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Online Schools Gain Popularity, Face Down Legal Challenges

About half a million American public school students take online classes to supplement their coursework in traditional schools. Full-time online charter schools now operate in 18 states, allowing about 90,000 children to attend school online through virtual public schools. These 90,000 students take classes only online and do not attend another school. Some school boards



and districts don't know what to make of the new full-time online charter school model. The teachers unions, however, know they don't like it. In several states, unions and districts have brought lawsuits against virtual schools.

Virtual schools allow students to take unusual or advanced classes that their local school districts don't offer, such as Chinese or linear algebra. Students enrolled in virtual schools full-time can work at their own pace and focus on what interests them most. They can "go to school" anywhere, and arrange their schooling to accommodate other important activities, such as practicing a musical instrument or another talent.

Homeschooling offers some of those same advantages, and many students of online charters were formerly homeschooled. Now they are public school students, although they still attend school from home. Their online schools are part of the public school system, are taxpayer-financed, and must comply with federal testing requirements.

The problem for teachers unions is obvious. Students enrolled in virtual schools communicate with their certified teachers over the internet or by phone, but spend most of the school day working independently or with their parents' help and oversight. The Wisconsin Virtual Academy, a full-time charter school of 800 students, employs 20 teachers. Because a traditional school of the same size would employ many more, some teachers complain that online schools draw students and funds away from traditional schools.

The Wisconsin teachers union, an NEA affiliate, sued the Wisconsin Virtual Academy in 2004. According to the union, that school and the state's eleven other online charters violated state law on teacher licensure, since unlicensed parents were effectively overseeing much of their children's schooling. A state court dismissed the case, but in December of 2007 an appeal court sided with the union.

The Wisconsin legislature tackled the issue early in 2008. About 1,000 students

and parents rallied at the state capitol in support of online schooling. Lawmakers responded with a bill that allows the online charter schools to stay open and leaves funding levels as they are, but increases state oversight of the schools.

Several districts in Pennsylvania sued over virtual charter schools in 2001. The districts claimed that online schools drained funds from traditional schools and allowed parents to homeschool their children at taxpayer expense. The districts lost the lawsuit, and online charter schools continue to operate in Pennsylvania.

It is clear that virtual schooling plays an important role in the future of both public and private education. State by state, America continues to evaluate what that role will be, and how to balance the opportunities such schools offer with the need for accountability to taxpayers.

Montgomery County, Maryland Redefines Gender

Montgomery County, Maryland is in the news again, as citizens rally against a bill they fear would allow transsexual men to use women's locker rooms and restrooms in health clubs and schools.

For several years, Montgomery County has been bitterly divided over the local school district's high school and middle school sex ed curriculum. The original curriculum targeted religious groups that held traditional views of sexuality. The current version teaches about homosexuality, teen sex and condom usage in ways that one coalition of citizens says violate parental rights and state law. (See *Education Reporter*, September 2007)

While schools are already using the materials, Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC) has continued its legal challenge, with assistance from the Thomas More Law Center. Both sides brought arguments before Maryland Circuit Court Judge William Rowan III in January, and Judge Rowan ruled in favor of the curriculum. CRC is now planning an appeal.

The most recent fracas in Montgomery County centers on the new county law 23-07, an anti-discrimination law that redefines "gender identity" to mean "an individual's actual or perceived gender-related appearance, expression, image, identity or behavior, whether or not these gender-related characteristics differ from the characteristics customarily associated with the person's assigned sex at birth." The law prohibits those who provide "public accommo-

AFT Endorses Clinton; NEA Can't Decide

The nation's two largest teachers unions, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, provide massive funding and volunteer support to Democratic candidates each election cycle. The AFT endorsed Senator Hillary Clinton last October, and has campaigned aggressively for Clinton in primary contests. The NEA has yet to endorse either Clinton or Obama, although a few state affiliates made their own decisions in advance of their state primaries and caucuses.

The day after Super Tuesday, the NEA issued a press release reminding both Democratic camps that "the most valuable, and perhaps the most important, endorsement remains unclaimed by either Senator Barack Obama or Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. The 3.2 million-member National Education Association, the nation's largest labor organization as well as the nation's largest professional association, remains on the sidelines."

The NEA complained that education has played only a minor role in the campaign so far. "There have been dozens of debates but less than a handful of ques-



tions about the future role of the federal government in public education," said NEA President Reg Weaver. Under the Bush administration, said Weaver, the teachers union and public schools "have been the victims of top down, manage by mandate federal education policy." He called instead for improvements to the No Child Left Behind Act, and implied that large funding increases would be welcome.

Education Week blogger Michele McNeil hazarded a guess that "the NEA has probably heard enough about the Democrats' education ideas, but is hedging its bets for fear of endorsing a losing candidate. Or maybe the NEA is as divided as the rest of the Democratic Party."

Each Democrat has won an endorsement or two from NEA's state affiliates, although most of the state affiliates have remained neutral. NEA-New Hampshire endorsed Clinton, who won that primary. In a surprising move, NEA-New Hampshire also endorsed a Republican, Mike Huckabee. Some states' union leaders endorsed candidates as individuals, speaking for themselves but not for their state union affiliates. Iowa State Education Association president Linda Nelson, for example, endorsed Obama.

The Illinois Education Association endorsed Obama early in December, and actively campaigned for him. AFT members in Illinois also campaigned for Obama, despite the national union's endorsement of Clinton. The national AFT chose to sit out the Illinois primary, saying it did not expect its members in Illinois to defect from their home-state candidate.

The NEA plans to spend \$40 million this year on election activities. The AFT will not disclose how much it plans to spend. (*Education Week*, 1-30-08)

"The truth is that, unless our referendum effort is successful, any transgender could enforce his rights under this law in a court of law and, relying on the plain reading of the statute, obtain entry into female locker rooms and restrooms."

CRC wants the law reframed to specifically exempt bathrooms, locker rooms, and "other places of shared nudity." They also want to reserve the right of discrimination based on "gender identity" for religious organizations, day care operators, and people seeking to share residential housing. (*WorldNetDaily*, 2-2-08)

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anyone based on race, religion, or the newly defined "gender identity."

The bill has already become law, but the grassroots group Citizens for a Responsible Government (CRG — affiliated with CRC) has collected over 32,000 signatures in order to bring the issue to a vote of the people. CRG objects to the law especially because it threatens the privacy of women's restrooms and locker rooms. It also could force religious employers and others to hire transsexual individuals even when being transsexual makes them ill suited.

An earlier version of the bill included a specific exemption for locker rooms, but this exemption disappeared before the final draft. County Executive Isiah Leggett dismissed CRG's concerns, saying that neither he nor the county council intends the bill's scope to include locker rooms.

Susan Jamison, a lawyer for CRG, responded that the law's plain wording matters far more than the County Council's oral intentions. "You seem to rely on your executive policy in the enforcement of the law. Such policy does not have the same force as law and will not be binding on a court. Furthermore, any such policy could be easily changed," said Jamison.



EDUCATION BRIEFS

In a recent survey, three in four South Carolina students said they were happy with their experiences in single-sex classes. The survey checked in with 1,700 students in the 2nd through 9th grades. Students named increased self-confidence and classroom participation as benefits of a single-sex setting. (*Education Week*, 1-23-08)

Some schools are experimenting with cash incentives for students who attend after-school tutoring programs or improve their grades. At two schools in Fulton County, Georgia, 40 at-risk students will participate in the pilot of the "Learn and Earn" program. The students will make \$8 an hour for staying after school to study and receive extra help. They will receive bonuses if their grades improve during the 15-week pilot. Local philanthropist Charles Loudermilk funds the program. (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 1-22-08)

One in five British teenagers believes Winston Churchill was a fictional character, a recent survey revealed. Almost half believe Richard the Lionheart was fictional, and a quarter of them believe Florence Nightingale was fictional. Teens guessed that many actual fictional characters were real: Robin Hood (51%), Sherlock Holmes (58%), and King Arthur (65%). (*Telegraph*, 2-4-08)

After an ugly battle between liberals and conservatives in St. Lucie County, Florida, the school board approved a sex ed curriculum opponents call "outrageous" and "explicit." The curriculum begins detailed instruction on how AIDS is transmitted in the 4th grade, when most students are nine or ten. St. Lucie teachers will demonstrate proper condom usage for 8th-graders. Although Supt. Michael Lannon says the curriculum promotes abstinence, critics counted 17 references to abstinence in the curriculum, compared to 210 references to condoms and other contraceptives. (www.sexedfacts.com, 12-9-08)

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Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>
E-mail: education@eagleforum.org

Algebra is the Key to Math Success

In March, the National Math Advisory Panel (NMAP) is expected to report to President Bush and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings on the panel's findings from the past two years. The NMAP has traveled across the country to assess the state of math education and what can be done to improve it. (See *Education Reporter*, November 2007) The NMAP's new report looks at curriculum, teacher training, assessment, and the latest research.

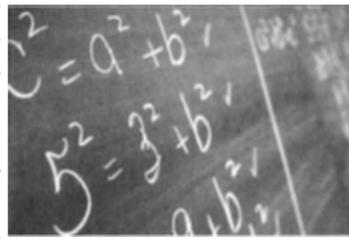
Dr. Sandra Stotsky, a member of the NMAP, recently reminded an audience in St. Louis that we cannot outsource national defense and national security to the nations around the world that currently produce many more students proficient in mathematics than the United States does. In the interest of national security, said Stotsky, we need "a sound K-12 math curriculum; and the keystone to such a curriculum is competence in school algebra."

"Algebra is the gateway to more advanced mathematics coursework in high school, and to technical proficiency in any field, whether the high school graduate goes directly into the workforce, into some form of post-secondary ed, or into the mili-

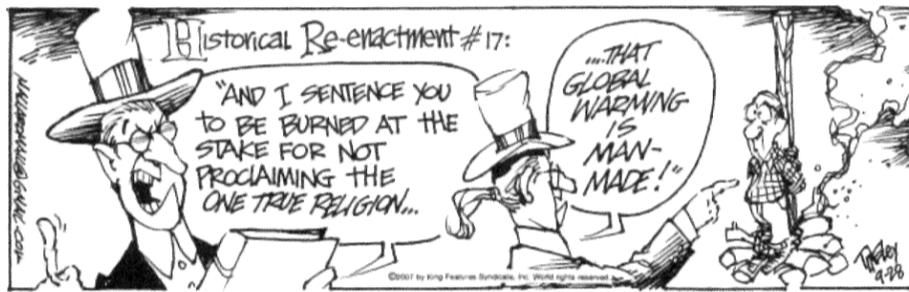
tary. What authentic school algebra consists of, what students need to know in order to study it, how it should be learned and when it should be learned are at the heart of the math wars," she said. According to Stotsky, other issues and debates in the math wars have distracted attention from the real issue in K-12 math curriculum: preparing students in elementary and middle school for Algebra I, and making them mathematically literate through what they learn in algebra.

Stotsky identified several problems that hold American students back in their preparation for algebra. Since the 1960s, education policymakers have focused almost exclusively on low-performing students. Partly to motivate those students and partly in response to social and ideological ferment in education schools, teachers across America adopted small-group work, "real-world problem-solving," calculator use in early grades, and student-invented algorithms. There is no evidence that any of these strategies motivate low-performing students or help them to learn math.

Even when *A Nation at Risk* was published (See *Algebra*, page 4)



MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Tennessee Law Would Limit Talk of Homosexuality in Schools

Tennessee lawmakers are considering a bill that would prohibit teachers in public elementary and middle schools from teaching about homosexuality. Rep. Stacey Campfield (R-Knoxville) says he proposed the legislation in response to the National Education Association's advocacy of such teaching.

For example, at its 2007 national convention, the NEA again approved a resolution that "to facilitate the realization of human potential, it is the right of every individual to live in an environment of freely available information and knowledge about sexuality. . . . [Sex ed] programs should include information on sexual abstinence, birth control and family planning, diversity of culture, diversity of sexual orientation and gender identification, parenting skills, prenatal care, sexually transmitted diseases, incest, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, homophobia." (2007 Resolution B-47)

"I don't think our schools have reading, writing and arithmetic down enough

to start teaching about transgenderism," said Campfield. The legislation would affect only classrooms up through 8th grade, leaving schools and districts free to choose curriculum or instruction about homosexuality at the high school level.

The bill's language states, "No public elementary or middle school shall permit any instruction or materials discussing sexual orientation other than heterosexuality." This language anticipates and hopes to avoid the possibility of lawsuits over the teaching of the science of reproduction, which necessarily involves heterosexuality. Campfield also said, "if I were to say 'Jack and Jill went up the hill' or 'George Washington and Martha Washington were husband and wife,' there are groups out there that would say we were pushing a heterosexual agenda." Campfield hopes his bill would instead simply require schools to leave out all discussion of homosexuality in the younger grades. (*Knoxville News Sentinel*, 2-13-08)



Book of the Month



50 Rules Kids Won't Learn in School, Charles J. Sykes, St. Martin's Press, 2007, \$19.95.

If you have an e-mail address, you've probably received some of these rules as forwarded messages. The original ten and then 14 rules, including such favorites as "The real world won't care as much as your school does about your self-esteem," and "It's not your parents' fault. If you screw up, you are responsible," tore a path across the internet in the late 1990s. While the e-mail forward usually credited the rules to Bill Gates, in fact they came from conservative author and commentator Charles Sykes.

Sykes takes a hard line against feel-good education, low expectations, and the attitude of entitlement he observes among young Americans. The rules' surprising popularity seems to indicate that readers, too, are tiring of the self-esteem movement and other trends that erode personal responsibility.

Sykes does a splendid job of pulling together quotes, news stories and statistics to persuade readers that, yes, something is wrong with these trends. He criticizes schools and parents for ignoring issues of character and focusing on unimportant matters. "A culture has to be awfully smug about the big things to devote as much time as we do to issues like the weight of backpacks, the onerous burden of homework, and self-esteem destroying class rankings. The very triviality of our concerns is evidence that we think we have the big stuff pretty much in hand." Sykes's 50 rules tackle the "big stuff," attempting to supply what is missing from the message our culture has sent the next generation.

One caveat: for anyone who is already somewhat open to the author's "deal-with-it" mentality, *50 Rules* makes a bracing and entertaining read. But the book's strident tone probably won't win over those few who need to hear the message the most (see lesson 21: "You're offended? So what? No, really. So what?"). This book won't make a good gift for the teenager in your life who strikes you as self-centered, coddled or entitled — he'll know why you gave it to him, resent it, and reject the "hint." Instead, give it to a teenager who has learned a few of the 50 lessons already. Parents and teachers will also profit from reading *50 Rules*, since it will encourage them to hold the line against the trends in childrearing and education that Sykes so vehemently protests.



FOCUS: Transformational Education and the Global Warming Fantasy

by Allen Quist

In early 2007 the government of the United Kingdom sent copies of Al Gore's global warming DVD, *An Inconvenient Truth*, to all secondary schools in England, Wales and Scotland. This action was part of a nationwide "Sustainable Schools Year of Action" which had been launched in 2006.

Showing the Gore DVD in UK public schools was challenged in the courts, however, on the basis that the schools are legally forbidden to promote partisan political views and that UK schools are required, when dealing with political issues, to provide a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Presiding court judge Michael Burton ruled that the Gore film contains numerous errors made in "the context of alarmism and exaggeration." As a consequence, said Judge Burton, the film could be shown only on the condition that it be accompanied by guidance notes to balance Gore's "one-sided" views in order to point out that the film's "apocalyptic vision" was not an impartial analysis of climate change.

At the same time, however, Gore's movie of "alarmism and exaggerations" has been shown, and continues to be shown, in countless American schools — shown to children at all grade levels, not just high school — and shown without any warning labels whatsoever.

In this way our school children are being subjected to a massive propaganda campaign of the global warming fanatics. Such programs are not intended to educate our children but rather to indoctrinate them with the attitudes, values and beliefs of the leftists.

The UK distribution of the Gore DVD was part of a "sustainable development" education program. Citizens worldwide need to become informed about what "sustainable development" actually means. It is not about conservation or genuine environmental protection. It is really about ideology and politics; it means indoctrination programs in our schools — not geared to protect our environment but only intended to advocate the agenda of the big government global leftists.

The Earth Charter clarifies what the term "sustainable development" means in our world (www.earthcharter.org). The Earth Charter indicates that "sustainable development" means legalized abortion, gay rights, eliminating the right to bear arms, promotion of New Age/Pantheism, advocating global government and using our education system to indoctrinate children in all the political attitudes, values and beliefs mentioned above.

The Earth Charter is the common statement of faith agreed to by the major environmental groups worldwide and by the UN. The Earth Charter calls on all nations to carry out education for sustain-

able development (as the Charter defines the term).

Education for "sustainable development" is part of the "transformational education" that now dominates America's education system. Well-known education theorist Shirley McCune, in her article called "Restructuring Education," said: "Our society has undergone profound economic, demographic and social transformation — a transformation that impacts virtually every aspect of our individual and collective lives."

McCune says that education also must be "transformational" in nature; that is, education must focus on changing the attitudes, values and beliefs of the child to match the worldview of the radicals. Education is no longer about learning the knowledge and skills necessary for a free society.

Because our children are being indoctrinated into radical environmentalism, they do not learn the new information that contradicts the global warming fantasy. For example, over the past few years several ancient maps have been discovered that picture Antarctica as partially ice-free. One such map, drawn by well-known French map maker Oronteus Finæus in 1531 is pictured as follows:

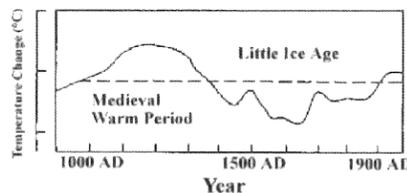
There is no serious question about the authenticity of this map. It pictures the globe from the perspective of the Antarctic South Pole, long before Antarctica was supposedly discovered. It also clearly shows South America, Southern Africa and Madagascar. The coastline of Antarctica is pictured as being ice-free with inlets, bays, rivers and mountain ranges. The map is extraordinarily accurate. In all likelihood, people were living on Antarctica at the time the source-maps for the Finæus map were drawn. (Two other recently discovered ancient maps also show all these features.)

What do such maps tell us? They demonstrate that at the time some of the source-maps were drawn, around 500 B.C., Antarctica was at least partially ice-free and people were sailing there and exploring the continent extensively. They were also making maps that were highly accurate. They were additionally exploring South America — long before the time of Columbus.

This is exciting stuff — the kind of information that makes education in world history absolutely fascinating. But our children will never learn any of this in school. Why not? Because it contradicts the global warming myth. When the Finæus source-maps were drawn, the earth was obviously much warmer than it is today. The earth was substantially warmer

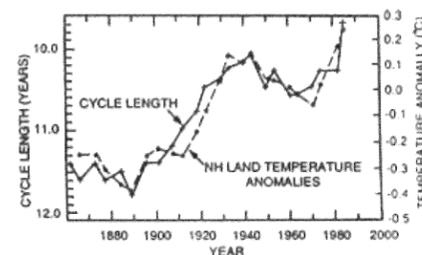
long before any fossil fuels were being used to any significant extent, long before people were releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This means that global temperature change results from something other than carbon dioxide.

The chart below reveals other important information our children will never learn in school. The chart, based on well-known information from the UN's panel on climate change, reveals that the Earth's climate was about 4 degrees Celsius warmer 1,000 years ago than it is today.



Once again, this warm period took place before we were burning fossil fuels. This warm period one thousand years ago was the time when the Vikings settled Greenland (which they called "Greenland" because it was green, at least close to the coast, not ice-covered as it is today.) During the same period, the Vikings sailed to North America, which they could accomplish in the warmer climate of that time.

If carbon dioxide is not the cause of global warming, then what is? The following chart, from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, reveals that sun spot activity is the real cause of global warming. Notice the close correlation between sun activity and global temperature. Sun activity is the primary reason the globe has experienced far warmer, and colder, periods in the past as compared to today.



As is obvious from the chart, global temperature variation results primarily from sun activity. This cause-effect relationship explains why global temperatures varied far more in the past, long before human beings burned fossil fuels, than in the past several hundred years. Once again, this is important information our children will never learn in school because it contradicts the global warming fraud. Our children are not being educated; they are being indoctrinated. Schools subject them to transformational education — propaganda intended to mold their attitudes, beliefs and values to match that of the radical left.

When will our nation wake up to the truth of transformational education? This is the real battle for freedom of our time. It is the battle for freedom of this generation. Millions of brave Americans have risked their lives, and given their lives, for our freedom. Why are we now willing to give that freedom away?

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.

Brandeis Threatens Professor; He Defends Free Speech

History professor Donald Hindley has taught at Brandeis University for almost 50 years. This year, several students complained to the school's administration about Hindley's use of the word "wetback." The word refers to Mexicans who entered the United States across the Rio Grande. Hindley used it in verbal quotation marks to refer to American citizens' negative attitude toward those immigrants during the time period studied in class. Even though he used the term in a historical context, three students accused Hindley of discrimination.

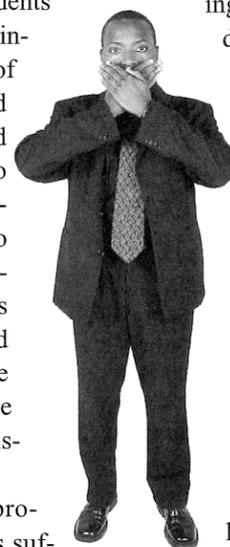
According to Brandeis provost Mary Kraus, the students suffered "significant emotional trauma" over the term "wetback." Kraus praised the students for the courage it took to "speak out against discrimination" — even though they made their complaints anonymously.

Professor Hindley first learned of the

complaints against him when he received two letters from the university accusing him of racial harassment and discrimination. The letters required Hindley to attend sensitivity training, and threatened to fire him. The administration also posted a monitor in Hindley's classroom to watch for further indiscretions.

Hindley took recourse to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a legal group that frequently defends students and professors when university administrators try to curtail their exercise of First Amendment rights. Hindley hired a lawyer to defend him against Brandeis's actions, and the university backed down.

Unfortunately, litigation over free speech restrictions on our nation's campuses has become commonplace, as universities attempt to silence speech that some find offensive or disagreeable. (*Boston Herald*, 1-27-08)



Police Confront Cell Phone Pornography at a PA High School

At Parkland High School in Pennsylvania, pornographic cell phone images of students quickly made the rounds among many other students whose phones could receive and send photos and videos. According to students, most who received the photos quickly forwarded them to all of their contacts. A few students, however, were dismayed to receive the photos and informed the school resource officer of what was going on.

The district attorney's office investigated the matter, and compiled a list of about 40 students known to have received the pictures and videos. The office wrote to those students' parents, explaining the situation and requesting consent to examine each student's phone and make sure the images were deleted.

"These images fall within the definition of 'child pornography' for the purposes of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code.

The mere possession of child pornography constitutes a felony of the third degree," warned the letter. "Any student who is found to be in possession of these images or videos after Jan. 29 will be prosecuted, as a juvenile, to the full extent of the law."

A state trooper examined students' cell phones at school the following week. Some Parkland students said it would be impossible for the school or the district attorney to contain the spread of the pictures and videos. "The school isn't going to get everybody because it is everybody," said one junior. "I don't know anybody who didn't get the pictures." (Associated Press, 1-25-08)



Sex Workers' Art Show Causes Uproar at Two Colleges

The College of William & Mary and Duke University were scenes of conflict over the Sex Workers' Art Show, an event featuring strippers and prostitutes who perform for the audience and share their experiences as sex workers.

The show aims to "dispel the myth that [strippers and prostitutes] are anything short of artists, innovators, and geniuses."

While the show's founder says the performance also attempts to humanize sex workers as normal people deserving "safety, dignity and respect," descriptions of the show make it sound prurient, degrading and, above all, dehumanizing. Its visit to William & Mary's campus this year cost \$2,200 in student activity fees. Some students and community members protested the event, while others defended it for its supposed artistic value or on the grounds of free speech.

William & Mary education professor John Foubert, who researches sexual violence against women, criticized the show. "I'm opposed to — and working strongly against — pornography and the industry. What I believe the Sex Workers' Art Show does is promote the porn industry, and it goes beyond a speech issue. . . . The issue here is an issue of public nudity," he said. Foubert agreed that in theory, a former sex worker telling his or her story on campus could be "a valuable learning experience for students and faculty." But, the professor pointed out, "you don't have to be naked to describe a past experience."

Shortly following the heated debate over the show, William & Mary's controversial president, Gene Nichol, announced his immediate resignation. The college's

Board of Visitors had told Nichol they would not renew his contract. Although the board cited more general leadership issues, Nichol blamed the public controversies over the Sex Workers' Art Show



and his removal of a cross displayed on the altar of the 400-year-old chapel on William & Mary's campus. In 2006, Nichol ordered the Wren Cross removed from display, saying that its presence in the chapel was divisive and unacceptable on the campus of a public university. After an emotional debate, the college returned the cross but now displays it behind glass except during Christian services.

The Sex Workers' Art Show also raised issues at Duke University, especially in light of the recent debacle at that school involving lacrosse players who had hired strippers for a team party. Three players were accused of raping one of the strippers, and then declared innocent of all charges a year later. A number of students and others objected to the use of university funds to bring strippers and other sex workers to campus. "I think the hypocrisy is extraordinary," said Kenneth Larrey, a member of Duke Students for an Ethical Duke.

"Inviting strippers does not appear to be a problem as long as the intent is not to titillate men, but to shock a mixed audience with vulgarity and disparage mainstream American values," commented Jay Schalin of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy. "In the latter case, the university is quite willing to pay, despite a regulation reintroduced into the Bulletin of Information and Regulations after the lacrosse case that explicitly states 'strippers may not be invited or

Education Schools Neglect Math, Obsess over Multiculturalism

Catherine Shock and Jay P. Greene's recent analysis of education school courses reinforces the NMAP's criticism of the current state of teacher training. At 71 top education schools, Shock and Greene computed a "multiculturalism-to-math ratio" by comparing the number of course titles and descriptions that include the words "multiculturalism," "diversity," and "inclusion," on the one hand, with the number that include the word "math" and its variants, on the other.

According to this "rough indicator of the relative importance of social goals to academic skills in ed schools," the nation's teacher training programs offer about 82% more courses in multiculturalism than in math. UCLA hosts the most imbalanced education program in the nation: 47 UCLA education course titles or

descriptions contain the word "multiculturalism" or "diversity," and only three contain the word "math."

24 schools actually do offer more classes in math than in multiculturalism, but only five offer twice as many.

"Because public schools are assured of ever-increasing funding, regardless of how they do in math, they can indulge their enthusiasm for multiculturalism, and prospective teachers can, too," Shock and Greene conclude.

The authors do not deny the importance of cultural awareness in schools of education or in public schools, but they call for a reconsideration of priorities. "Our students probably have great appreciation already for students from other cultures — who're cleaning their clocks in math skills, and will do so economically, too, if we don't wise up." (*City Journal*, Winter 2008)



Algebra (Cont. from page 2)

lished, in 1983, too few teachers left education schools with a solid understanding of math or the ability to teach it well. Already, too many teachers came from the bottom quarter of their graduating college and even high school classes. From the 1980s onward, more and more teachers left education school ill-prepared to teach math, and cherishing an antipathy toward teaching basic skills and toward teacher-directed instruction.

According to Stotsky, providing "math coaches" for teachers and spending money on professional development in math, two popular strategies to improve math instruction, are unsupported by research and most likely a waste of tax dollars. The NMAP instead recommends the development of more alternative routes to credential mathematically knowledgeable people to teach math in the public schools. "We are not going to get the teachers we need for math and science from traditional teacher preparation programs," said Stotsky. "But there are other ways to get mathematically or scientifically knowledgeable people. Sometimes they are mid-career changers; sometimes after majoring in math or science they have decided they want to teach. There must be district-based programs that give them a little bit of preparation and get them into the schools without going through a traditional preparation program."

All of the high-achieving nations in math focus heavily on basic arithmetic, especially in the early grades. "Mathematicians are asking for the restoration of the centrality of arithmetic, because particularly the study of fractions they see as

basic to learning algebra. . . . What has not been prominent in the curriculum is the teaching and learning of fractions, whether you're dealing with decimals, percentages, or other ways of teaching fractions," said Stotsky. The NMAP report devotes a section to fractions and calls for renewed attention to this important area of math.

Current elementary curricula pay far more attention to geometry and probability than the NMAP believes they should. Many focus heavily on patterns, which NMAP mathematicians say have little to do with learning math. Instead, children need to focus on basic arithmetic in the lower grades, so that they can succeed in algebra, and then learn geometry and probability later. The report also criticizes early calculator use and invented algorithms. It calls for math curricula to embrace a coherent progression of skills, rather than project-based learning or small-group work, neither of which research supports as math learning strategies.

The NMAP hopes that in response to the forthcoming report, Congress as well as state decision-makers will choose to approve funding only for elementary textbooks that stress basic arithmetic instead of patterns and data analysis. The report also recommends limiting funds to textbooks that "teach traditional algorithms as well as student understanding of them, and expect math facts to be learned with immediate recall," says Stotsky. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings says she is "very excited" to hear what the NMAP has to say.

paid to perform at events sponsored by individual students, residential living groups, or cohesive units."

Duke's vice president for student affairs, Larry Moneta, defended the administration's decision to allow the Sex

Workers' Art Show on campus. While the strippers at the lacrosse team party "served the purpose of personal gratification," said Moneta, the Sex Workers' Art Show "had educational value" and "raised issues for discussion."