have no interest . . . The only way to control that is for all of us to demand much less from government, or nothing at all."

FOCUS: TAKING THE BOY CRISIS IN EDUCATION SERIOUSLY: How School Choice Can Boost Achievement Among Boys and Girls

by the Independent Women's Forum

For more than three decades Congress has answered, "How high?" to the feminist command to jump, and provided millions in funding for the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA). If legislation passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee in July 2006 was any sign, this year will be no exception despite the fact that the only inequity girls experience is being superior to boys on nearly every indicator of academic excellence.

The 33-year-old Women's Educational Equity Act, reauthorized in the No Child Left Behind Act, claims that "teaching and learning practices in the United States are frequently inequitable as such practices relate to women and girls. . . ." Since its inception, Congress has appropriated as much as \$10 million annually for research, curriculum development and teaching strategies to promote "gender equity." However, what may have been appropriate decades ago is no longer the case. Boys, not girls, are being left behind by our nation's schools.

Girls surpass boys in reading, writing, civics and the arts. Girls get better grades and more honors; they have higher aspirations, are more engaged in school and are more likely to graduate from high school and college. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to be suspended or expelled, need special education, smoke, drink and do drugs, repeat a grade, commit suicide, become incarcerated, leave school without attaining literacy, drop out of school or be unemployed. Marginal advantages in math and science for boys pale compared to the sheer advantage girls enjoy throughout school.

Boys are in trouble. Yet despite glaring inequities, the tired myth of the short-changed girl remains strong enough to seize another \$2.9 million from taxpayers last year for an outdated federal program. Even more unfortunate is how the myth of inequity is wielded to oppose real reforms that help boys and girls.

The reality is that far too many boys, particularly among minorities, fall behind along the way toward adulthood and do not recover. This is no "manufactured" crisis or "backlash against the women's movement," as two feminist authors recently opined. Moreover, recognizing the problem and seeking solutions to the problems facing our boys in no way harms girls' prospects. The object of formal education, after all, is to help boys and girls live up to their potential.

To achieve equality of opportunity for all young people, the nation must finally bury the myth of shortchanged girls and the special-interest programs that propagate female victimhood. Secondly, it must take seriously the plight of boys by embracing strategies and systems that allow boys and girls to excel — in particular, by encouraging a greater diversity of educational methods and innovation through school choice.

A look at the facts

Last year, a paper published by Education Sector, a new think tank, declared that the "current boy crisis hype and the debate around it are based more on hopes and fears than on evidence." However, the paper quoted statistics that painted a different picture than its conclusions: boys trail girls in most indicators of academic excellence including school engagement, achievement scores, and graduation rates at the secondary and postsecondary levels. The achievement gap in reading and writing — foundational skills in the information age — between boys and girls is alarming. Even more disturbing is the number of boys who fall behind in school, become involved in destructive behavior and drop out. Despite marginal leads in math and science, the overall picture of academic achievement shows boys, not girls, on the short side of "frequently inequitable."

Academic Achievement in K-12

In general, girls are more engaged and ambitious in school. They are more likely to get good grades. Girls are more likely to be in gifted and talented classes and to take Advanced Placement exams. They are more likely to do their homework. Girls have higher hopes and ambitions for school. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to get Ds and Fs, and the gap has widened since 1996. Boys are also more likely to repeat a grade.

Engagement after School

A survey of high-school seniors found girls were more likely to participate in music and performing arts activities, academic clubs, student council or government, and join the newspaper or yearbook. Girls were also more likely to participate in community affairs or volunteer at least once or twice per month. The only extracurricular activity boys were more likely to participate in was athletics.

Another survey of high-school sopho-

mores found girls are more likely to perform community service, take a music, art or language class, read at least three hours a week of nonschool reading, and talk on the phone. Boys are more likely to work on hobbies, drive or ride around, visit with friends, play sports, watch television, and play video games. The percentage of students who spend three or more hours a day watching television is higher for boys. The largest gap between girls' and boys' television watching habits was for those who said they watched six or more hours of television daily: 22% of boys and 15% of girls.

Percentage Points Girls and Boys are Ahead of Each Other in Various Subjects

FAVORING GIRLS	FAVORING BOYS
Reading (2005)	Math (2005)
4th grade +6	4th grade +2
8th grade +10	8th grade +2
12th grade +13	12th grade +2
Writing (2002)	Science (2005)
4th grade +17	4th grade +4
8th grade +21	8th grade +3
12th grade +24	12th grade +4
Civics (1998)	U.S. History (2001)
4th grade +2	4th grade 0
8th grade +4	8th grade +3
12th grade +4	12th grade +2
Arts 8th grade (1997)	Geography (2001)
Music creating +5	8th grade +4
Music performing +13	12th grade +5
Music responding +20	
Visual arts creating +3	
Visual arts responding +8	
Theater creating +6	
Theater responding +18	

Course Taking and Achievement

While there is some diversity in course-taking preferences, on balance, neither sex dominates in terms of taking rigorous classes. Contrary to the myth of the shortchanged girl, girls do not shy away from math, science or other challenging subjects. Girls receive on average slightly more Carnegie units in English, history, advanced math (algebra or higher), biology, and chemistry than boys, while boys take slightly more general science, physics, lower math (less than algebra), and computer classes. Girls are much more likely to take foreign language and art classes while boys take more technical courses.

In terms of achievement, girls hold a significant advantage in reading and writing while boys hold a marginal advantage in math and science.

On NAEP tests, boys and girls as student subgroups score differently. Girls score significantly better on reading, writing, and arts tests and slightly better on civics tests at all three grade levels. Boys score slightly higher in math, science, geography and U.S. history. The most pronounced differences in scores, which favor female students, occur in reading, writing, and the arts in the 8th and 12th grades.

Analysis of the 2005 NAEP scores re-

veals a startling fact: A third of 12th-grade boys scored below the basic level. *These boys cannot read a newspaper and understand what they are reading.*

Graduation Rates by Sex and Race (2003)

	Female	Male	Gap
African-American	59%	48%	11%
Asian	73%	70%	3%
Hispanic	58%	49%	9%
White	79%	74%	5%
Total	72%	65%	7%

Source: Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, *Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates*, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.

Illiteracy is a problem even among sons of white, middle-class households according to research by Judith Kleinfeld, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of Alaska. She found that nearly a quarter of high-school seniors who are the sons of white, college-educated parents score below the basic level on NAEP, whereas only 6% of girls with the same background scored below basic. A similar disparity exists for Hispanic students: 34% of sons of college-educated parents scored below basic while 19% of daughters of college-educated parents scored as low. In grades K-3, boys are just a tiny bit behind girls in reading but by high school the difference between male and female literacy is large and, for many, tragic.

High School Graduation

Girls graduate from high school at higher rates than boys. The disparity is highest among minority students.

College Attendance

In high school, young women are more likely to aspire to go to college. They are also more likely to enroll in post-secondary education right after high school and to complete their post-secondary education. All together, women attain 58% of college degrees and outnumber men in the number of associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees. Only among doctorate degree earners do men slightly outnumber women.

That the division of degrees is not split evenly between the sexes is not the problem. Yearly fluctuations in the percentage of degree earners by sex would be natural. Assuming that neither sex is smarter as a group than the other, college aptitude should be similar. The growing imbalance suggests there are college-capable men who are not going to college or, if they are, they are dropping out before graduation. Given the different prospects for those who obtain a college degree and those who do not, concern for these young men failing to graduate col-

(See *Boys and Girls*, page 4)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



K-12 Courses *(Continued from page 1)*

dinators or teacher-trainers at a number of university Middle East Studies centers have themselves been trained by the very same Saudi-funded foundations that design K-12 course materials. These Saudi-friendly folks happily build their outreach efforts around Saudi-financed K-12 curricula."

Kurtz reports on a 2005 investigation by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA). JTA investigated, among other groups, the Middle East Policy Council (MEPC — formerly the Arab American Affairs Council) and Arab World and Islamic Resources (AWAIR). Audrey Shabbas, one member the two groups have in common, is employed by MEPC to conduct seminars for teachers, and is also the founder of AWAIR. Shabbas describes the mission of AWAIR in this way: "Believing firmly that teachers are the vanguard of change in any society, AWAIR has taken as its mandate to impact

the very resources chosen and used by teachers as well as the training and sensitizing of teachers themselves."

According to the JTA report, Saudi Arabia funds MEPC directly. It also funds AWAIR through Saudi Aramco, the government-owned oil company. Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz has donated at least \$1.1 million to MEPC for teacher training. As Stanley Kurtz points out, "this is the same Prince Alwaleed whose \$10 million post-9/11 gift was returned by Rudy Giuliani because that gift was accompanied by a letter blaming American foreign policy for the attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Center."

AWAIR's Audrey Shabbas is also editor of the *Arab World Studies Notebook*, a Title VI resource promoted by Harvard's outreach program. The *Notebook* is one of the most controversial resources on its subject, with many critics claiming it is deeply biased and inaccurate. It made that impression on education analyst and researcher Sharon Stotsky, who has worked for both Harvard, as director of a professional development institute for teachers, and for the Massachusetts Department of Education, where she was a senior associate commissioner from 1999 to 2003.

Stotsky called the *Notebook* a "piece of propaganda." (See sidebar.) She also brought to light further problems with Harvard's outreach program, especially through her study, published by the Fordham Foundation, *The Stealth Curriculum: Manipulating America's History Teachers*. Her experience with Harvard's program of teacher training in Middle East Studies led her to call the entire program "a barely disguised" attempt to "shape . . . attitudes on specific political issues." Past materials and training celebrated Islam uncritically and prompted teachers to introduce their students to a wholly positive view of Islam's religion and culture.

Curricula such as the one Harvard endorses have made their way into an unknown number of schools, only occasionally raising a hue and cry among students or parents. Set aside for a moment the ques-

tions of accuracy and objectivity. When teachers, prompted by materials they received as professional development and supplemental curriculum under Title VI, ask students to appoint imams, don Muslim dress, memorize the five pillars of Islam, make prayer mats and bow toward Mecca, it is doubtful whether basic legal standards for education on culture and religion in public school classrooms are being upheld. Each of these activities actually appears in one or more curriculum guides for children as young as kindergarten.

In his introduction to Sandra Stotsky's study, Chester Finn, president of the Fordham Foundation, calls teacher-training seminars and materials a "vast dark continent within our public (and private) educational system."

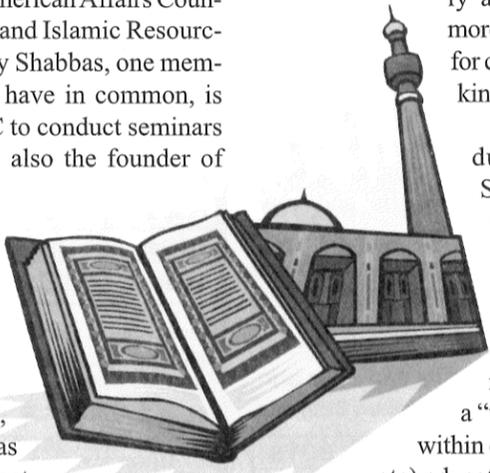
"This part of K-12 education rarely gets examined or evaluated," he writes. "We know staggeringly little about how good these materials and workshops are — how accurate they are, whether the information they present is balanced and accurate. We know even less about the efficacy, value, or intellectual integrity of innumerable workshops, institutes, and training programs in which teachers participate."

Whenever course materials fall below the public radar, interest groups have the opportunity to introduce their own opinions into the classroom. "The semi-covert agenda varies, of course, by topic and group," writes Finn. "But most of its specimens share these features: under the guise of heightening teachers' and students' awareness of previously marginalized groups, they manipulate teachers (and, thus, their pupils) to view the history of freedom as the history of oppression, and to be more sympathetic to cultures that don't value individual rights than to those that do."

Interest groups will be all the more eager and able to do this if they continue to receive federal funds subsidizing their efforts.

Efforts such as Stotsky's have succeeded in bringing this issue to the attention of a much wider segment of the public. In her study, Stotsky suggested the creation of a grievance procedure to address some of the problems with the "stealth curriculum" financed by Title VI.

Congress may move this session to enact such a plan: Senators Kennedy and Enzi have drafted a bipartisan plan to reform Title VI. The higher-education lobby and other opponents of Title VI reform have argued that reforms would give the federal government control over universities; but Stanley Kurtz counters that the problems with Title VI involve K-12, not college, curricula. All legislation seeking to reform Title VI to date has included a provision specifically preventing the government from interfering with college curricula.



Arab Notebook *(Continued from page 1)*

though there is no evidence for this, Shabbas and another author claim in the *Notebook* that Muslims spread across North, Central, and South America and throughout the Caribbean before the arrival of Columbus.

Later, English explorers in North America supposedly met "Iroquois and Algonquin chiefs with names like Abdul-Rahim and Abdallah Ibn Malik." When Peter DiGangi, then the Director of the Algonquin Nation Secretariat, challenged this claim directly and called it "preposterous" and "outlandish," MEPC eventually agreed to remove the passage concerning Algonquin history from subsequent copies.

One notable exercise the *Notebook* curriculum introduces is a world religions "pretest" asking teachers and students to identify from which of three holy books eleven chosen quotations come. At the end, against expectation it turns out that all eleven came from the Koran.

"Think of 6th-graders participating in this activity," said one concerned mother who sat in on an MEPC-sponsored teacher-training seminar that used the *Notebook*. "It intentionally muddies the waters and gets in their heads to tell them all religions are the same."

The same mother was shocked by the way the seminar presented Islam in comparison with other religions. The materials affirm that the God of Islam, the God of Judaism and the God of Christianity are one and the same, an idea that most adherents of all three religions repudiate.

The seminar also used the fact that "Allah" is the Arabic word for God to imply that Allah, the God of Islam, is the God of all the earth. The seminar further compared Christianity unfavorably with Islam, referring to the divorce of faith and reason that Christianity has supposedly caused in the "post-Christian West." The answer to this dilemma, in the seminar's opinion, is found in the Koran.

Boys and Girls *(Continued from page 3)*

lege should replace the regular hand-wringing over the fact that fewer women choose to major in engineering and math while in college.

In college, women are awarded half of the bachelor's degrees in math, 60% of biological/life sciences degrees, a fifth of engineering degrees, and more than a quarter of computer science degrees. While some, including the proponents of WEEA, think these percentages should be higher, little attention is paid to the fact that women are awarded 77% of the degrees in education, 61% of the degrees in accounting, 78% of the degrees in psychology and 84% of the degrees in the health professions. Where is the dismay over the inequitable distribution of men in these fields?

Although the once proclaimed and now debunked *How Schools Shortchange Girls* maintains a postmortem life on the Web, it can no longer conceal the facts about girls' achievements and boys' struggles: that girls equal or surpass boys on nearly every indicator of academic excellence, and too many boys are falling

behind and not catching up. Even *Newsweek* and other mainstream media outlets have broken the news. While feminists and politicians continue to cling to old myths, the nation must face these facts for the sake of its future.

It is time to face the facts: boys, not girls, are falling behind. However, this recognition is only the first step. The public-education system must embrace innovation and encourage the replication of strategies that help boys and girls reach their potential. The most effective way to encourage



innovative practices and meet the special needs of individuals is to support choice in education. By allowing families to choose schools, students can enroll in the environment where they can flourish. In some instances, a single-sex school or a co-educational school with single-sex classrooms will be appropriate. Since different strategies work for different students, parents should decide. By enacting charter-school laws, tax incentives, and scholarship programs, each state can spur innovative practices while giving every girl or boy the chance to succeed.

Curriculum *(Continued from page 1)*

rights issues. The board issued a decision on June 27 dismissing these concerns and affirming the curriculum.

The state board agreed with Montgomery County's school board that public schools need not present all issues with strict "viewpoint neutrality." The Montgomery board, in one of its motions, argued that "one of the principal purposes of public education is to instill civic virtues. . . . Doing so necessarily requires a school board to make normative decisions all the time — whether in deciding to teach the history of the Holocaust without lending credence to those who deny it or extolling the virtues of democratic rule in civics class without giving equal time to the 'virtues' of fascism." The state

board quoted this argument at length in its own decision.

The appellants argued that the curriculum as constituted amounted to an establishment of secular humanism as a religion. The state board rejected this argument, citing two federal district court decisions that ruled secular humanism is not a religion.

To the claim that such a dogmatic curriculum interferes with parents' fundamental right to direct their children's education, the state board rejoined: "It is, of course, the fundamental rights [sic] of a parent to control the upbringing of his/her child . . . , but that right is not absolute. It must bend to the State's duty to educate its citizens."