

Push for P-20 Data Systems Raises Privacy Concerns

As states ramp up their longitudinal student data systems, they are collecting more information than necessary and failing to take appropriate measures to safeguard student privacy, a national study concluded. The Fordham Law School Center on Law and Information Policy reviewed publicly available educational records from all 50 states to investigate whether children have adequate legal and technical protection from data misuse and information breaches.

The study concluded that state databases generally have weak privacy protections, and the transfer of information between local and state agencies is often not compliant with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Additionally, 80% of states do not have protocols for purging student records, and are thus likely to maintain them indefinitely. (Of interest, the only remedy on the books for a FERPA violation is for the Depart-

ment of Education to withhold federal education funding; the Fordham Center could not find one instance in which funding was withheld.)

The study also found that some states collect data far beyond standardized test scores including Social Security numbers, disciplinary records, and family wealth indicators in what “appeared to be non-anonymous student records.” Additionally, at least 22% of schools record student pregnancies, and 46% of the states track student mental health, illness and jail sentences as descriptors of why a student dropped out of school.

A few states record some health information about students. New Jersey and Kentucky keep track of the date of a student’s last medical exam. South Dakota documents how much kids weigh as part of its child obesity program.

The push for statewide databases that follow students from pre-school through

entry into the workforce began with the 1990s emphasis on testing and standards, grew significantly under federal No Child Left Behind mandates, and has been considerably boosted by policies of the Obama administration. Lured by the promise of federal money awarded through the Race to the Top grant competition and other parts of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, states are working to design computer systems that can share information statewide. The goal is to make data easily available to teachers, parents, researchers and interested government bureaucrats.

“Ten, 15 years later, these kids are

adults, and information from their elementary, middle and high school years will easily be exposed by hackers and others who put it to misuse,” said Fordham law professor Joel R. Reidenberg, who oversaw the Fordham study. States are “trampling the privacy interests of those students,” he charged.



The report made numerous recommendations to beef up student privacy. Suggestions included collecting only information relevant to articulated purposes, purging unjustified data, enacting time limits for data retention, hiring a Chief Privacy Officer for each state, and tightening procedures to ensure data is anonymous at the state level (though individually identifiable at the local level).

These recommendations are likely to go unheeded, however, because the U.S. Department of Education argues that collecting and analyzing personally identifiable data is “at the heart of improving schools and school districts.” One of the four reform mandates of the Race to the Top competition is to establish pre-kindergarten to college-and-career data systems that “track progress and foster continuous improvement.” Federal stimulus funds provide at least

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New Sex Ed Study ‘Game-Changing’

A new study provides compelling evidence that abstinence-only sex education can be more effective than so-called “com-

prehensive sex ed.” In a report published in the February 2010 *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, researchers found that only about a third of the sixth- and seventh-graders who completed an abstinence-focused program began having sex within two years.

In contrast, 52% of the students who participated in a safe-sex course had intercourse, a slightly higher proportion than kids who received no sex ed at all. A fourth group received “comprehensive” instruction that taught both abstinence and contraceptive use, with 42% of those students reporting coitus in the following two years. The researchers also reported that the abstinence program had no negative effects on condom use, thereby countering a primary criticism of abstinence-focused programs.

“I think we’ve written off abstinence-only education without looking closely at the nature of the evidence,” said John B. Jemmott III, professor at the University of Pennsylvania and lead author of the study. He and his team conducted their federally funded research between 2001 and 2004 with 662 African-American students from four public middle schools in the Northeast.

The study’s conclusions come in the midst of a contentious national policy debate about the best way to reduce teenage pregnancy and STD rates, both of which have begun to climb again after a decade

of decline. Last year, the Obama administration eliminated more than \$170 million for abstinence programs in favor of “evidence-based” contraceptive-focused programs.

“This new study is game-changing,” said Sarah Brown of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned pregnancy. “For the first time, there is strong evidence that an abstinence-only intervention can help very young teens delay sex.”

Actually, at least eleven other studies have found abstinence programs to effectively reduce sexual activity, according to Robert Rector, a senior researcher at the Heritage Foundation. But the Jemmott study is the first to compare the abstinence approach to several alternatives using a random assignment of study subjects, a methodology considered to be the gold standard in research. “This takes away the main pillar of opposition to abstinence education,” said Rector. “I’ve always known that abstinence programs have gotten a bad rap.”

Rector also observed that media and policymakers have ignored important benefits of abstinence beyond pregnancy and STD prevention. He said research has shown that abstinent teens are happier and are half as likely to drop out of high school as their sexually active peers, and that statistic doesn’t even include girls who are forced to leave school to care for their infants. Teens who are abstinent until age 18 are also twice as likely to attend and graduate from college, compared to sexually active peers from the same socio-economic background.

background.

Elayne Bennett, founder of the Best Friends program, is delighted that the Jemmott research confirms her experience in working with primarily African-American girls. Her program has successfully helped girls abstain from sex, drugs and alcohol during high school for 20 years, and has recently added Best Men, an off-shoot program for boys. Bennett has found

(See Sex Ed Study, page 4)



Parent Blows Whistle on Teacher Promotion of Obama Internship

The parent of a Perry High School student in Massillon, Ohio, set off a firestorm in his community and in the blogosphere when he gave Pamela Geller, of AtlasShrugs.com, a copy of an internship application provided to his 11th-grade daughter’s government class the last week of January.

The information packet, emblazoned with the Obama presidential campaign logo, was from DNC-funded Organizing for America (OFA), the successor organization of Obama for America. The student’s father, identified as “Chuck,” told Geller that the teacher offered no Republican Party internship equivalent to students.

The document, posted in its entirety on Geller’s website, promotes a ten-week internship for “empowering students across the country to help us bring about our agenda of change,” and for which students may receive course

credit. Interns must commit to at least 12 hours a week, and will be taught how to be “leaders in OFA’s organizing work this summer,” *i.e.*, campaign workers for the 2010 election season.

According to the curriculum details, interns will learn “the theory behind Community Organizing,” and practice “tactics for relationship . . . and organization building.” Suggested readings for the first week of the program include Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals*, and *Stir It Up: Lessons from Community Organizing and Advocacy* by leftwing activist Rinku Sen.

Activities include using social media for “online organizing,” building alliances with others working on health care, energy and education reform, and role-playing interviews with media outlets about the student’s experience as an OFA intern.

At the end of the internship, students (See Parent Blows Whistle, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Nine-year-old Patrick Timoney was nearly suspended for bringing a two-inch plastic gun to school. He was



playing with Lego figures when he placed the gun in the hands of his plastic police officer. His Staten Island principal agreed to forgo any punishment after speaking with the boy's parents. Laura Timoney said her son is typically an eager student, but asked to stay home after the incident because he believed the principal was angry with him. (*Daily News*, 2-4-10)

A study of first- and second-graders suggests girls may learn math anxiety from female teachers. The less confident teachers were about their own math skills, the more likely female students agreed that "boys are good at math and girls are good at reading." Student math ability was unrelated to teacher math anxiety at the start of the school, but girls who agreed with the statement scored lower on end-of-year tests than either boys in the class or girls who did not agree. (*Associated Press*, 1-25-10)

The San Francisco Unified District school board unanimously guaranteed \$62,000 in annual funding to hire someone to manage LGBT youth issues. Meanwhile the district is laying off personnel and cutting curricular programs due to a \$113 million budget shortfall over the next two years. The author of the resolution, Sandra Fewer, commented, "... we have to prioritize our monies." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 2-9-10)

President Obama is seeking an additional \$1.35 billion in next year's budget to extend Race to the Top. He also proposed allowing individual school districts to participate even if their state does not. Governor Rick Perry decided earlier this year Texas would not compete for the grant, and said Obama's latest plan is "evidence that the federal government is bound and determined to intrude" in state affairs. (*Teacher Magazine*, 1-20-10)

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Campus Dating: It's a Man's World

From an academic achievement perspective, women have a lot to celebrate. According to the American Council on Education, women have represented an average of 57% of American college students since 2000.

But women's predominance on campus corresponds to fewer men. Even though women go to college primarily to earn a degree, they are also interested in romance, and many are frustrated with the dating dynamics on their campuses.

Jayne Dallas is a senior at the University of North Carolina, where nearly 60% of students are female. From her perspective, the actual dating pool of men is even smaller than it appears: "Out of that 40 percent, there are maybe 20 percent that we would consider, and out of those 20, ten have girlfriends, so all the girls are fighting over that other ten percent," she said.

Predictably, the disproportionate ratio of men to women tends to skew dating behavior. Men are more free to play the field, and women, for their part, are more aggressive than they might otherwise be.

"I was talking to a friend at a bar, and

this girl just came up out of nowhere, grabbed him by the wrist, spun him around and took him out to the dance floor and started grinding," recounted Kelly Lynch, a junior at North Carolina. Lynch said her girlfriends are more sexually permissive because of the lopsided student population.

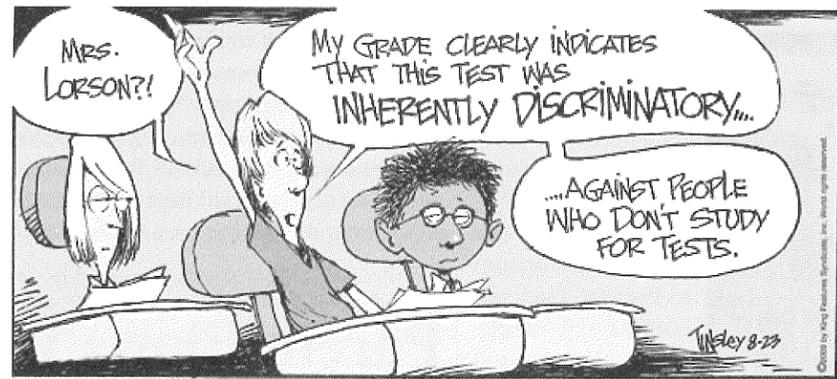
"Girls feel pressured to do more than they're comfortable with, to lock it down," she said. "A lot of my friends will meet someone and go home for the night and just hope for the best the next morning."

Katie Delray, a senior at the University of Georgia, concurred. Her campus is only 43% male. As a result, "If a guy is not getting what he wants, he can quickly and abruptly go to the next [girl], because there are so many of us," she said.

Women are also more prone to tolerate unfaithfulness in this environment. "That's a thing that girls let slide," said Emily Kennard, a junior at North Carolina. "If you don't let it slide, you don't have a boyfriend."

Students aren't the only ones to notice the social impact of campus gender imbalance. School administrators and professors have been debating whether

(See *Campus Dating*, page 4)



MALLARD FILLMORE
by Bruce Tinsley

School May Cut Science Labs for 'Equity' Programs

President Obama has called for "a national commitment to science education and training" that will position the U.S. to compete globally. Berkeley High School could provide some pointers on how to achieve those goals. Last year 82% of Berkeley High School's Advanced Placement (AP) chemistry students passed a rigorous exam that gives college credit to high school students; nationally, only 55% of students passed the exam. The school's AP physics and biology students do even better.

Such exceptional success leaves some parents and teachers asking why the school's principal and others now want to cut science labs to fund 'equity' classes such as note-taking and study skills for struggling students. The science program would lose the equivalent of five teaching positions and about 65 lab sections for college prep and AP classes.

The proposal is part of a school restructuring plan put forth by principal Jim Slemp to rectify Berkeley High's

"achievement gap" between higher-performing white and Asian students and lower-performing black and Latino kids. "Our community at Berkeley High School has failed the African Americans. We need to bring everybody up — that's what this plan is about" (*Oakland Tribune*, 2-3-10) Berkeley High's achievement gap is the widest in the state, with just 31% of black students proficient in English, and 31% in math.

Part of the disparity, according to parent Peggy Scott, is due to the unique mix of students at the town's only high school. Kids of dot-com professionals and University of California professors mix with children living in poverty. "So many students at Berkeley High are from academic families," said Scott.

(See *Science Labs*, page 4)

Book of the Month



Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills, Third Edition, Editor Abigail R.

Gehring, Skyhorse Publishing, 2008, 456 pages, \$24.95.

First published by Reader's Digest back in 1981, this book has time-tested appeal. The revised edition remains a great reference for those who aspire to a more independent, self-reliant way of life; but even firmly entrenched urbanites will find doable projects that interest them.

The book is organized into six main sections: shelter, energy sources, raising and preserving food, home crafts and recreational activities. Some topics receive only a solid overview; for example, you'll need more than the six pages of instruction included to build a stone house. On the other hand, you can make cheese and soap, and butcher a hen using just the instructions provided.

In all there are 65 major subjects, many with subsets. For instance, the beekeeping section covers standard hive configuration, choosing a site, bee identification (drones, workers, or queen), favorite bee plant blossoms, tools and equipment needed, how to avoid swarming, and methods for harvesting and storing honey.

The book has over 2,000 color photographs, drawings, charts and diagrams, which add visual interest and enhance "how-to" understanding. Resource recommendations are provided for further reading.

Other features include short interviews with folks who practice the "lost arts" in the book, as well as relevant historical background for some skills. Did you know that scrimshaw — the art of etching and coloring teeth, ivory and bone — was invented by American whaling men during the long days between whale sightings? Or that New England colonists created patchwork quilts because they needed more substantial blankets than the coverlets they brought with them?

Kids (and adults) who want to understand how gardens and herds supply us with our daily sustenance will find *Back to Basics* absorbing. Some readers will be inspired to start their own kitchen gardens. Others may decide to raise a few chickens, pigs or goats, as do the featured young Eastwood siblings in suburban Brewster, New York. Many will simply find it interesting to know how the hide of an animal was transformed into tennis shoes or a leather jacket through the arts of tanning and leatherwork.

Families will find projects they can do together, like making candles or homemade ice cream. Kids will enjoy playing one of the six varieties of "tag" described, making a corn-husk doll, or a kite, and learning to play "cat's cradle" with yarn or string. There really is something for everyone.

FOCUS: PROFESSOR OF CONTEMPT: The Legacy of Howard Zinn

by Roger Kimball

With Howard Zinn, contemporary American academia found its court historian. Zinn, who died January 27 at 87, was like a gigantic echo chamber, accurately reproducing — and actively reinforcing — every left-wing cliché with which the academy has abetted its sense of election these past several decades. “You see how smart he is,” saith the tribe, “he thinks exactly as we do.”

Zinn’s biography tells us that he was the author of “more than 20 books.” But only one matters: *A People’s History of the United States*. Published in 1980 with appropriately modest expectations — it had, I read somewhere, an initial print run of only 5,000 copies — the book went on to sell some 2 million and is still going strong. Its Amazon sales rank as of February 1, 2010, was 7. Seven. That’s a number most authors would climb over broken bottles to achieve 30 days after their books were published. Here it is 30 years on.

How to explain such phenomenal success? The publisher had doubtless assayed the book’s intellectual merits and proceeded accordingly. Left out of the account was the presumption of its political message. The extremity and consistency of that message — that America is and always has been an evil, exploitative country — guaranteed its success among the tenured radicals to whom

we have entrusted the education of our children.

More to the point, this history “from the perspective of the slaughtered and mutilated” nudged out all other contenders for the prize of becoming the preferred catechism in American — that is to say,

anti-American — history. *A People’s History* is the textbook of choice in high schools and colleges across the country. No other account of our past comes even close in influence or ubiquity. No other, more responsible, telling of the American story had a chance. How could it? Given a choice between a book that portrayed America honestly — as an extraordinary success story — and a book that portrayed the history of America as a litany of depredations and failures, which do you suppose your average graduate of a teachers college, your average member of the National Education Association, would choose?

To ask the question is to answer it.

What this means is that most American students are battered on a story of their country in which Blame America First is a cardinal principle. No element of our heritage, from the derring-do of Christopher Columbus to the valor of the U.S. military in World War II, escapes the perverting alchemy of Howard Zinn’s exercise in deflationary revision.

To his credit — well, it’s not really to his credit, since he offers the admission only to disarm criticism, Zinn is entirely candid about the ideological nature of his opus. All history, he says, involves a choice of perspectives. Maybe so. Are we therefore to assume all perspectives are equally valuable? Zinn employs this relativist’s sleight of hand in order to promulgate his preferred species of intolerance, which appeals to latitudinarian sensitivities only because it is an intolerance fabricated in opposition to the established order. If “all history is ideological” (it isn’t really), then why not make your choice based on what appeals to your political sympathies, truth be damned? That’s the takeaway of Zinn’s admission, and it’s all he offers to explain his decision, which he details at the beginning of his book, to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of

“Howard Zinn was a Stalinist in the years when the Marxist monster was slaughtering millions of innocent people and launching his own ‘final solution’ against the Jews. Zinn supported every enemy of the United States in every war, and devoted his writing talents to every socialist tyrant including Mao Zedong who killed 70 million Chinese in peacetime because they got in the way of his progressive agendas.”

— David Horowitz, *frontpagemag.com*

the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott’s army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile mills, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by the black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America.

In other words, what Zinn offers us is not a corrective, but a distortion. It is as if someone said to you, “Would you like to see Versailles?” and then took you on a tour of a broken shed on the outskirts of the palace grounds. “You see, pretty shabby, isn’t it?”

The one indisputably valuable thing about *A People’s History of the United States* is the way it illustrates a melancholy fact about the place of reasoned argument

in human affairs. In brief, it occupies a lamentably attenuated place. Placed in opposition to a wish driven by the Zeitgeist (that’s German for “what the *New York Times* preaches”), reasoned argument doesn’t stand a chance. Item: Soon after *A People’s History of the United States* was published, the historian Oscar Handlin wrote a devastating review of the book for *The American Scholar* (which was still a respectable magazine).

“It simply is not true,” Mr. Handlin noted, that “what Columbus did to the

Arawaks of the Bahamas, Cortez did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powhatans and the Pequots.” It simply is not true that the farmers of the Chesapeake colonies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries avidly desired the importation of black slaves, or that the gap between rich and poor widened in the eighteenth-century colonies. Zinn gulps down as literally true the proven hoax of Polly Baker and the improbable Plough Jogger, and he repeats uncritically the old charge that President Lincoln altered his views to suit his audience. The Geneva assembly of 1954 did not agree on elections in a unified Vietnam; that was simply the hope expressed by the British chairman when the parties concerned could not agree. The United States did not back Batista in 1959; it had ended aid to Cuba and washed its hands of him well before then. “Tet” was not evidence of the unpopularity of the Saigon government, but a resounding rejection of the northern invaders.

And on and on. In any normal world, Zinn would have stolen away in the middle of the night, fled to a mountain fastness in Peru, and taken up llama ranching. In this world, however, he went on to fame and fortune.

Oscar Handlin left Zinn’s “deranged . . . fairy tale” in tatters. But the eye of love continued to regard it as an unspoiled beauty. Hence the two million copies, the Amazon ranking, the exuberant grief that taxed the powers of hyperbole commanded by obituary writers across the republic as they competed with one another to freight the word “progressive” with ever more awesome pulpit tones.

The obituaries of Howard Zinn make for interesting, if not exactly edifying, reading. Zinn himself, of course, is the hero of the moment, the model “progressive” warrior who spoke truth to power, struggled against the demons of American imperialism, and consoled the weak, the oppressed, the inarticulate. The villain

of the story was John Silber, former president of Boston University and for the 24 years Howard Zinn taught there, the bane of his existence. In the obituaries, Silber is invariably described as “con-



Howard Zinn

servative” or “right-wing.” In fact, he is a liberal in the antique, *i.e.*, the classical mode. While a dean at the University of Texas, Silber labored to abolish segregation. He was an energetic supporter of Head Start, was instrumental in Boston University’s involvement in improving an inner-city school, and has battled tirelessly

to further the vocation of the liberal arts and the life of the university as a primary institutional home for that vocation.

During his disreputable tenure as a professor at Boston University, Howard Zinn did everything in his power to subvert the university, partly by subordinating its intellectual mandate to trendy political causes, partly by short-circuiting with malicious levity the high seriousness of a liberal-arts education. He would, for example, pass around his classes a bag containing bits of paper imprinted with the letters “A” or “B.” Whichever token a student picked denominated his grade, no matter what work he did or didn’t do.

The point? It wasn’t merely grade inflation. More insidiously, it was an expression of contempt for the entire enterprise of which he was a privileged beneficiary. Contempt, in fact, was Howard Zinn’s leading characteristic. Its primary focus was America, because that was the biggest game in town. But he had plenty left over for the rest of the world. As Oscar Handlin observed in his review, “It would be a mistake . . . to regard Zinn as merely anti-American. Brendan Behan once observed that whoever hated America hated mankind, and hatred of humanity is the dominant tone of Zinn’s book. No other modern country receives a favorable mention. He speaks well of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, but not of the states they created. He lavishes indiscriminate condemnation upon all the works of man — that is, upon civilization, a word he usually encloses in quotation marks.”

Howard Zinn has left us. But his repellent ideas — and even more, the contemptuous nihilism that stands behind and fires those ideas — live on.

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“At its root, *A People’s History* is a Marxist tract that paints the United States as the wellspring of earthly evil — a wretched embodiment of sexism, racism, and imperialism and a scourge not only to most of its own population, but also to a vast portion of humanity around the globe.”

— John Perazzo, *frontpagemag.com*

Privacy Concerns *(Continued from page 1)*

\$250 million to help states build such student data warehouses.

Proponents claim that data at the student-identifiable level is necessary to enable policymakers and educators to evaluate student and teacher performance at the school, district and state level. They say the ability to track individual students will enable educators to predict which students are in danger of dropping out, determine which teachers and curricula best prepare students for college and work readiness, and track trends in yearly academic progress by ethnicity and income level, among other things. The ability to correlate students with particular teachers could also help determine which teacher training programs produce effective educators.

Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan has an important ally for promoting and funding student data systems in the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), an organization founded in 2005, largely with money from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Secretary Duncan has been criticized about being particularly cozy with the Gates Foundation, whose largesse has afforded it a significant voice in education reform efforts (*Education Week*, 1-20-10).

According to its own documents, a primary aim of the DQC is to “create the political demand for sharing data” by using the “bully pulpit to talk about the need for information to follow individual students, even across state and district lines, and to break down the traditional silos.” Having largely reached that goal — as evidenced by Obama Administration education priorities and the organization’s partnership with more than 50 organizations across the country — the DQC has turned its attention to pushing demand for data collection and analysis from teachers, school boards and administrators.

The organization’s January 2010 publication, *The Next Step*, lauds the “enormous progress” states have made in developing data systems, but takes states to task for not going beyond compliance measures to proactively “alter policies, programs and practices to spur continuous improvement at every level.” In other words, teachers, school districts and state

policymakers have thus far not used the data they already have to make education decisions, even as an increasing number of personal details about each student are stored.

In the thrust to use data to better inform education policy, the concern for privacy protection seems almost an afterthought. The DQC affirms that confidential student data needs to remain private but emphasizes, “Data are only useful if people are able to access, understand and use them.”

DQC executive director Aimee Guidera admitted that unnecessary data have “probably” been collected in some cases, but said the larger concern is most states’ lack of a “strategic, thoughtful way of connecting information and using it to answer questions.” The DQC website explicitly supports linking education provider data with “workforce, social services and other critical state agency data systems.”

A recent *Education Week* article noted that privacy laws have made it challenging to link K-12 and postsecondary data in states that prohibit schools from storing students’ Social Security numbers; however, the Fordham Center found that 16 states already record each child’s SSN. It is also possible that some states might opt to change their statutes concerning SSN data to pave the way for receiving more federal money to implement longitudinal student databases. The changing of such laws may be what the DQC has in mind with their current focus of “helping states identify and put in place the necessary policies and practices” necessary to implement “robust” student-level longitudinal data systems.

All 50 states now have at least five of the DQC’s ten “essential elements” for a statewide longitudinal data system in place, up from 29 states meeting that benchmark in 2005. Within the next three years, 47 states plan to have eight or more elements in place. “This is something that’s going to happen, and it’s happened at a really breakneck pace over the past year,” said Ben Passmore, director of policy research for the University System of Maryland. (*Education Week*, 12-21-09; *The Washington Post*, 10-28-09)

Science Labs *(Continued from page 2)*

“The high end is very high. The low end is the same tragic achievement gap that exists all over the U.S. What’s wonderful here is that our kids all go to school together. . . . Taxpayers showed we care about all kids by approving the local education tax measures.” (*The Berkeley Daily Planet*, 12-17-09)

Berkeley residents voted for a parcel tax in the 1980s to provide additional education funding to bridge the achievement gap. Most of the money is used to reduce class sizes, but about a third goes toward enhanced science and arts programs, and academic help such as tutoring. But the extra funding has done little to close the performance gap.

Parents opposed to the cuts argue that equity should not be sought by eliminating classes for high-performing students, but by improving classes offered to those

who don’t do as well. These parents and a group of science teachers have started an online petition and spoken out at school board meetings.

Mardi Sicular-Mertens, science teacher at the school for 24 years, said the potential cuts would also harm minority students. She noted there are 12 black males in her AP courses, and her environmental science classes are 18% black and 14% Latino.

Amy Hansen, a longtime biotechnology and AP chemistry teacher at Berkeley High, said in a letter to the school board that Principal Slemph and others who had lower expectations of black and Latino students were exhibiting “racism, plain and simple.”

No final decision on the proposal is expected until April or May. (*Los Angeles Times*, 1-24-10)

Applying to College on YouTube

Now you can see student applications to Tufts University online — at least the video portions posted on YouTube. For the first time, this year Tufts invited students to submit an optional one-minute video that “says something about you” with their admissions applications. About 1,000 out of 15,000 applicants did.

Some students chose to play musical instruments, others showed off card tricks, and many performed rap songs. Several incorporated Jumbo the Elephant, Tuft’s mascot, into their videos. Amelia Downs has developed a YouTube following for her video combining “two of my favorite things: being a nerd and dancing.” Her performance of a bar graph, scatter plot, pie chart, and a sine and cosine graph has more than 92,000 views.

The videos are genuinely optional, emphasized Lee Coffin, dean of undergraduate admissions, so students who don’t choose to submit one are not penalized. Even a bad video doesn’t hurt a student’s admission chances, “unless there was something really disgusting,” he said.

“At heart, this is all about a conversation between a kid and an admissions officer,” said Coffin. “You see their floppy hair and their messy bedrooms, and you get a sense of who they are.”

Coffin said there are no plans to replace the traditional essay requirement with video submissions. “We will never abandon writing,” he said. “No matter what, it’s important to be able to express yourself elegantly in writing.” (*New York Times*, 2-23-10)

Sex Ed Study *(Continued from page 1)*

that kids desperately want someone to tell them it is okay to postpone sex, to help counter the incessant cultural pressures they are bombarded with.

Obama administration officials said abstinence programs like the one in the Jemmott study could be eligible for federal funding in the future. “No one study determines funding decisions, but the findings from the research paper suggest that this kind of project could be competitive for grants if there’s promise that it achieves the goal of teen pregnancy prevention,” said Nicholas Papas, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services.

Which studies will be considered adequate “evidence” is not so clear-cut. At least two researchers have taken issue with the conclusions of a recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) review of 83 U.S. sex education studies. Irene Erickson and Danielle Ruedt said the CDC panel’s judgment that comprehensive sex ed programs are “generally effective” is unsupported by the evidence, citing various methodological problems. The pair also charged the CDC panel with “fail[ing] to acknowledge the evidence” for the efficacy of abstinence-education programs. (*National Review*, 2-1-10; 2-5-10; *The Washington Post*, 2-2-10)

Parent Blows Whistle *(Continued from page 1)*

are asked “How do you plan to continue working with OFA in the future?” Organization leaders are also instructed to “have interns agree to participate” in a follow-up call with OFA headquarters. The purpose of the call is to “unveil our larger strategy for student and youth strategy in the states.” Leaders will then follow up with each student to get them “immediately . . . plugged in to OFA’s efforts within their communities.”

Perry Local School District Superintendent John Richard said the government teacher violated school policy by passing out the forms, but implied the teacher did

not look through the material before handing it out. “I do believe it was an honest mistake on [his] part,” Richard said. “However, board policy was not followed and the teacher had no administrative permission to do so.”

Perry High Principal Don Gregoire sent parents a letter about the controversy on February 1, 2010. “We apologize that your son or daughter was given this information without approval,” Gregoire wrote. “This error in following Board Policy has been addressed and has been clearly communicated to staff.” (*foxnews.com*, 2-3-10; *cantonrep.com*, 2-2-10)

Campus Dating *(Continued from page 2)*

it makes sense to admit less academically qualified men to achieve campus gender balance for awhile. Dating dynamics are part of the discussion, both informally and as an area of academic research.

Kathleen A. Bogle, a sociologist at La Salle University in Philadelphia published *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus* in 2008. “Women do not want to get left out in the cold, so they are competing for men on men’s terms,” she explained. “This results in more casual hook-up encounters that do not end up leading to more serious romantic relationships. Since college women say they generally want ‘something more’ than just a casual hook-up, women end up losing out.”

A psychology professor at the Uni-

versity of Georgia is even more blunt in his assessment. “When men have the social power, they create a man’s ideal of relationships,” said W. Keith Campbell. He thinks women on predominantly female campuses are paying a social price for their academic success, and to some extent are being victimized by men precisely because they have outperformed them.

Even some of the dating-advantaged men aren’t entirely satisfied with the situation. “It’s awesome being a guy,” admitted Garrett Jones, a senior at North Carolina. Still, he complained about a dating culture that generates more hook-ups than relationships. It was only this year, he said, that he finally found a serious girlfriend. (*The New York Times*, 2-5-10)