

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 288

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

JANUARY 2010

University of Minnesota Plans to Re-Educate Teachers

A civil liberties organization and other critics are denouncing the recommendations of the Race, Culture, Class and Gender Task Group at the University of Minnesota flagship Twin Cities campus for its proposal that race, class and gender form the “overarching framework” of all



teacher education coursework. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) dispatched a letter to the University President Robert Bruininks in November urging the university’s College of Education and Human Development to “change course.” FIRE director Adam Kissel warned that if the task group achieved its stated goals, “the result will be political and ideological screening of applicants, remedial re-education for those with the ‘wrong’ views and values, and withholding of degrees from those upon whom the university’s political reeducation efforts proved ineffective.” He wrote that, “These intentions violate the freedom of conscience of the university’s students. As a public university bound by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the university is both legally and morally obligated to uphold this fundamental right.”

The task group is one of seven formed as part of the University’s Teacher Education Redesign Initiative. The initiative is “premised, in part, on the conviction that Minnesota teachers’ lack of ‘cultural competence’ contributes to the poor academic performance of the state’s minority students,” according to *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* columnist Katherine Kersten. She said in her 11-21-09 column that the proposed

plan would require teachers to “embrace — and be prepared to teach [Minnesota] kids — the task force’s own vision of America as an oppressive hell-hole: racist, sexist and homophobic.”

Jean Quam, dean of the university’s College of Education and Human Development, responded to Kersten with her own piece in the *Star-Tribune*. “Kersten’s primary concern is that the initiative addresses the reality of how issues of race, class, culture and gender play out in classrooms and affect student achievement. Her position is that discussion of these issues equates to indoctrination. Our belief is that acknowledging these issues

is essential to teacher and student success and that ignoring them will not make them go away,” wrote Quam.

According to the final report submitted by the Race, Culture, Class and Gender task force in July 2009 (later amended), “Teachers first have to discover their own privilege, oppression, or marginalization, and [be] able to describe their cultural identity,” in order to effectively teach a diverse student population. Furthermore, teachers must explain how “white privilege, hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and internalized oppression” have impacted their thinking, and also “create and fight for social justice, even if it’s just in their classroom.” The report demands that future educators be prepared to instruct students on the “myth of meritocracy” in the United

States, the “history of demands for assimilation to white, middle-class, Christian meanings and values,” and the “history of white racism with special focus on current colorblind ideology.”

FIRE director Kissler maintained that while some teachers might want to work for “social and cultural transformation” in their classrooms, “Some might just want to teach math.”

The task force document also addresses potential obstacles to achieving its stated goals and offers methods to overcome these obstacles. “What,” the report asks, “if students fail to meet outcomes for lack of skill or motivation?” Then the university must “develop clear steps and procedures for working with non-performing students, including a remediation (See *University of Minnesota*, page 4)

Researchers Say CDC Sex Ed Conclusions May Mislead Policymakers

Two external consultants have issued a dissenting opinion on a recently released CDC report on sex education because they believe its conclusions don’t match key study findings. The CDC report — Group-based Interventions to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs — reviewed 83 studies of U.S. sex education programs, and recommended comprehensive sex education (CSE) programs as generally effective in both community and school settings.

Irene Ericksen and Danielle Ruedt, two members of the study’s External Partners panel, contend that CSE programs in school settings lacked demonstrable evidence of effectiveness on key outcomes of teen condom use, pregnancy

prevention, and the spread of STDs. “The effectiveness of school-based programs is crucial since the school classroom is where most teens receive sex education,” said Ruedt, the Public Health Programs Coordinator for the Georgia Governor’s Office of Children and Families. “Yet the report’s conclusion that comprehensive sex education programs are generally effective in school settings is contradicted by some of the data upon which the report is based.”

Indeed, asserted Ericksen and Ruedt in their minority report, “a sizable percentage of CRR programs did not work” on stated outcomes of sexual activity, condom use, and STDs, “especially for school-based programs, which are the fo-



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
cus of the national policy debate about sex education.”

The problem is that the study “suffered from a fundamental research error” in that it lumped together “widely divergent types” of sex ed programs into a single analysis, and then drew broad conclusions from the conflated types of programs, said Ericksen, a research analyst

(See *CDC Sex Ed Conclusions* page 4)

Safe Schools Czar’s GLSEN Reading List Denounced as ‘Pornographic’

***Please be advised that this article contains quotes that include explicit sexual terms and imagery.

Obama adviser Kevin Jennings is under fire again after it was publicized that the organization he founded and headed until 2008 recommends sexually explicit books for 7th-12th graders. Jennings has previously come under harsh criticism by more than 50 House Republicans who called for his removal as head of the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools last year.

The lawmakers questioned his suitability for the post because of Jennings’ prior drug use and because of what Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) characterized as Jennings’ “integral role in promoting homosexuality and pushing a pro-homosexual agenda in America’s schools” (see article in the November 2009 issue of *Education Reporter*).

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), founded by Jennings in 1990, works to prevent harassment and create a climate of positive ac-

ceptance for gay, bisexual and transgender youth in schools. The group seeks to accomplish its mission by encouraging the formation of Gay Student Alliances, influencing public policy, organizing pro-gay school events, and providing educational resources for sympathetic teachers and students.

A “cornerstone” of the organization’s educational effort, according to its website, is the promotion of gay-friendly books for all ages. The GLSEN BookLink identifies recommended resources for teachers that include the organization’s own published works as well as “other pre-screened videos and publications related to GLSEN’s mission.” A similar list of books and films is provided in the student section of the website for youth who want to purchase and read the books on their own.

Critics say that many of the books recommended for 7th-12th graders are inappropriately explicit. Scott Baker and his

reporting team at Breitbart-TV.com randomly chose and examined eleven of the more than 100 books on the BookLink list. In their opinion, “the books seemed to have less to do with promoting tolerance than with an unabashed attempt to indoctrinate students into a hypersexualized worldview.”

Baker reported that “Book after book after book contained stories and anecdotes that weren’t merely X-rated and pornographic, but which featured explicit descriptions of sex acts between preschoolers; stories that seemed to promote and recommend child-adult sexual relationships; stories of public masturbation, anal sex in restrooms, affairs between stu-

dents and teachers, five-year-olds playing sex games, semen flying through the air.

One memoir even praised becoming a prostitute as a way to increase one’s self-esteem.”

Mindful that readers might conclude that Baker and crew exaggerated or took material out of context in attempt to sensationalize it, they digitally scanned and

posted the relevant pages from each book. They also made exact transcriptions of the objectionable passages so readers could decide for themselves.

One such passage is from a book titled *Reflections of a Rock Lobster: A Story About Growing up Gay*, by Aaron Fricke. In it the author describes his “busy homosexual childhood. . . . By first grade

(See *Safe Schools Czar* page 4)



Kevin Jennings

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Children covered by Medicaid are four times more likely to get antipsychotic drugs as children whose parents have private insurance, and are more likely to receive the drugs for less severe conditions, including ADHD and conduct disorders. The powerful drugs have been linked with serious side effects, including extreme weight gain and metabolic changes resulting in long-term health problems. (*New York Times*, 12-12-09)

A NJ 3rd-grader cried when her teacher told her to put away her Bible during quiet reading time. The principal of Madison Park Elementary School later apologized, saying the teacher made a mistake, and that school policy permits reading any religious book during quiet reading time. (*myfoxny.com*, 12-15-09)

A federal study reports a decade-long drop in teen marijuana use has ended. About 14.3% of the 8th, 10th and 12th-graders surveyed said they smoked pot during the past year, up slightly from 12.9% in 2007. Researchers also found that fewer teens believe the occasional use of pot and other drugs is dangerous, and cited the national debate over the medical use of marijuana as one reason for students' changing attitudes. "When the perception of the danger goes down, in the following years you see an increase in use," said National Institute on Drug Abuse Director Nora Volkow. (*Los Angeles Times*, 12-15-09)

New York city parents are paying companies like Bright Kids NYC upwards of \$145 a session to prepare their 3- and 4-year-olds for admissions tests for public school gifted and talented kindergarten programs. The recession has made private schools less affordable for parents concerned about the quality of regular public education. "It's quite pricey, but compared to private school, which averages about \$20,000 for kindergarten, the price is right," said parent Melisa Kehlmann. "I just want the opportunity to have a choice." (*New York Times*, 11-21-09)

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Kim Andrews. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

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School Christmas Celebrations Become Lessons in Inclusiveness

Walsh Elementary in Waterbury, Connecticut had a "winter celebration" last month, but no religious or even secular symbols such as Santa Claus or Christmas trees were permitted. Principal Erik Brown banned Christmas parties in classrooms as well as many decorations upon his arrival at the school five years ago, because he didn't want to offend some students and force them to leave during the celebrations.

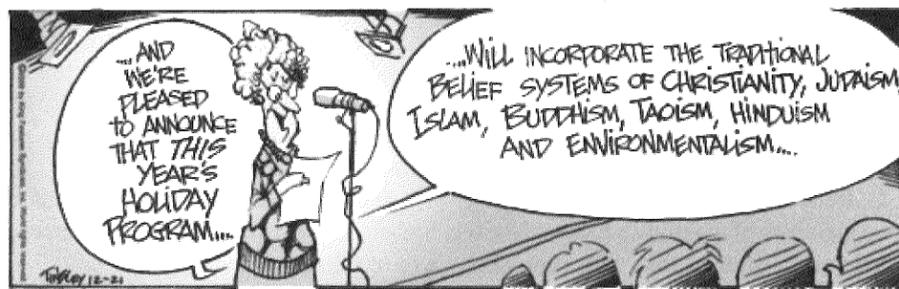
"This is not a church. It's a school and it's a public school. I have to do things that include every child. So what we do is celebrate winter," said Brown. The school did give presents to its students and allowed Christmas carols, along with Hanukkah songs and Kwanzaa songs. (*Waterbury Republican-American*, 12-3-09)

Lantern Road Elementary in Fishers, Indiana had a holiday show that aimed to teach inclusiveness through its second-grade program, according to principal Danielle Thompson. The show included segments about Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan, Las Posadas and Kwanzaa. School officials did take out a line that included "Allah is God" after American Family Association publicized the matter, prompting about 30 people to call the school with concerns. Thompson said that the change was made because no other deities were specifically named in the program. (*IndyStar.com*, 12-12-09)

A recent federal appeals court deci-

sion upholding a New Jersey school district's restrictions on the performance of holiday religious music also cited inclusiveness as a factor. Parent Michael Stratechuk argued that the South Orange-Maplewood district policy is hostile to religion and infringes upon his children's right to learn about religious music. The district encourages secular holiday songs such as "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer" and "Winter Wonderland," while precluding songs like "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night." Stratechuk believes that because the school's song exclusion policy is based only on religion, it violates the First Amendment requirement that the government be neutral towards religion. The 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia disagreed, and ruled that allowing only secular carols did not demonstrate hostility towards religion. "Certainly, those of us who were educated in the public schools remember holiday celebrations replete with Christmas carols, and possibly even Chanukah songs, to which no objection had been raised," states the opinion by U.S. Circuit Judge Dolores K. Sloviter. "Since then, the governing principles have been examined and defined with more particularity. Many decisions about how to best create an inclusive environment in public schools, such as those at issue here, are left to the sound discretion of the school authorities." (*blogs.edweek.org*, 11-24-09)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Will Cursive Writing Disappear?

When West Virginia parent Kelli Davis saw her eighth-grade daughter's childlike signature on a form the child had brought home from school, she was dismayed. "I just assumed she knew how to do it, but I have a piece of paper with her signature on it and it looks like a little kid's signature," said Davis. The student explained to her mother that she hadn't been required to write anything in cursive in years, which led Davis to call the school.

Jane Roberts, assistant superintendent of elementary education for the largest school system in West Virginia, told Davis that cursive is still taught in Kanawha County schools, but only in the 3rd grade. Hours formerly spent practicing the loops and curves of cursive writing in what used to be called "penmanship" classes have given way to developing technology skills perceived more necessary for the 21st century.

Students are doing more and more of their work on computers in schools, including writing. Beginning in 2011, 8th and 11th graders will compose the writing test portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress on a computer, with 4th graders following suit by 2019.

Handwriting is increasingly something people only do to jot notes for themselves, said Katie Van Sluys, president of the Whole Language Umbrella. She suggested that students accustomed to using text messages, e-mail and word processors don't see the value of spending hours practicing cursive writing.

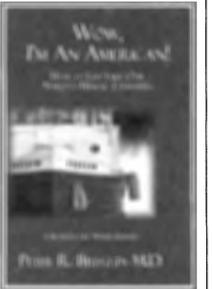
Cheryl Jeffers, a professor at Marshall University, fears that if cursive writing is lost to new generations, it will be harder for them to decipher historic records, and they will have lost "a gift." Others point out that most schoolwork, from taking notes to writing essays, is still done by hand. (*Associated Press*, 9-19-09)



Book of the Month



Wow, I'm an American!: How to Live Like Our Nation's Heroic Founders, Peter R. Breggin, M.D., Lake Edge Press 2009, 235 pages, \$18.95.



At a time when American exceptionalism is under assault, Peter R. Breggin engenders gratitude and enthusiasm for the blessings of American citizenship in *Wow, I'm an American!* The writing style is simple enough for middle school-age children to understand, and the content is engaging enough to interest adults, making the book ideal for family reading.

The author begins with a reminder that the freedom citizens of the United States have enjoyed for over 200 years didn't "just happen," but is the result of the faith, courage, and fortitude of the colonists. The heart of the book is an examination of the lives of important founding fathers such as John Adams, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, and how the principles of freedom, responsibility, gratitude and love guided their personal behavior as well as their political ideals and commitments.

Readers learn of the risks these men took to found a nation based on liberty and individual human rights. Many of the founders were successful, wealthy men of some reputation who could have chosen lives of relative peace and prosperity in the colonies, if they had been willing for themselves and their posterity to remain under the thumb of King George. Instead they risked physical danger, loss of wealth, and the safety of their wives and children to pursue freedom.

The founders' wives, too, showed devotion to the cause of independence. Ultimately some wives were imprisoned, some fled homes set ablaze by enemies, some lost a husband or son, and many more suffered great financial loss.

Breggin notes that of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, nine "died of 'wounds or hardships,' five were captured or imprisoned, twelve had homes burned to the ground and seventeen 'lost everything they owned.'" Yet not one signer or his family ever reneged on their commitment to liberty.

With all of his reverence and honor for the founders, the author does not deny or minimize their flaws. More than half of the founders owned slaves. Despite their faults and inner contradictions, these men gave us the foundational principles that paved the way for the end of slavery and later fostered universal voting rights. There remains much in their ideals, character and behavior worth studying and emulating, principally their pursuit of liberty and exercise of personal responsibility.

FOCUS: HOME-SCHOOLING: Socialization not a problem

by Michael Smith

One of the most persistent criticisms of home-schooling is the accusation that home-schoolers will not be able to fully participate in society because they lack “socialization.” It’s a challenge that reaches right to the heart of home-schooling, because if a child isn’t properly socialized, how will that child be able to contribute to society?

Since the re-emergence of the home-school movement in the late 1970s, critics of home-schooling have perpetuated two myths. The first concerns the ability of parents to adequately teach their own children at home; the second is whether home-schooled children will be well-adjusted socially.

Proving academic success is relatively straightforward. Today, it is accepted that home-schoolers, on average, outperform their public school peers. The most recent study, “Homeschool Progress Report 2009,” conducted by Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute, surveyed more than 11,000 home-schooled students. It showed that the average home-schooler scored 37 percentile points higher on standardized achievement tests than the public school average.

The second myth, however, is more

difficult to address because children were home-schooled in appreciable numbers in the late 1980s and early 1990s are only now coming of age and in a position to demonstrate they can succeed as adults.

Home-school families across the nation knew criticisms about adequate socialization were ill-founded — they had the evidence right in their own homes. In part to address this question from a research perspective, the Home School Legal Defense Association commissioned a study in 2003 titled “Homeschooling Grows Up,” conducted by Mr. Ray, to discover how home-schoolers were faring as adults. The news was good for home-schooling. In all areas of life, from gaining employment, to being satisfied with their home-schooling, to participating in community activities, to voting, home-schoolers were more active and involved than their public school counterparts.



Until recently, “Homeschooling Grows Up” was the only study that addressed the socialization of home-schooled adults. Now we have a new longitudinal study titled “Fifteen Years Later: Home-Educated Canadian Adults” from the Canadian Centre for Home Education. This study surveyed home-schooled students whose parents participated in a comprehensive study on home education in 1994. The study compared home-schoolers who are now adults with their peers. The results are astounding.

When measured against the average Canadians ages 15 to 34 years old, home-educated Canadian adults ages 15 to 34 were more socially engaged (69 percent participated in organized activities at least once per week, compared with 48 percent of the comparable population). Average income for home-schoolers also was higher, but perhaps more significantly, while 11 percent of Canadians ages 15 to 34 rely on welfare, there were no cases of government support as the primary source of income for home-schoolers. Home-schoolers also were happier; 67.3 percent described themselves as very happy, compared with 43.8 percent of the comparable population. Almost all of the home-schoolers — 96 percent — thought home-schooling had prepared them well for life.

This new study should cause many

critics to rethink their position on the issue of socialization. Not only are home-schoolers actively engaged in civic life, they also are succeeding in all walks of life. Many critics believed, and some parents feared, that home-schoolers would not be able to compete in the job market. But the new study shows home-schoolers are found in a wide variety of professions. Being home-schooled has not closed doors on career choices.

The results are a great encouragement to all home-schooling families and to parents thinking about home-schooling. Home-schoolers, typically identified as being high academic achievers, also can make the grade in society.

Both “Homeschooling Grows Up” and “Fifteen Years Later” amply demonstrate home-school graduates are active, involved, productive citizens. Home-school families are leading the way in Canadian and American education, and this new study clearly demonstrates home-school parents are on the right path.

This article originally appeared as an op-ed in The Washington Times on December 13, 2009. Michael Smith is president of the Home School Legal Defense Association, based in Purcellville, Virginia. To read a synopsis or the full version of the study “Fifteen Years Later: Home-Educated Canadian Adults,” visit www.hsllda.ca/cche.

Many Ill-Prepared College Students Never Earn Diplomas

Fewer than 60% of students attending four-year colleges graduate, even within a generous time frame of six years, according to a report issued by the American Enterprise Institute earlier this year. When the very- to most-competitive schools are not included in the average, the graduation rate of the remaining schools — which matriculate more than half of all students — drops to below 50%. Noncompetitive schools average only a 34% graduation rate, with many community colleges and other schools attracting low-income students falling far below even that dismal rate.

In his first speech to Congress last February, President Obama named low college graduation rates as a threat to American competitiveness and called for improvement. “By 2020,” he declared, “American will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.” A short time later, the president’s first budget proposal included a new line item for \$2.5 billion to increase college completion rates. The current rate of return for taxpayers is disappointing, to say the least. According to a 2006 assessment by the National Center for Education Statistics, more than 50 cents of every dollar spent on community colleges goes toward classes and activities that never produce a degree.

One reason for the deplorable graduation rate is that a large proportion of students enter college with inadequate reading and math skills. Before they can suc-

cessfully complete freshman-level classes, these students must spend time and tuition dollars completing remedial English and math courses that do not earn them credit towards a college degree.

A 2004 Department of Education study reported that 42% of freshman needed remedial classes. While it is common for nontraditional students who haven’t been in a classroom for years to require remediation, the same study noted that students 21-years-old or younger constituted 80% of remedial class enrollment. Simply put, many high schools are not preparing students for college-level coursework. As an example, a 2008 report found that 90% of 200 City University of New York students taking their first college math class could not solve a simple algebra problem.

Surprisingly, most of the discussion about how to fix the problem centers on changing the colleges and universities rather than strengthening high school coursework. The Charles Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Education devotes one sentence in its four-page 2009 policy brief to improving K-12 education “to reduce the demand for remedial courses.” Most of their report and recommendations focus on improving remedial courses and using them to “increase access to postsecondary education for underserved groups.” The Center is, in effect, tasking higher ed to do the job that the K-12 educational system should have done.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation notes the changing demographics of college students and blames post-secondary institutions for not responding to “their students’ increasingly complex and diverse needs.” The Foundation’s “Postsecondary Success Initiative” seems to advocate allowing students to bypass remedial courses and enroll directly into entry-level credit courses as a way to reduce

attrition. The report lacks detail, but “re-vamping ‘gatekeeper’ courses such as remedial math and reading” and “supporting credit accumulation” seems to mean giving college credit to students for courses that previously were required to be completed in high school.

“Which is better for higher education institutions and the United States?” ask Professor of Education Reform Sandra Stotsky and policy advisor Ze’ev Wurman in an article for EducationNews.org (10-12-09): “Placing mathematically unqualified freshman in credit courses in colleges and universities, or strengthening high school coursework to prepare more mathematically qualified freshman for them? In a rational world, the question wouldn’t

even be asked.”

Stotsky and Wurman surmise that the push to reduce post-secondary admission requirements stems from a “fear that raising high school expectations would increase the dropout rate.” They argue for better motivating high-school students with higher expectations to keep students engaged in high school studies. Indeed, the pair contended, in 2008 the state of Massachusetts “meaningfully increased” high school academic standards while also reducing their drop-

out rate by 12%.

Stotsky and Wurman also recommend more honest feedback for high-school students about the quality of their academic work and their readiness for college studies. Inflated high school grades don’t help college freshman pass entry-level college courses. The reform advocates cite 2008 data showing that 57% of California students who had high-school grade point averages over 3.1 nonetheless required remediation in math and/or English during their freshman year of college.

Furthermore, California high school juniors who participated in an Early Assessment Program (EAP) to measure aca-

Table 1
High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates by Race/Ethnicity (2001)

	Graduate from High School	College Ready
All	70%	32%
African American	51%	20%
Hispanic	52%	16%
Native American	54%	14%
White	72%	37%
Asian	79%	38%

Note: Data from Greene, J.P. & Forster, G. (2003) *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States*. New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.

(See Diplomas, page 4)

Letter to the Editor:

To the Editor:

My 14-year-old daughter Pearl is a freshman at Ft. Myers High School and my 11-year-old daughter Lily is in 5th grade at Three Oaks Elementary. Here are some of the things they have relayed to me concerning what they have been learning in our public schools:

1. Lily said, "I would rather just shoot myself in the head because it would be a less painful death than to suffer and die from global warming."
2. Pearl has been studying the Watergate scandal for three weeks. She has had to

memorize the name of everyone involved (people I've never heard of) for a test.

3. Both girls have been taught to fear the extinction of polar bears.
4. Both girls have had numerous lessons about various aspects of the Native Americans and the brutal treatment thereof.
5. Both girls have studied the Pueblo people, and Mexican pottery.
6. Neither girl has spent much time studying our American forefathers.

Dr. Jean-Marc Bovee
Ft. Myers, Florida

University of Minnesota (Continued from page 1)

plan." Another option listed for addressing non-compliant students would be to have them take courses that meet the outcomes "as a condition for admission" to the program.

Kissler's letter to President Bruininks also expressed concern about assignments students would have to complete, including one in which they must "reveal a 'pervasive stereotype' they personally held about an identity group, and evidently must argue in a personal essay that this view has now been 'challenged' on the basis of their experiences with that identity group." In an interview with Fox News, Kissler further surmised that, based upon the language of the recommendations, "if you say, 'well actually I don't have a pervasive stereotype' . . . you're probably going to get a bad grade."

Minnesota University spokesman Dan Wolter said that FIRE is wrong about the proposal. "It's not at all what they're suggesting — that it's some sort of litmus test — it's just making sure that teachers are prepared to deal with the different situa-

tions that they might have for each and every student — which has been a challenge in the past," he said. "Teachers obviously come from one perspective, so if they've got 15 other people of different backgrounds in their classrooms it's a completely different situation."

Constitutional attorney Steve Greenberg agrees with Kissler that the proposed plan violates both student and teacher rights. "They're telling people you have to look back on these feelings that you have, whether you have them or not — if you don't have them you better find them — and then you better address them this way, and then after going through step B, step C is that you have to look at the world through this viewpoint," said Greenberg. "You can say it's not a litmus test . . . but the truth of the matter is — it's a litmus test."

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), an independent network of more than 10,000 U.S. college and university trustees, also registered its alarm with a letter sent to members of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents. "At a time of reported shortages of teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the challenges in K-12, it is surely troubling that some at the

University of Minnesota apparently seek to promote standards that, in practice, ignore academic goals and lead to a politicized determination of who is qualified to be a teacher," wrote ACTA's president, Anne D. Neal. The letter calls upon the University of Minnesota trustees to uphold their fiduciary duty to students, faculty and taxpayers to do all they can to "guarantee the free exchange of ideas" at the public institution.

Wolter said that the task force recommendations would undergo a deliberative process and that the concerns raised by FIRE and others are "helpful to this process . . . as the final product is being shaped." The university intends that the first group of prospective teachers will enter the redesigned program during the summer of 2011.

An October 28, 2009 letter from the education college to the Archibald and Edyth Bush Foundation seemed to indicate an intention to go forward with the implementation the recommendations of the task force. In that proposal the college

pledged to revise its curriculum to incorporate the "development of cultural competence," and to begin screening applicants to the program for the proper "dispositions." Apparently pleased with the proposal and undaunted by public criticism, the Bush Foundation has committed \$4.5 million to the University of Minnesota for teacher education, as reported in a December 3, 2009 university press release.

The University of Minnesota is only the most recently publicized university that is reportedly trying to mandate a particular ideology and political stance for its faculty and students. The mindset and intentions of its Race, Culture, Class and Gender Task Group align with that of major education schools including Cal State in Los Angeles and the Teachers College of Columbia University in New York, according to Gilbert Sewall, director of the American Textbook Council and president of the Center for Education Studies (phibetacons.nationalreview.com, 12-7-09). The University of Delaware and Missouri State University have also been criticized in recent years for similar attempts to institutionalize an ideology of "social justice" under the guise of "cultural competence." (*WorldNetDaily*, 11-27-09; Fox News, 12-10-09)

CDC Sex Ed Conclusions (Continued from page 1)

with The Institute for Research and Evaluation in Salt Lake City. The CDC report grouped programs into only two categories, abstinence-only education (AE) and comprehensive risk reduction (CRR) approaches. The AE programs were primarily school-based, but the CRR category combined data from 24 school/classroom settings with 36 community-based settings. The CRR community-based settings included STD clinics, youth shelters, youth detention centers, and housing projects with a wide variety of study populations, environments, and methods of disseminating information. From a research standpoint, lumping these programs together "undermines the validity of the entire study," said the researchers.

The researchers specifically question the study conclusion that CSE programs are generally effective at reducing STDs. That is because the conclusion appears to be based upon only two programs based in community health clinics, with no school-based programs demonstrating statistical effectiveness for that outcome. "This does not seem like adequate evidence upon which to base national policy about STD prevention," said Ruedt. Accurate conclusions are critical, because the CDC estimates that there are 19 million new sexually transmitted infections each year, with half occurring in 15- to 24-year-olds.

Erickson and Ruedt also charged that the CDC recommendations "fail to acknowledge the evidence for the effectiveness of AE programs at reducing teen sexual activity, and invite conclusions that CRR is a superior approach to AE, which is not supported by the evidence." They said the study discounted the significant reduction in sexual activity found with many AE programs "based upon a misplaced deference" to certain studies that had "important design problems." The CDC analysis also tested whether teens participating in an AE program were less

likely to use condoms if they did become sexually active, and found no evidence to support that common criticism of AE programs. The dissenting consultants criticized the CDC Task Force because "this important finding was not included in the Recommendation Statement."

The pair also raised other issues about the Task Force's meta-analysis methodology which may have compromised the accurate measurement of CRR and AE outcomes. For example, they contend that the use of a one-to-three month minimum follow-up time for condom/contraceptive/STD outcomes while requiring a six-month minimum follow-up time for abstinence outcomes had the effect of requiring AE to meet a higher standard of effectiveness.

The minority report also calls upon the CDC to release to the public the full set of studies that underlie the Task Force's Recommendation Statements. The federal agency plans to eventually release all of the underlying data, but not until the CDC has scientifically cleared it for release to the public. The problem with this policy, according to Erickson and Ruedt, is that it "prevents the public from scrutinizing the body of evidence underlying the CDC Task Force Recommendations in the same time frame in which the CDC recommendations will influence the decisions of policymakers and public health professionals." They note that public access to the full data set is "particularly important in the current climate of controversy and politicization that surrounds the public policy debate about sex education in America."

Ultimately, the researchers are concerned that the CDC study "invites an inappropriate comparison" between CRR and AE programs. The resulting statistical inconsistencies make "the study's recommendations potentially misleading to policy-makers who want to implement evidence-based programs, especially in schools" said Erickson.

Safe Schools Czar (Continued from page 1)

I was sexually active with many friends. In fact, a small group of us regularly met in the grammar school lavatory to perform fellatio on one another. A typical week's schedule would be Aaron and Michael on Monday during lunch; Michael and Johnny on Tuesday after school; Fred and Timmy at noon Wednesday; Aaron and Timmy after school on Thursday . . ." Fricke goes on to explain that he and his friends intuitively knew not to mention any of this to adults. Nonetheless, he writes, "None of us had any guilty feel-

ings about it; we figured everyone did it. Why shouldn't they?"

Many other passages of the eleven books Baker and colleagues reviewed are even more explicit than the passages quoted above. Some describe disturbing encounters between young boys and older men.

Jennings stepped down as the organization's Executive Director in August of 2008, but the Breitbart-TV.com report notes that each of the books it reviewed was added to the resource list while Jennings headed GLSEN.

Diplomas (Continued from page 3)

demical readiness for college-level work were less likely to need remedial classes at California State University campuses. The 2009 study concluded that "Rather than discouraging poorly prepared students from applying to Sacramento State, EAP appears to lead students to increase their academic preparation while still in high school."

Though the California EAP students rose to meet the higher expectations communicated to them, many teachers do not seem to share a confi-

dence in student abilities. Less than one-third of teachers surveyed by Civic Enterprises in 2009 believed that "schools should expect all students to meet high academic standards and to graduate with the skills to do college-level work, and provide extra support to struggling students to help them meet those standards." (*EducationNews.org*, 10-12-09)

