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College Students, Too, Are Hit with 'Zero Tolerance'

As writer Glenn Garvin pointed out in an editorial in the *Miami Herald* (4-21-09), college students face their own version of extreme "zero tolerance" of weapons, when school officials take action against students who merely mention weapons or speak up for the right to bear arms.

At Lone Star College near Houston, Texas, administrators punished members of the Young Conservatives of Texas club for referring to firearms in fliers the club passed out to recruit new members. The fliers poked fun at gun-safety manuals — "No matter how responsible he seems, never give your gun to a monkey." Lone Star administrators seized the fliers and threatened to disband the club. When the students sought legal counsel, administrators told the Young Conservatives' lawyers that any "mention of firearms" causes "interference with the operation of the school or the rights of others" by bringing "fear and concern to students, faculty and staff."

Communications professor Paula Anderson of Central Connecticut State University reported to the police a student who chose the topic of concealed carry for a class presentation. Police brought the student in for questioning. Anderson defended her action in an interview with the school paper, calling the student a "perceived risk" and saying she had a "responsibility to protect the well-being of our students."

Shortly after the Virginia Tech school shooting of 2007, Troy Scheffler, a graduate student at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, wrote an email criticizing Hamline's prohibition on concealed weapons. Scheffler argued that if concealed carry had been permitted at Virginia Tech, someone could have stopped Cho Seung-Hui before he killed 27 students and five faculty members. Hamline administrators suspended Scheffler and ordered him to undergo a "mental health examination."

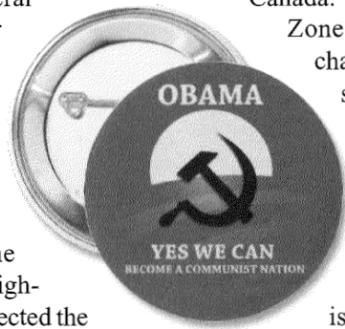
The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which stepped forward to defend Scheffler, wrote to the university, "a psychological evaluation, to be overseen by a Hamline administrator, is one of the most invasive and disturbing intrusions upon Scheffler's individual right to private conscience imaginable. Because Scheffler has shown no proclivity toward violence and has made no threatening comments, this psychological evaluation seeks to assess his political opinions."



Obama Moves Ahead on 'Promise Neighborhoods'

On top of \$115 billion for education allotted in the \$787 billion stimulus, Pres. Obama requested \$46.7 billion in discretionary funding for the federal Department of Education for fiscal year 2010. But how exactly will the department spend this money? For one thing, it plans to carry out Obama's vision for combining education with other social services through the creation of 20 "Promise Neighborhoods." The president directed the department to work with the White House's Domestic Policy Council and other agencies to draft plans to carry out this signature initiative.

So far, no one knows exactly how much the initiative will cost, but on the campaign trail Obama mentioned he expected to spend "a few billion dollars a year" on it, and to receive about an equivalent amount for the project from private businesses and philanthropies.



The "Promise Neighborhood" idea is based on Harlem's "Children's Zone," a project headed by urban planner Geoffrey Canada. The Harlem Children's Zone combines two public charter schools with social services and after-school programs. It serves 8,000 children and their families in a 97-block area of New York. "The philosophy behind the project is simple," said Obama in July of 2007. "If poverty is a disease that affects an entire community in the form of unemployment and violence, failing schools and broken homes, then we can't just treat those symptoms in isolation. We need to heal that entire community."

One of the Harlem Children's Zone's core programs is a parenting class for new moms, nicknamed "Baby College." In an interview with ABC News (4-25-09), mas-

termind Geoffrey Canada said the Children's Zone attracts parents to "Baby College" through "aggressive outreach to the entire community. We don't just limit it to poor families, although 85% of families who come are poor. We try and get everyone in the neighborhood." According to ABC News, Children's Zone programming also offers preschool, provides free tax assistance, and "teaches community organizing techniques."

In the recent ABC News interview, Canada warned that some of the proposed Promise Neighborhoods might fail, but said that Americans should not take that as a sign to stop creating more Promise Neighborhoods. "What I have argued is that all of these may not work," he said. "So within the 20 there may be some that don't work but it won't mean they don't work because the concept is not good. In some places, it will take hold. In other places, they may struggle."

(See *Promise Neighborhoods*, page 4)

'Story of Stuff' Teaches Anti-Capitalist View

"The Story of Stuff," a 20-minute movie on the evils of human consumption, has lit up not only the blogosphere and YouTube, but also classrooms at all grade levels and across the nation. According to the *New York Times*, the movie "has been embraced by teachers eager to supplement textbooks that lag behind scientific findings on climate change and pollution" (5-11-09). The movie has been viewed six million times on its website, www.storyofstuff.com, and millions of times on YouTube. Over 7,000 schools, churches, and others have ordered "The Story of Stuff" on DVD.

The movie's creator, Annie Leonard, is a former Greenpeace employee and a self-described "unapologetic activist" who is critical of corporations and the

military. "The Story of Stuff" portrays corporations as a bloated man in a top hat with a dollar sign on it.

Critics of "The Story of Stuff" say that it demonizes all human use of natural resources, and that it neglects balance in favor of an unabashedly negative take on capitalism. "We'll start with extraction," the movie says, "which is a fancy word for natural resource exploitation, which is a fancy word for trashing the planet. What this looks like is we chop down the trees, we blow up mountains to get the metals inside, we use up all the water and we wipe out the animals."

A parent in Missoula, Montana complained that presenting "The Story of

Stuff" without the balance of an alternative point of view violated the district's standards on political bias in the classroom.

Mark Zuber said the video was "very well done, very effective advocacy, but it was just that." He also noted "there was not one positive thing about capitalism in the whole thing." The school board took Zuber's point and voted 4-3 that teachers should present materials favorable to capitalism as well if they were going to screen "The Story of Stuff" for students.

Nevertheless, of the many students watching "The Story of Stuff" in school, very few will hear any caveats or problems with the movie presented or discussed.



Zero Tolerance: States 'Add a Little Common Sense'

Several states are reconsidering "zero-tolerance" policies, the draconian regulations affecting many public school children since the 1990s. Even in Colorado, where the 1999 Columbine school shooting catalyzed a huge increase in zero-tolerance legislation nationwide, legislators have been reconsidering the policies. "We tried to add a little common sense," said Colorado state Sen. Kevin Lundberg (R-15th District).

The legislation that Lundberg sponsored added a small exception to Colorado's zero-tolerance policy on weapons in schools. The policy now allows students to bring facsimile or prop weapons to school if they leave them in their cars.

Earlier this year, Colorado public school student Marie Morrow was ex-

pelled because there were three facsimile drill-team rifles in her car while parked on campus. After she had missed six days of class, a school hearing officer ruled she could return to school after all. Lundberg's legislation responded to that incident. "I wasn't trying to challenge zero-tolerance policies on dangerous weapons," said Lundberg. "I was trying to define what a dangerous weapon is." The bill passed unanimously in both houses, but lawmakers resisted efforts to further clarify the definition of a "dangerous weapon."

In Florida, students have been arrested for bringing a plastic butter knife

to school, throwing an eraser, and drawing a picture of a gun. The eleven-year-old who allegedly brought a plastic butter knife to school was handcuffed, taken to jail, and charged with a third-degree felony. Legislation recently passed unanimously by the Florida Senate could change all that by prohibiting schools from calling the police for nonviolent misdemeanors. "Throw an eraser and they want to call it throwing a deadly missile, which is a felony," said state Sen. Stephen

Wise (R-Jacksonville), the senate sponsor of the legislation, which has yet to clear the state house. "When you get into the



Marie Morrow

(See *Zero Tolerance*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

President Obama's \$3.55 trillion budget proposal cut funding for abstinence education. Since the late 1990s, schools nationwide have received about \$1.3 billion for programs that teach teens that the expected standard for their sexual behavior is abstinence until marriage. Obama's budget shifts funds to programs that teach contraceptive methods instead. (Reuters.com, 5-7-09)

A federal judge in Jacksonville, Florida has ordered the St. Johns County School Board not to allow children to learn the song "In God We Still Trust" at school. Historically, it has not been seen as a violation of the Establishment Clause for public school choirs to sing religious songs. Lawyers, however, argued that teaching the song to 3rd graders constituted "religious instruction," and are seeking damages from the board. (TCPalm.com, 3-25-09)

In Massachusetts this year, 72% of those who took the state's elementary school teacher licensing exam failed the math section. The test measured teachers' skills in elementary school math topics including geometry, statistics, and probability. (WPRI.com, 5-19-09)

Father John Jenkins, President of the University of Notre Dame, sits on the board of directors of an organization that promotes contraception and abortion in Africa. The organization, Millennium Promise, distributes birth control and promotes the establishment of "abortion services" in small villages throughout Africa. Jenkins and Notre Dame are particularly involved in the Millennium Villages Project in Uganda.

Uganda has had signature success in reducing levels of HIV through domestic programs emphasizing abstinence and monogamy. Millennium Promise, however, does not emphasize abstinence or monogamy, and Ugandan leaders in the fight against AIDS have publicly criticized large Western aid organizations for their contraceptives-based approach.

News of Fr. Jenkins's involvement drew national attention amid the controversy over the Catholic university's honoring of pro-abortion President Barack Obama. (Lifesitenews.com, 5-13-09)

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Another Marxist History Text

In April, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez handed to American President Barack Obama an anti-American and anti-capitalist book written in 1971: *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, by Eduardo Galeano. Galeano blames Europe and the United States for political corruption and poor economies in Latin America.

As Fox News reported (4-24-09), American curiosity about Chávez's reading taste sent *Open Veins* skyrocketing up Amazon.com's bestseller list, from the 54,295th most-popular book to the second-best seller.



Barack Obama — Hugo Chávez

Despite its original low ranking, there is one arena in which *Open Veins* has always held its appeal: the American college campus. Fox News spoke with numerous professors of Latin-American history who praised the book and said they have frequently assigned it. Some of the professors said they warn students the book lacks balance, but others only praised *Open Veins* for its "rare insights" into the evils of imperialism.

Prof. Michael Snodgrass of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) said that *Open Veins* has been extraordinarily influential. "Beyond the literate Latin Americans who actually read the book, millions of students in the entire region learned their own history from

teachers who drew their lesson plans directly from its pages," he said. Snodgrass recommended that if Obama wants to return the favor to Chávez, he should give him *A People's History of the United States* (See "Howard Zinn's Marxist History Text," *Education Reporter*, April 2009).

In the *Wall Street Journal* (4-27-09), Mary Anastasia O'Grady noted that

Open Veins was singled out in a 1996 bestseller, written from a free-market perspective, as the "Perfect Latin-American Idiot's Bible." In that book, *The Manual of the Perfect Latin-American Idiot*, three Latin-American journalists dismantled populist, anticapitalist assumptions taken for granted for decades. The authors devoted an entire chapter to the important role of *Open Veins* in the mentality they critiqued.

Michael Reid, the *Economist's* Americas editor, wrote in 2007 that the "history" presented in *Open Veins* is "that of the propagandist, a potent mix of selective truths, exaggeration and falsehood, caricature and conspiracy theory." "Unwittingly," concludes O'Grady, "Mr. Chávez's gag gift served another purpose. If there has been any doubt about how he has run his oil-rich country into the ground during a decade of booming petroleum prices, the mystery is now solved. Mr. Galeano's book is Mr. Chávez's bible."

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Californians Argue Over Exit Exam

Standards-oriented administrators and state legislators fought an uphill battle to institute an exit exam as a requirement for graduation from California high schools. Supt. of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, who ran on a platform of reform, led the charge. According to O'Connell, the exam "plays an important role in our work to ensure that a high school diploma has meaning."

The exam has been required for graduation since 2007, but the battle goes on, especially as a recent report from researchers at Stanford University and UC Davis urged the Department of Education to scrap the test. The report looked at data from students who took the test in four large California school districts. According to researchers, the test caused a disproportionate decline in the numbers of minority and female students who were able to graduate. Researchers blamed a phenomenon they called "stereotype threat" — a theory in social psychology which posits that negative stereotypes can

actually create the low achievement they predict.

The study concluded that the exam "had no positive effect on student achievement." State Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) said the study "reinforces concerns that many of us have had about the exit exam from its inception."

Deb Sigman, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, took issue with the study's conclusions, saying, "I'm not ready to agree with that at all." Sigman pointed out that the researchers "[didn't] look at grades, they [didn't] look at classroom observation or interviews with children."

The test sets an extremely low bar for high school graduation: students can take it multiple times beginning in 10th grade, and they need only a 60% on the English section to pass it, and a 55% on the math section. The English section is aligned to California's 10th-grade standards, and the math section is aligned to the state's 8th-grade standards. (*Los Angeles Times*, 4-22-09)

Book of the Month



The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement, by Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, Free Press, 2009, 339 pp., \$26.00

What do uncommon sexual relationships, celebrity obsession, attention-seeking school shootings, the rise of incivility, skyrocketing consumer debt, and people making a public spectacle of themselves on YouTube have in common? According to psychiatrists Twenge and Campbell, each of these cultural phenomena is caused at least in part by a rise in narcissism that has reached the level of an epidemic.

Narcissists tend to believe that they are more important than others and are entitled to special privileges. They focus excessively on appearance, social status, and acquiring possessions. They are unlikely to have close relationships, but instead relate on a shallow level with many acquaintances. Modern social networking sites, which tend to encourage shallow interactions and nominal "friendships," are perfectly compatible with this narcissistic relationship style.

Twenge and Campbell show that reality TV, YouTube, advertising, and other aspects of modern culture promote the further spread of narcissism. Because narcissists enjoy the spotlight, they are overrepresented in reality TV and other media, and this promotes a shift in cultural values toward general acceptance of narcissism.

The epidemic is not just a media-inspired trend. The authors report on preschool classrooms where children sing "I am special, I am special, look at me." In elementary school, these children go on to experience "character" curricula that focus on loving oneself instead of loving others.

Increasingly permissive parenting styles mean that many children never learn humility or self-discipline. Grade inflation means that almost everyone is an A-student. Rising generations of young adults, who have always received trophies just for showing up, are changing the American workplace and debilitating the American work ethic. Some employers now hire "praise consultants" to help them learn to praise their young employees when they arrive on time, rather than criticizing them for the days they are late or don't show up. "One praise consultant throws several pounds of confetti a week," the authors report.

The book contains several offensive passages in which the authors report, with more detail than was necessary, on the crassness of a degraded culture. These passages aside, *The Narcissism Epidemic* is a fascinating cultural study. Any parent or educator who reads it will be motivated to understand narcissism better, and to fight against this epidemic and its many ill effects.

FOCUS: Hispanic Triumphalism and Globalism Are Found in Many Spanish Textbooks

by Allan Wall

My experience living in Mexico was a real eye-opener for me personally. It had a profound influence on my thinking on the National Question — as I have recounted in my article, “The Education of a Gringo in Mexico.”

And now that I’ve moved back to the U.S.A., to teach Spanish in the American public school system, my education is continuing. I’ve discovered some interesting details about Spanish-language textbooks. If your sons or daughters are studying Spanish in high school or junior high, I recommend you keep up with the curriculum.

Studying a foreign language is a valuable experience. It would be good if more Americans studied foreign languages. It’s advantageous that some Americans study Spanish as a foreign language. That, however, is distinct from the idea being promoted in the U.S. nowadays — that learning Spanish is some sort of obligatory civic duty incumbent upon Americans living in their own land. Even in “Red State America,” a region supposedly filled with nativist xenophobes, I constantly hear statements like “Nowadays it’s necessary to learn Spanish.”

What we’re moving toward is Spanish becoming a *de facto* official language of the United States, eventually to achieve parity with and even superiority over English.

Impossible? Well, a few decades ago, who’d have predicted that both Democrats and Republicans would be having presidential debates in Spanish?

What are students studying when they learn Spanish? Certainly, they have to learn vocabulary and verb conjugations, and practice speaking and reading. You can find all this basic material in Spanish textbooks used in public schools. But what kinds of cultural/political agendas are also being promoted?

Foreign language textbooks contain dialogues featuring young people in foreign countries. Spanish-language textbooks traditionally have dialogues between kids in Spain, Mexico or some other Spanish-speaking country. They still do. But now Spanish textbooks also include dialogues of young people speaking Spanish in Texas, Florida and California.

Since there are so many countries in which Spanish is spoken, there are lists of Spanish-speaking countries. They now regularly include the U.S. as another Spanish-speaking country. Sometimes the U.S. Southwest is colored differently than the rest of the United States on maps, indicating it is a Spanish-speaking region.

Another feature found in Spanish textbooks is the obligatory article at the beginning, explaining to students why they should study Spanish. In *¡Ven Conmigo!* Level 1 (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2003), on page 2, one of the reasons listed is: “For Career Opportunities”: “Bilingual employees are always in demand in business, social work, health care, education, journalism, and many other fields. Learn-

ing Spanish will help you find a more interesting, better-paying job.”

In the section entitled “To Expand Your Horizons,” *¡Ven Conmigo!* says that “Spanish-language movies, books, videos, magazines, TV shows, and music are all around you.”

¡Avancemos! Dos, a textbook from a rival company (McDougal Littell, 2007), has a section on page xxx entitled “Why Study Spanish?” explaining: “Inside the United States, Spanish is by far the most widely spoken language after English. There are currently about 30 million Spanish-speakers in the U.S. When you start to look and listen for it, you will quickly realize that Spanish is all around you — on the television, on the radio, and in magazines and newspapers.”

This text also touts career opportunities: “If you speak Spanish fluently, you can work for international and multinational companies anywhere in the Spanish-speaking world. You can create a career working as a translator, an interpreter, or a teacher of Spanish. And because the number of Spanish-speakers in the U.S. is growing so rapidly, being able to communicate in Spanish is becoming important in almost every career.”

Spanish textbooks also play up the Spanish colonial territory that later came to be part of the United States. *¡Ven Conmigo!* Level One declares on page 3 that “Spanish language and culture are important parts of our national history. As you begin your study of Spanish, you should be aware that . . .

- the Spanish were among the first European explorers in what is today the U.S.
- the first European settlement in the United States was founded by the Spanish in 1565 at St. Augustine, Florida.
- parts of the U.S. once belonged to Mexico.”

On page 53 of *¡Aventura!* 2 (James F. Funston and Alejandro Vargas Bonilla, EMC Publishing, 2009), the impressionable student reads, “Look at a map and see the lakes, rivers, cities, mountains and other geographic features with names in Spanish. For example, the states of Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Montana, Nevada and New Mexico have names of Spanish origin. Can you see this influence in your community or in your state?”

There is nothing wrong with students learning that certain geographical features have Spanish etymologies. But it’s not just the etymology; it’s the context in which it’s presented. American students ought to understand the historical context of how the U.S. acquired the Southwest, so as not to fall prey to *reconquista* propaganda.

For example, Page 68 of *¡Aventura!* 2 contains a *Lectura Cultural* (“Cultural Reading”) entitled “*Estados Unidos: Un País Latino*” (“The United States: A Latino Country”). This informs students that “Spanish was the first European language spoken in the territory which is now the United States. That’s why we have cities

with names like Los Angeles and Las Cruces (and not The Angels or The Crosses). Today, the Latino community, with a population of more than 40 million, is the largest ethnic group in the United States.”

Did you catch that last part? Latinos constitute “the largest ethnic group in the United States”! So the white English-speaking majority, which founded this country and still constitutes the majority, is not an ethnic group? Well, not according to this textbook.

But there’s more:

“The impact that the Latinos have in the culture of the United States is evident in daily life. Waking up, you turn on the radio and listen to Jennifer López or Enrique Iglesias. Showering, you use the shampoo of Samy, Latin stylist of the stars. Later, you have an egg burrito for breakfast. At lunchtime, you order salsa for your hamburger. (In 1992, salsa replaced catsup as the number one condiment in the United States). In the afternoon, when you turn on the television, you see Soledad O’Brien give the news. Shakira is on one commercial and Congressman Reyes on another. Later, a baseball game which player Alex Rodriguez starts. Before going to bed, you speak by telephone with your friend José. (In 1988, José replaced Michael as the most popular name for boys in Texas and California.) Every day, the United States becomes more Latino.”

“Every day, the United States becomes more Latino.” Sounds a lot like Jorge Ramos-type triumphalism, does it not?

What’s more, the *¡Aventura!* 2 chapter is followed by questions including the following:

- How do you think that the culture of the United States will change during the next fifty years with the growth of the Latino population?
- Why do you think it is important to learn Spanish?
- How might you use Spanish as a volunteer in your community?

(How about volunteering to help the Border Patrol? Probably not what they had in mind!)

On page 81, the textbook contains a little selection entitled “*Minoría Mayoritaria*”:

An historic date for the Hispanics of the United States was the year 2003. In that year the results of the last census made it official that the Latinos of the United States had become the majority minority, passing the Afro-Americans for the first time in the history of the country. How do you imagine this significant growth of the population will affect the future of the Hispanics?

The Spanish language is the second language of the United

States. . . . Someday, these increases of the Hispanic population are going to be seen reflected in politics and the economy.

Not only is the Hispanicization of the United States pushed relentlessly, but so is globalism as well. Thus *¡Ven Conmigo!* Level 1 has a cultural note on page 280 about national currencies. Harmless information, right? Just telling the kids what the currencies of various Spanish-speaking countries are?

Yes, until it gets to Spain, where the text celebrates the replacement of the peseta with the euro:

During the 1980s, the countries of the European Union, including Spain, [but not including the U.K., which apparently doesn’t matter] made a commitment to use a single currency: the euro. . . . The euro is intended to strengthen Europe economically. It also makes it easier for countries around the world to do business with the European Union. Can you think of some ways it might affect travel, tourism, and banking if several countries in the Western Hemisphere decided to use a common currency? What might such a currency be called?

In that textbook’s sequel, *¡Ven Conmigo!* 2 (copyright 2003) there is an “*Encuentro Cultural*” on page 13 entitled “*¿Qué es el Euro?*” (What is the Euro?). Discussion questions include: “What are some of the advantages of many countries using the same currency? Are there some disadvantages as well? How are United States businesses affected by the euro?”

This at least mentions disadvantages as a possibility, though the text doesn’t present any. And then it asks: “Would it be a good idea for the United States to share a common currency with Canada and Mexico? Why or why not?” The additional information for teachers in the annotated teachers’ edition doesn’t present anything negative about the European Union or a North American common currency.

Individual teachers may or may not teach or emphasize these textbook celebrations of Hispanic cultural conquest and globalism. But that is what is in the textbooks — courtesy of the American taxpayer.

As parents of public school students, we have to be on our guard — constantly. We have to evaluate what our kids are being taught, what their textbooks say, and what agendas their teachers are promoting. That applies to academics, politics, moral issues, and the National Question. As parents, we can’t take anything for granted when it comes to the education of our children.

And if your kids are taking Spanish, encourage them to do their best — but check out their textbooks as well!

American citizen Allan Wall recently moved back to the U.S.A. after many years residing in Mexico. In 2005, he served a tour of duty in Iraq with the Texas Army National Guard. This article first appeared at www.VDARE.com.

463 School Districts Have Put Their Check Registers Online

463 public school districts in 31 states have put their checkbook registers online, in an effort to become more transparent with and directly accountable to taxpayers.

As of October 2006, just a handful of school districts in five states had their checks online. Public education commentator Peyton Wolcott documents this growing trend on her website (www.peytonwolcott.com), and urges more school districts to join the list. Wolcott points out that if the trend from 2006

Check #	Date	Amount	Payee	Account	Balance
1001	10/1/06	100.00	State of TX	1001	100.00
1002	10/2/06	200.00	State of TX	1002	300.00
1003	10/3/06	150.00	State of TX	1003	150.00
1004	10/4/06	50.00	State of TX	1004	100.00
1005	10/5/06	100.00	State of TX	1005	0.00

to 2009 continued at the same rate, all 15,000 public school districts in the nation would have their check registers online by 2014.

“Corruption, fraud, and waste are being used as excuses for nationalization by no less than the former head of IBM, in the *Wall Street Journal*,” (12-1-08) notes Wolcott. “It’s clear that for our schools to remain strong, free, and locally run, they are going to have to learn to do a better job of teaching our students for less money, using resources we already have.”

Promise Neighborhoods (Continued from page 1)

Similar rhetoric in the U.K.

In the United Kingdom, steps combining education and social services are still controversial, though the U.K. is much farther along this road than the U.S. In 2007, the U.K. created the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to replace the Department for Education and Skills. DCSF officials use exactly the same rhetoric as American proponents of Promise Neighborhoods and similar ideas. “We make no apologies for the fact that the DCSF has broadened Government’s focus beyond the school gates,” said a department official recently, continuing:

Common sense and every teacher in every classroom tell us what happens outside school hours and parents’ involvement in children’s education are both vital to their progress. By strengthening family support during children’s formative early years, getting parents more involved in their child’s learning and making sure young people have more exciting things to do outside school, we hope to make this country the best place in the world to grow up.

Not everyone agrees with how the British government is going about this. Steve Patriarca, a former school head who worked closely with Government to convert a high-profile private school to a state-funded school under the new department, recently declared that “the Department for

Children, Schools and Families lives up to its Orwellian title.” According to Patriarca, the DCSF’s various responsibilities are in conflict with each other, and the new department is a cumbersome hybrid which fulfills none of its roles very well.

It is politicized in a way which seems to find achievement embarrassing. It is preoccupied with the less able and the social misfit — which would be fine if it actually achieved anything in dealing with such children. It doesn’t because it panders to them — it prioritizes their needs over the needs of the vast majority.

According to Patriarca, the school system under the new department has treated disruptive and low-achieving students to generous helpings of “indulgence and sentimentality,” instead of firm discipline, which Patriarca believes would encourage excellence. “The more disruptive the child is, the more attention it receives and the more benefits,” he charged. Schools such as the one Patriarca headed until last year, that have gone from private to state-run, have lost all independence and are now controlled by ill-informed bureaucrats. The *Telegraph* said that Patriarca’s comments would “come as a huge embarrassment to Government.” (*London Telegraph*, 3-12-09)



Homeschoolers in Parts of Europe Face Heavy Restrictions

The Swiss canton of Zurich recently outlawed homeschooling, except by parents who are registered teachers.

Before this new restriction passed, Zurich allowed families to homeschool their children as long as they submitted to inspection by local authorities twice a year.

Zurich now becomes one of several Swiss cantons that severely restrict homeschooling. Two cantons outlaw home education entirely.

Professor George Stöckli of the University of Zurich’s Education Institute applauded the new restrictions, and helped to explain the logic behind them.

“Children from early on have an urge to separate themselves from their parents. One should not hinder them in this,” he said. “The family alone is not enough to satisfy the social needs of the children.”

At least eight families in the canton have announced they will defy this ominous intrusion of the government into both their homes and their decisions about how best to meet their own children’s social needs. These families face fines of up to 5,000 francs (\$4,100 USD), as well as possible citations for disobedience of official orders.

In 2002, Zurich considered a motion to require both homeschooling parents and private schools to teach “the same worldview” as that which is taught in the public schools.

The motion would also have required teachers in those settings to be certified by the state and evaluated by the canton’s education board. That motion failed, but the new restriction is a move in the same direction.

European families who wish to homeschool meet a broad range of re-

sponses from regional and national governments.

Germany is the only European nation that outlaws homeschooling entirely. The law against homeschooling is one of a very few made under the Third Reich that still remain on the books.

Several German families who have resisted the ban on homeschooling have suffered serious consequences. The Brause family, of Zittau, Ger-

many, currently seeks the restoration of full child custody after appearing in court to answer a charge of child neglect because of homeschooling.

The criminal charges were dropped, but a family court will now consider the custody question. Other parents have faced brief jail terms or large fines as a result of their attempts to homeschool their children.

Uwe and Hannelore Romeike, of Bissingen, Germany, made homeschooling history as the first family to seek political asylum in the United States over Germany’s ban on homeschooling.

Officials dragged three of the Romeikes’ children to school over their parents’ protests in 2006, while the children were crying to be left at home. The Romeikes and their six children settled in eastern Tennessee in 2008, where they are homeschooling their children and awaiting the result of their petition for asylum.

Fritz and Marianna Konrad attempted to cite the European Convention on Human Rights in a complaint against the homeschooling ban in 2003.

That convention states: “No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.”

In response to the Konrads’ arguments, a German court declared that schools represent society, and that “it was in the children’s interest to become part of that society.” According to the court’s ruling, “the parents’ right to education did not go as far as to deprive their children of that experience.”

Germany’s consul general Wolfgang Drautz declared that the German government “has a legitimate interest in countering the rise of parallel societies that are based on religion.”

Of one situation in which a homeschooling family was in conflict with the government, Drautz wrote that “the education authority is in conversation with the affected family in order to look for possibilities to bring the religious convictions of the family into line with the unalterable school attendance requirement.”



Hannelore Romeike works with daughter Damaris at their new home in Tennessee.

Zero Tolerance (Continued from page 1)

juvenile justice system everybody thinks your sins are forgiven when you turn 18, and I will assure you that doesn’t happen. It’s a blemish on your record.”

Wise’s bill also attempts to “define and distinguish petty acts of misconduct as opposed to offenses that pose serious threats to school safety,” and requires Florida schools that still allow spanking to bring their corporal punishment policies under public review every three years at a public meeting.

Texas, Rhode Island, and Utah have also attempted to improve their zero-tolerance laws in the past few years. Texas recently passed a bill allowing school officials to consider “mitigating factors” before they punish students under zero-tolerance policies.

Texas’s previous zero-tolerance hall

of shame includes the case of 13-year-old Christina Lough, a Houston honor student who was punished in 2003 for bringing a small cutting implement with a two-inch blade to school. Christina’s mother, Sumi Lough, grew up in Korea, where this implement is the standard one that students use to sharpen their pencils, and Mrs. Lough gave it to her daughter for that purpose. School officials forced Christina to attend a special disciplinary school for seven days, and removed her as president of the student council and honor society. The school district’s attorney, Christopher B. Gilbert, explained the district’s rationale: “If we vary from the rules, that’s when the rules fall apart.”

In 2007, Rhode Island passed a bill allowing discretion to school officials in deciding how to punish students who

bring weapons to school. Utah made an exception to its zero-tolerance policy on drugs to allow asthmatic students to bring their inhalers with them to school.

Although these actions in states certainly indicate a trend away from zero tolerance, it is unclear whether school districts, which make and enforce their own zero-tolerance policies, will follow the trend. Fred Hink, co-director of Texas Zero Tolerance, said it is very possible that schools will continue to enforce zero-tolerance policies even if or when their state legislatures change state law to allow greater discretion and flexibility. “The prevailing wind among school administrators is that ‘We don’t want to have to think about it. It’s just not feasible to take these things into consideration,’” said Hink. “It’s extremely frustrating.” (*Washington Times*, 4-21-09)