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Texas Gives the Boot to Liberal Social Studies Bias

After three days of contentious meetings, Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) members gave preliminary approval to revised social studies standards they say are intended to rein in the liberal bias of teachers and academics. “We are adding balance,” said Dr. Don McLeroy, leader of the conservative bloc of the board. “History has been skewed. Academia is skewed too far to the left.”

The new standards will be written next year and remain in effect for ten years. They will determine what the state’s 4.8 million K-12 students are taught in government, world history, U.S. history, and economics classes from kindergarten through high school. They will also be used to develop state tests and write textbooks.

Significant media attention has been devoted to the state’s debate over social studies guidelines because decisions made

there have national impact. Since Texas is the largest single purchaser of textbooks, publishers tailor them to its guidelines. Typically more than 90% of America’s textbooks are based on Lone Star state curriculum, as it is too costly to produce multiple versions.

The lengthy process of determining curriculum guidelines began with teams of teachers writing a first draft, which was then reviewed by six experts appointed by the SBOE. The expert panel then reported their findings and recommendations to the 15 board members. The board also received at least 14,000 emails and considered 17 hours of public testimony prior to the three-day meeting. Parents, teachers, civil rights groups, historians and state legislators were among those who attended the proceedings, and many testi-

fied before the board.

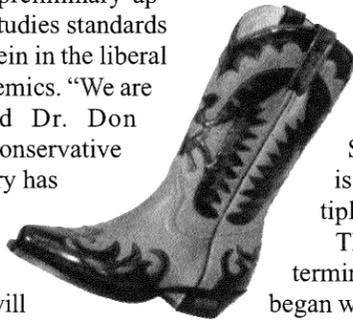
The heated discussions there served as a public forum for quieter ideological skirmishes happening throughout the country. The battle line runs between defenders of traditional values who oppose what they see as politically correct historical revision and progressives who prefer secularism and emphasize prominent inclusion of minority figures. McLeroy acknowledged the conflict, saying, “Our country is divided on how we see things, and [it comes] into sharp focus, especially with history and how you present it to your children.” (*Austin-American Statesman*, 3-11-09) Proponents of both sides were visible and vocal during the deliberations.

The conservative caucus of the Texas legislature submitted written testimony

and sent representative Ken Paxton to read it at the proceedings. The letter called on the board to resist pressure to wash the standards “clean of any references to Judeo-Christian faiths while promoting references to other religions.” The letter cited a prior attempt to remove Christmas and Rosh Hashanah from guidelines and replace them with the five-day Hindu festival Diwali, a measure that was overturned by the board.

The board also rejected the adoption of the secularist-preferred B.C.E. and C.E. (Before the Common Era and Common Era) instead of B.C. and A.D. to specify time periods before and after the birth of Christ. Board member Mavis Knight (D-Dallas) objected on the ground that the “social studies community uses B.C.E. and C.E.”

(See *Social Studies Bias*, page 4)



Parents ‘Awakened’ to District Education Agenda

Hundreds of parents have a message for the Alpine School District (ASD) board in Utah: We want comprehensive change. A few already monitor curriculum, but many others were roused to action by a relative newcomer to their community.

Susan Schnell’s family moved to Utah hoping for a better education and environment for their five children. “I told my children . . . we didn’t have to fear indoctrination” in Utah schools like they had experienced in California. A year and a half later, Schnell wasn’t so sure.

It all began when Schnell’s 6th-grade daughter’s history teacher argued with the eleven-year-old that the United States is a democracy rather than a constitutional republic in class. He also told her the book of quotes from the Founding Fathers on her desk was “pure science fiction.”

Since her daughter was being taught historical fallacies, and wasn’t being challenged in other classes, Schnell decided to homeschool her for the rest of the year. She went to the district office to fill out the paperwork, and was shocked to see a 30-foot mural that read, “Enculturating the Young into a Social and Political Democracy.” Schnell wondered why the district’s motto emphasized politics instead of educational excellence.

Further investigation led to even more questions. The ASD mission statement is “Educating all students to ensure the future of our democracy.” Furthermore, the mission webpage linked to an essay titled, “America: Republic or Democracy?” by radical Green Party activist William P. Meyers of California. Meyers believes the Founding Fathers were “predatory elitists” who started the U.S. as a Republic for their

own selfish gain, and that for two centuries people have been working to correct that “dangerous mistake” by transforming the nation to a Socialist Democracy.

Incensed and armed with more research, Schnell fired off an email alerting other parents. “These dangerous ideas are linked to . . . radical socialists who have discovered that the best way to change a nation is to indoctrinate — enculturate — our children and their teachers through ‘democracy’ training,” she wrote.

Schnell, who has a teaching degree, insisted that she does not believe school staff are intentionally trying to corrupt children. “The way I see it is that ASD is the keeper of the well. . . . They might not be the ones poisoning the water, but they have let the poison seep into . . . our schools by adopting false educational ideas which stem from radical progressives.”

Schnell eventually teamed up with Oak Norton, a long-time watchdog of the ASD. Norton operates a website, UtahsRepublic.org, and has his own mission to inform and mobilize Utah county parents on local education issues.

And mobilize they did. A petition on the website has more than 700 signers so far, including six state legislators. The petition calls for a change of history textbooks, the modification of several history

(See *Parents Awakened*, page 4)



“Enculturating the Young into a Social and Political Democracy”

Taxpayers Misled about Real Costs of Public Schools

The amount Americans spend on education has risen dramatically and consistently over the past century, with a 25% increase in per-student costs between 1995 and 2005, even after adjusting for inflation. In fact, public education spending accounted for more than a third of state general funds in 2007, according to the National Association of State Budget Officers.

Yet taxpayers are regularly asked to reach deeper into their pockets for public schools, all the while having little to no idea how much their district is already spending per child each year. A report released in March by the Cato Institute explains how figures provided by offi-

much money Americans dedicate to public education.

Cato reviewed district records and state budgets for the nation’s five largest metro areas (Phoenix, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Houston), and in the District of Columbia to compare real versus stated costs. Their analysis revealed that, on average, per-student spending in these areas is 44% higher than officially reported.

Real spending per student ranges from a low of nearly \$12,000 in Phoenix area schools to a high of nearly \$27,000 in the New York metro area. The gap between real and stated per-pupil expendi-



	Real Public School Cost	Stated Public School Cost	Median Private School Cost	Higher than Stated School Cost	Higher than Private School Cost
High-Income District Avg.	\$19,171	\$13,408	\$9,173	46%	107%
Low-Income District Avg.	\$15,221	\$11,580	\$9,173	28%	62%
Overall Avg.	\$17,889	\$12,550	\$9,173	44%	93%

cial and reported in the media often leave out major costs, and thus understate education spending.

Many district officials and other bureaucrats don’t believe that certain costs — health and retirement benefits, building and equipment costs, transportation expenses and debt payments — ought to be counted in the annual per-student figure. They have therefore devised a formula they call “current expenditures” that leaves out those very real and very expensive outlays. As a result, the most widely reported per-pupil spending figures give a grossly inaccurate impression of how

tures ranges from a low of 23% in the Chicago area to a high of 90% in the Los Angeles metro area.

The study also compared public school outlays per student to local private school outlays. In the areas studied, public schools are spending 93% more than the estimated median private schools.

Adam Schaeffer, Cato Institute policy analyst, concluded his report by recommending legislation requiring every district and state to publish up-to-date spending figures, fully inclusive of every dollar spent on K-12 education. “Our current economy makes this issue urgent,” he wrote.

EDUCATION BRIEFS

An Arizona school district filed a lawsuit against several taxpayers seeking to bar them from asking for public school records, or suing over any of the district's actions or records. District officials allege the multiple requests over several years constitute harassment. An attorney with the Goldwater Institute, which is defending the taxpayers, said officials are trying to silence people who criticize the district's policies and handling of tax monies. Liz Hill, assistant state ombudsman for public access, said she is unaware of any other instance in which a government agency went to court to block access to records that by law must be available to citizens. (wnd.com, 3-11-10)

Van Jones, Obama's former 'green jobs' czar, will teach environmental politics at Princeton University. Eddie Glaude, chair of the Center for African-American Studies, welcomed Jones' one-year appointment as an opportunity to help transform the nation's understanding of environmental justice. Jones spoke of using "green" jobs to bring down capitalism in a 2005 Uprising Radio interview, and blamed "white polluters and white environmentalists" for "steering poison" into minority neighborhoods. (foxnews.com, 2-24-10)

Most young adults who graduated from high school in the last 4 to 12 years say guidance counselors offered little meaningful advice about college or careers, according to a new study by research organization Public Agenda. The study revealed that 67% of respondents rated their counselor as "poor or fair" at helping them choose a college; 54% gave similar ratings for help with the application process, and almost half the graduates said counselors left them feeling "like I was just another face in the crowd." Researchers noted that counselors spend much of their time dealing with discipline issues and sorting out scheduling and other administrative mix-ups, leaving little time for student counseling. (New York Times, 3-3-10)

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How Schools are Failing Boys

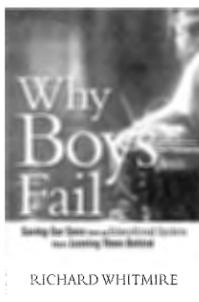
The grim statistics keep coming: boys are twice as likely as girls to repeat a grade, and 32% of boys drop out of school compared to 25% of girls. Girls have long been recognized to have a verbal advantage over boys; now in many states, girls do slightly better on math tests as well. Women have earned 57% of bachelor's degrees for the last decade.

It's no surprise to educators that American boys are lagging behind girls academically. What is a surprise, says Richard Whitmire, is how slow the education establishment has been to acknowledge the problem, much less identify the causes and enact remedies. Whitmire, author of *Why Boys Fail*, has spent the last several years examining the issue, and believes he's found at least some of the answers.

The central problem, he says, is that kids are now expected to use literacy skills at increasingly younger ages. Kindergartners are now expected to do work previously assigned to second graders, thanks to the standards and accountability movement and "No Child Left Behind" laws. Since boys take longer to develop verbal competencies, they start off behind and never recover. Whitmire says that two or three decades ago, boys usually caught up by the fourth or fifth grade; today, in most schools, they don't.

What has changed in the last few decades? Whitmire blames instructional trends such as whole-language reading, which emphasizes the recognition of words based upon context rather than using the decoding skills of phonics training. He also feels that many of the books assigned in school appeal to girls, but bore the boys.

Many boys favor action and gore when it comes to writing assignments, but teachers tend to discourage that kind of imagination for fear it will lead to real-life violence. When limited to topics girls find interesting, boys learn to dislike writing.



Even math classes, once an arena in which boys could discover their strengths, have become more verbal. Math used to focus more on calculations, but now involves analyzing lots of word problems.

Boy troubles aren't limited to the U.S., and Whitmire's quest for solutions led him to Australia, where political correctness hasn't kept educators from admitting and addressing the problem, though they have yet to fully fix it. In just one year, a grammar school there was able to close the gender imbalance among its best students. How? The school switched to a phonics-based reading program, broke the curriculum into manageable "chunks" to aid organizationally challenged boys, introduced some single-sex classrooms, and held parent-teacher conferences well before exams to give parents a heads up if their kids were in trouble.

Another education policy researcher, Martin Morse Wooster, agrees with some of Whitmire's remedies, but has sharp criticism for others. Wooster, author of *Angry Classrooms, Vacant Minds*, concurs with a return to phonics instruction, and applauds Whitmire's call for more volunteer tutors to help boys struggling to read.

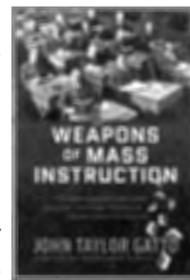
However, Wooster says, Whitmire's suggestions show he's spent too long in Washington, because "His first solution is that the federal government should launch a national commission. . . . He should know that most reports by national commissions are unread." Wooster also characterizes a proposal to give boys comic books and graphic novels to read as "dubious," and recommends instead "a good selection of fiction with the action and adventure boys crave."

Whitmire's best solution, according to Wooster, is to "remind teachers to work harder to make sure that all children succeed in the classroom." Wooster refers to the KEY Academy, a Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) charter school in Southeast Washington that Whitmire visited as part of his research. There is no test-score gender gap there, Wooster asserted, "because KIPP believes that long school days and hardworking students and teachers result in boys doing as well as girls on standardized tests." (Washington Times, 2-17-10)

Book of the Month



Weapons of Mass Instruction, John Taylor Gatto, New Society Publishers 2008, 215 pages, \$24.95.



Former New York State "Teacher of the Year" John Taylor Gatto has an urgent message for American parents: "School is not a good place for your kids," even if they get good grades.

The author is at pains to break the spell most are under about the purpose of modern education. We are told compulsory schooling is meant to help people achieve their personal best, but historical documents tell a different story. For example, a 1906 Rockefeller General Education Board document reads, "In our dreams . . . people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands."

William Torrey Harris, U.S. Commissioner of Education from 1889 to 1906, is shockingly blunt about his vision. "Ninety-nine [students] out of a hundred are automata," he said. "This is not an accident but the result of substantial education which, scientifically defined, is the subsumption of the individual."

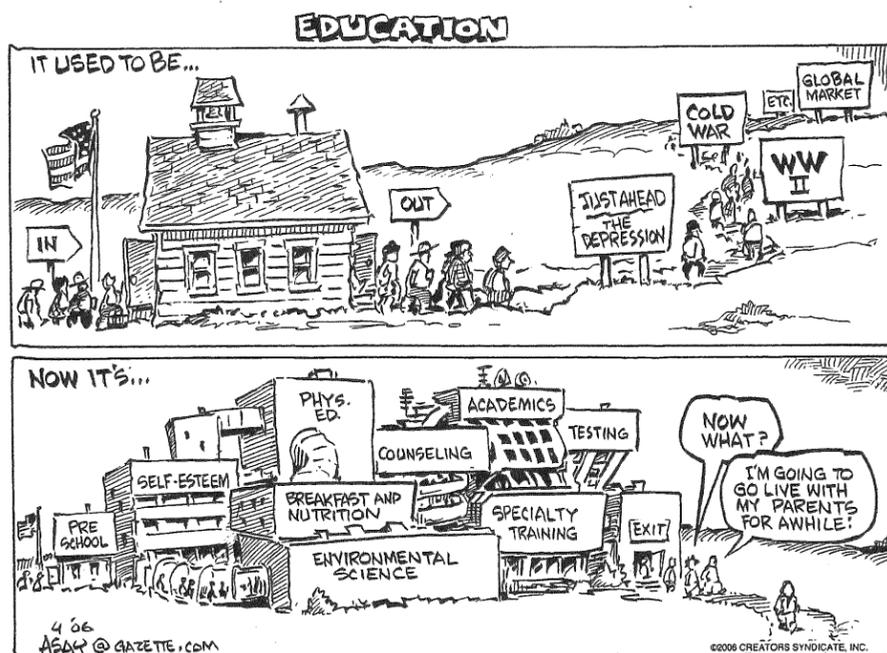
Harris regarded children as property of the state, and believed they ought to be alienated from families, traditions, religion and themselves so they would not pose a threat to the state or the industries they were trained to serve. Other powerful people concurred. Gatto knows it sounds incredible, so he piles on the evidence.

The 30-year teaching veteran also shows how the "open source," family and self-directed education common before the 20th century, served America quite well. It produced Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. He also tells the stories of modern men and women who succeeded without a college degree or even a high school diploma.

Modern schooling disconnects Americans from the "Western intellectual tradition that gave societies the greatest gift of personal liberties they had ever seen." Instead young minds are filled with disconnected facts and subjected to standardized tests that cripple imagination and real learning.

Gatto makes a case that 12 years of "incarceration" dulls the mind by stripping kids of real-world responsibilities that develop competence and confidence. Colonial-era children made vital contributions to family and society by age 12; modern education unnaturally lengthens childhood.

"Factory" schooling is now the largest industry in the U.S. Textbook publishers, building contractors, and bus companies benefit from a mass captive customer base just as much as teachers and administrators. Change must come from the bottom, insists Gatto, and he offers specific tactics for disarming the leviathan that is modern schooling.



FOCUS: Indoctrination in American Colleges

by David Horowitz

How bad is the indoctrination process in American colleges?

I had occasion to see for myself during a recent visit to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, a state school with 20,000 students. While I was there I audited an hour-and-a-half lecture about the Warren Court's landmark decisions on civil liberties by a highly respected political scientist named Sheldon Goldman, a nationally recognized expert in the field.

There are no open conservatives on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts, and none that the conservative students who were hosting me could identify. My student hosts were political science majors, and the absence of conservative professors was a real problem for them given the extreme and abusive nature of many of their professors. One professor gave an exam, for example, that consisted of a speech by President Reagan. The exam question was: Explain why Reagan is wrong. Another professor was a militant leftist who required a paper on the Vietnam War. To avoid the political minefield that confronted him, a student wrote a paper comparing military strategies for the war. The professor rejected the paper with the comment: "We shouldn't have been there in the first place."

When I entered Goldman's classroom I saw that half of my student hosts were present. They later told me taking his course provided some relief from the harassment they experience in other political science courses. These conservative students regard Goldman as the "best" and "fairest" professor on the University of Massachusetts faculty, someone who every now and then would vent a "liberal" sentiment or prejudice, but whose lectures were relatively free from bias and whose classroom behavior was respectful towards them. Political Science departments in my experience are more academic and less politicized than departments such as Anthropology, Sociology and the various inter-disciplinary fields (so-called Peace Studies, Cultural Studies, etc.) that tenured radicals have invented to establish their ideological claims.

Consequently, I was not prepared for what I encountered in Professor Goldman's classroom. I have previously suggested in my writings and lectures on universities that professors who use their classrooms as platforms for their political agendas represent a small but significant minority, which I have estimated to be about ten percent of any given faculty. The other ninety percent are scholars who are professional and observe the guidelines on academic freedom that enjoin faculty from presenting students with "ready-made conclusions" on controversial matters. Or so I thought. After audit-

ing Professor Goldman's course I will have to revise that judgment.

Let me begin by stating what I believe indoctrination to be and what it is not. Indoctrination is presenting opinion to students as though it were scientific fact or as though no rational, decent, and moral person could have any other view. It is the equivalent of presenting students with ready-made conclusions that they cannot realistically feel free to challenge. There are entire fields of study that are in fact programs of indoctrination. For example, all Women's Studies programs with which I am familiar are programs to train students to be radical feminists, and specifically to instill in them the doctrine that gender differences are "socially constructed" — that they are artificially created by male elites to subordinate and oppress women.



Prof. Sheldon Goldman

The social construction of gender is not a theory that students in Women's Studies courses are free to adopt or reject. It is taught in the same way university courses in physics teach Newton's laws of motion. When, at a recent academic conference, I confronted the president of the American Association of University Professors over

this very issue, he replied that he did indeed teach the social construction of gender as a scientific fact, but because he allowed students to take the opposite point of view it wasn't indoctrination. But what does it mean to let a student who is seeking a good grade argue against a scientific fact, except that you are allowing him to make a fool of himself?

Professor Goldman is not a radical and his presentation was of much subtler order, but its import was surprisingly similar. Let me be clear at the outset. If Professor Goldman had presented the rulings of the Warren Court along with the conservative objections to those rulings and then said that personally — and based on his own years of study — he was of the opinion that the Warren rulings were wise or correct, I would have no problem with his presentation, particularly since the students were confident that he was fair-minded in his treatment of them. But Professor Goldman did not do that. Instead he presented a series of landmark Warren Court decisions as a salesman for the Warren Court's point of view, and without giving the conservatives' concerns a proper day in his court. To put it more bluntly, Professor Goldman suppressed the conservative argument against the Warren Court so that no one sitting in the class who was not already familiar with it could think that any modern person, or any rational and moral person for that matter, could fail to approve what the Warren Court did.

In discussing the establishment of religion clause in the First Amendment, for example, he made it seem as though the issue was whether saying a prayer in school was a step in establishing religion

or whether it was too inconsequential to trigger concern. But this was not the gravamen of the conservative argument. The conservative position is that the establishment clause refers to the establishment of a particular religion rather than to an acknowledgment that a deity exists. After all, the Founders were, or were descended from, refugees who had fled to America as Christians persecuted by the Anglican Church, which as the established Church of England, could therefore use government powers against rival denominations. Mentioning a non-denominational "God" in the classroom may or may not qualify as the kind of establishment the Founders had in mind, but obviously reasonable, moral, and modern people can disagree on this matter — something no student in Goldman's class would understand from his lecture.

Goldman then turned to an even more important case, *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which as he pointed out, provided the constitutional basis for *Roe v. Wade*. This, as he did not point out, was a decision that can be said to have transformed the politics of this country by virtually creating a "religious right" opposition, turning Supreme Court nominations into political battles, and causing a polarization of the two major parties. Nor did he explain why this should be so.

The *Griswold* case involved a Connecticut law against contraceptives and was resolved when the Warren majority invented a "right to privacy," which Goldman conceded cannot be found in the actual Constitution. He then went on to argue in effect that a "right to privacy" should have been there, and to imply that we can be thankful that it was put there by Justice Douglas under the mysterious doctrine of "penumbras." Goldman made the case for the ruling by making fun of the Connecticut law, acting out an imaginary knock at the door by the contraceptive police coming to look into citizens' bedrooms. The effect was to insinuate that this was a stupid and dangerous law, and if we have to invent rights that aren't in the Constitution to get rid of it, well and good. They should have been there, and we as enlightened progressives are really obligated to supply them.

At no point do I remember Goldman reminding students that actually there was another way to get rid of a stupid and dangerous law, which was through the legislative process. This would avoid having nine unelected judges, appointed for life, rewriting the Constitution and substituting themselves for the electorate. The closest Professor Goldman came to recognizing this issue was a passing reference to Justice Stewart's dissent, in which he said that the majority decision was like having a constitutional convention every day.

At no point did Professor Goldman explain to students that the conservative opposition to the Warren Court decisions revolved around this absolutely critical point, or as the noted liberal law professor Mark Tushnet acknowledges, "To

conservatives, the Warren Court converted constitutional law into ordinary politics. . . ." By circumventing (really subverting) legislatures and the democratic process instead of merely applying the Constitution as written, the Warren Court liberals made the selection of a Supreme Court justice a momentous political act, which is why the Supreme Court nominations have since become such open political conflicts. Another result is that the Constitution, as written by the Founders, has been gravely weakened. That is the conservative argument that was absent from Professor Goldman's lecture.

All this would have been less problematic if the text Professor Goldman required his students to read for the course was not a partisan liberal view of the Court written by Jeffrey Toobin. It is not as though there aren't equally accessible conservative books about this very history. Robert Bork, a distinguished law professor and jurist (whose name was mentioned a few times in vain by Goldman) has written one, *The Tempting of America*. How difficult would it have been to assign students to read Bork's book alongside Toobin's? Then students could familiarize themselves with the arguments that Goldman left out of his presentation.

The classic 1915 statement on academic freedom from the American Association of University Professors declares:

"It is not the function of a faculty member in a democracy to indoctrinate his/her students with ready-made conclusions on controversial subjects. The faculty member is expected to train students to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials, which they need if they are to think intelligently. Hence, in giving instruction upon controversial matters the faculty member is expected to be of a fair and judicial mind, and to set forth justly, without super-cision or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators."

If Professor Goldman had followed these guidelines I would have had no problem with his personal judgments about the wisdom of the Warren Court. But he didn't, and therefore I do. The larger problem is this: what happens to a democracy when its educational institutions are converted into training and recruitment programs for one political party and its worldview?

David Horowitz is the author of *One Party Classroom: How Radical Professors at America's Top Colleges Indoctrinate Students and Undermine Our Democracy*. He is also the founder of *Students for Academic Freedom*, which now



David Horowitz

has chapters on more than 200 campuses, and has devised an *Academic Bill of Rights* to protect students from abusive professors.

SPIN A BUCKET OVERHEAD:

One Dad's Sneaky Feat for Educational Excellence

by Jay Payleitner

Eventually, every kid will learn to multiply. It usually happens late in second grade. They will also learn about "opposites." That's basic kindergarten curriculum. In fourth grade, most school districts teach centrifugal force. In middle school, kids will learn how to bisect an angle with a compass and a straight edge. Your school district should be able to tell you exactly what they teach and when.

When a teacher introduces new concepts to a class full of kids, three things happen. One, it's immediately considered *work*. There's no choice involved and students have to put effort into learning these new ideas. A good teacher may be able to make it interesting, but it's still work that needs to be done. Second, some kids pick up on the concept faster than others. My wife often reminds me that not everything is a competition, but wouldn't you prefer your own kid to be in the winner's bracket when it comes to new topics in the classroom? Third, kids start making instant judgments concerning their classmates. "He's so smart." "He's so dumb." You can't fight it — that's just the way it is. But again, shouldn't we be setting our kids up for achievement?

Here's an idea. Not the week before. Not the semester before. But *years* before, go ahead and teach a few of these concepts to your kids. Make it a game!

Do you know a three year old? Ask them "What's the opposite of *up*?" They won't know. Tell them with great sincerity, "The opposite of *up* is *down*!" Then ask them, "What is the opposite of *cold*?" They won't know. Tell them the "The opposite of *cold* is *hot*!" Do the same with big/little, loud/quiet, slow/fast, closed/open, nice/mean, clean/dirty, yes/no, off/on, etc. Use your best vocal expressiveness, use your hands, look in their face, mime the answer as you say it. After four or five examples, suddenly their little face lights up and they understand! It's amazing. It's a rush for them and for you. In a couple years, when the kindergarten teacher starts teaching "opposites," your kid is going to be top of the class. Suddenly, they will be earmarked as a bright student worthy of special attention the rest of their school career. This is strategic fathering. Going into kindergarten all the moms have already made sure their kids know colors, ABCs, and two plus two. But only your kid will know "opposites." The best part is that you taught them!

Do the same with multiplication when your kid is in first grade. But don't ask, "What is five times two?" That sounds confusing. That's work. Instead, ask "What is five, two times?" Use your hands as demonstration. Then ask, "What is four, two times?" Then ask, "What is four, three times!" A sharp first grader (your kid) will get it. Be warned, you've turned learning

into a game and they may never want to stop. That's when you know you have put them way ahead of the curve.

One more example. On the next nice day, invite your second grader out to your driveway to wash your car. Ask them if they think you can hold the bucket of water upside down over your head without spilling it. They will laugh and say "No way, daddy!" Then spin that bucket over your head without losing a drop. They'll be amazed, and you will have demonstrated centrifugal and centripetal force. (Look it up, if you don't remember.)

You can easily see how this concept can be applied to many life skills your kids need to know. Teach them to run hard through first base weeks before their first little league game. Take them for a drive around a big empty parking lot months before they begin driver's education. Help them commit to sexual purity years before their first date. Think about what future challenges your children will face, and prep them well ahead of time.

Are your kids smarter, more skilled or more athletic than all the others? It doesn't matter. This little bit of subterfuge is one of the great secrets of parenthood, especially for fathers. Dad, you're running a bit of a con game. Your kid may start out as average, but he or she won't be for long. Because everyone in that classroom has new heightened expectations for your child's performance.

Funny thing about expectations. They tend to come true.

Jay Payleitner is a radio producer, author and family man. This article is an excerpt from his latest book 52 Things Kids Need from a Dad. He blogs weekly at fathers52.com.



Social Studies Bias (Continued from page 1)

Hostilities escalated over presenting the religious beliefs of the Founding Fathers, and particularly on how the First Amendment should be taught. Knight proposed an amendment to teach students that "the Founding Fathers supported a strong wall of separation between church and state."

Republican member Ken Mercer countered that the Founders "did not want a separation from religion, they just wanted to avoid having a national denomination . . . one religion everyone would have to follow. I think they had a different understanding of religious freedom." Other Republican board members agreed that the First Amendment was written to protect rather than prohibit the practice of religion, and Knight's motion failed. (wnd.com, 3-15-10)

"Some board members and the non-expert ideologues they appointed to a review panel have made it clear that they want students to learn that the Founding Fathers intended America to be an explicitly Christian nation with laws based on their own narrow interpretations of the Bible," said Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, an organization whose mission is to "counter the religious right."

Former board chairman McLeroy said the efforts of conservatives were misconstrued and mischaracterized. "I don't see anyone wanting to say this is a Christian nation or anything like that," he said. "The argument is that the principles on which (the nation) has been founded are biblically based."

McLeroy found support for his position in the dean of the College of Humanities at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Derek Davis. "An education without some understanding of the profound role of religion in our nation's history and its contributions to our nation's success is an incomplete education, and our courts have often said as much," said Davis. (Education Week, 1-13-10)

The subject of minority inclusion and prominence in the guidelines was another ongoing area of controversy. Texas state legislator Eddie Rodriguez (D-Austin), rep-

resenting the Mexican-American caucus, came before the board to voice concerns about the absence of important Hispanic figures and groups in the history standards. Rodriguez asked the board to include Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America and member of the Democratic Socialists of America in the guidelines; member Pat Hardy (R-Fort Worth) informed him Huerta was already in the standards.

Other Hispanics such as Jose Antonia Navarro were added in response to the push for greater inclusion, but tensions rose when not every request was adopted. Mary Helen Berlanga, Democrat board member, stormed out of the room when members did not add the names of two Hispanic and one black Medal of Honor recipients to a history lesson. Berlanga was also upset that the board deleted a requirement that sociology students "explain how institutional racism is evident in American society." She accused her colleagues of "whitewashing" the curriculum standards, saying, "We can just pretend this is a white America and Hispanics don't exist."

Republican members argued that listing three Medal of Honor winners out of the thousands of those honored "diminishes the accomplishment of other recipients." Terri Leo (R-Spring) said, "I would rather give teachers the academic freedom to possibly pull a winner from that school, that those children can relate to and emulate."

Further examples of the changes the SBOE ultimately approved include restoring references to Independence Day, Thomas Edison, Christopher Columbus, Mother Teresa, Albert Einstein, Neil Armstrong and Daniel Boone that had been deleted. The board added the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms to a lesson on the Bill of Rights, an element conspicuously absent from some curricula.

Teachers and textbooks will be required to accurately describe the U.S. form of government as a constitutional republic rather than as a democracy. Depictions of Joseph McCarthy must include an explanation of "how the later release of the Verona papers confirmed suspicions of Communist infiltration in the U.S. government." The Verona papers are verified transcripts of communications between the Soviet Union and its agents in the U.S.

A section in the U.S. government standards will cover the concept of American exceptionalism and detail how the nation's values are unique from other nations. Alexis de Tocqueville's five values critical to America's success as a republic will also be delineated. In economics, the board added free-market economists Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek to the usual list of John Maynard Keynes, Adam Smith and Karl Marx.

The board, whose members are elected, voted ten to five along party lines to approve the revised standards, with the Republicans prevailing over the Democrats. Conservatives held only one seat 15 years ago, but have built up to seven of the ten GOP seats on the 15-member board now. A final vote on the Texas standards is expected in May, after another public comment period. (Education Week, 3-1-10; New York Times, 3-13-10)

Parents Awakened (Continued from page 1)

and government curriculum standards, and a resolution concerning Constitution Day in the schools.

At least 200 parents jammed into several rooms and a hallway at the last school board meeting. ASD board president Debbie Taylor opened with a statement calling the web link a "serious mistake" that does not represent the values of the district. Officials repeatedly said they appreciated the concerns of parents, but continued to defend the district's actions.

Parents were not easily mollified. Schnell was the first to respond to the board. "Our children . . . are being uninformed and misinformed of our great American heritage. We have been naïve, too trusting, and too busy to notice. . . . We put our trust in our government leaders, including this school board, and [you] have let us down. . . . If this nation does become 'fundamentally transformed' like so many of our progressive government leaders are trying so hard to accomplish, I do not want to look my children in the

eye and tell them I did nothing to save it," she said to sustained applause.

Parents spoke respectfully to the board, but were firm in their insistence on systemic change. "It is not the end of the discussion," said a father who owns a company that maintains websites. He said a socialist web link could not accidentally appear on the district webpage, as officials have claimed, because people are intentional about their website designs. "For me, it is kind of an awakening."

"We hope a new mission statement will focus less on adults and their politics and more on excellence in academics," said a parent who received a standing ovation from the audience. Several others warned district officials that simply removing socialist 'code words' from the district mission statement would not adequately address the issue. Parents found "entire phrases that come from socialism or social democracy" in a hallway brochure about the district, and were adamant that the district's philosophy must change.