

# EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 304

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

MAY 2011

## Free Lunches Feed School Coffers

The Chicago Tribune incited much outrage last month when it reported that a West Side elementary school principal prohibits students from bringing lunch from home. Little Village Academy principal Elsa Carmona told the reporter her intention was to protect students from their own poor nutritional choices.

Reporter Monica Eng was interviewing Little Village students in the cafeteria about the new healthier lunches being served in Chicago schools this year when young Fernando Dominguez took an impromptu poll of his lunch mates. “Who thinks the lunch is not good enough?” the seventh-grader shouted out in Spanish and in English.

Dozens of fellow students raised their hands and began shouting with young Dominguez, “We should bring our own lunch! We should bring our own lunch! We should bring our own lunch!”

The students went on to explain that they had to take a school-provided lunch or go hungry because home-packed lunches weren’t allowed. Some students took a cafeteria lunch, but still went hungry, because they threw most of it in the trash.

Principal Carmona said she instituted the policy six years ago after she noticed kids who brought “bottles of soda and flaming hot chips” on field trips for lunch. Kids with allergies or medical issues are exempted from the rule.

“Nutrition wise, it is better for the children to eat at the school,” said Carmona. “It’s about the nutrition and the excellent quality food that they are able to serve (in the cafeteria). It’s milk versus a Coke.”

Carmona said the no-sack-lunch policy was fairly common in Chicago, but could not name any other schools that employed it. A Chicago Public Schools spokeswoman said she did not know how many schools prohibit packed lunches, and that individual principals

why parents at the school have not felt compelled to complain about the cafeteria lunch mandate — they don’t have to pay the \$2.25 daily lunch fee. (Students who qualify for reduced-price lunches pay no more than 40 cents per meal.)

Still, Little Village parent Erica Martinez said that because some of the kids don’t like the cafeteria food, “it would be a good idea if they could bring their lunch so they could at least eat something.”

But parent Miguel Medina said he thinks the policy is a good one. “The school food is very healthy, and when they bring the food from home, there is no control over the food.”

Who should have control over something as basic as what kids eat is the central issue, of course. “This is such a fundamental infringement on parental responsibility,” said J. Justin Wilson, a senior researcher at the Washington-based Center for Consumer Freedom.

Many people agreed, and the story struck a nerve with a nation already debating personal responsibility and choice versus government intervention and regulation. The media attention and public outcry eventually persuaded the Little Village principal to reverse course, and Carmona now says she doesn’t impose the policy.

Amidst all the controversy, an obvious question remained unasked: Do schools have incentives beyond the nanny-state impulse to heavily promote — or require, in the case of Little Village Academy — school lunch participation? In fact, they do.

The federal government pays the district a set fee for each free, reduced-price, and even every paid lunch a student takes (\$2.72, \$2.32, and 26 cents, respectively). State governments are required to contribute matching funds equal to at least 30% of their 1980 federal grant amount; local governments often contribute additional funds.

The local food supplier receives a portion of those reimbursement funds, typically around \$1. Schools use the rest of the money to pay for food service equipment, administrative costs, and wages (many cafeteria workers are unionized and make a lot more money than you might expect).

Local school authorities set the prices students pay for full- and reduced-price lunches. Schools are supposed to operate their meal service as non-profit programs, but that doesn’t necessarily equate to a lean operation that gets the most bang for the taxpayers’ buck. Schools may not show a profit *per se*, but they may direct food-service subsidies towards the expenses of administrative departments that

(See *Free Lunches*, page 4)



make that decision.

“While there is no formal policy, principals use common sense judgment based on their individual school environments,” Monique Bond wrote in an email. “In this case, this principal is encouraging healthier choices and attempting to make an impact that extends beyond the classroom.”

In the case of Little Village Academy students, more than 99.9% of the 733 students are low-income and 99.6% are Hispanic. The fact that most, if not all, of the students receive free lunches may explain

## ‘Common Core’ Tests Ahead

Now that the new common standards in mathematics and English/language arts have been adopted by all but six states, the two state consortia tasked with developing the tests face concerns that expectations may outpace state technology resources and budgets.

The federal government gave the two groups — the 25-state SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the 26-state Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) — \$360 million to design the tests and expects them to be fully operational for the 2014-2015 school year.

Each consortium must develop end-of-year computer-based tests for each subject and grade level, along with optional interim benchmark tests that teachers can use to gauge student progress and adapt

instruction during the year. The consortia’s “visions of grandeur,” as Utah’s assessment director John Jesse characterized them, call for portals through which test results can be accessed and analyzed. There are plans for the difficulty level of questions to adapt as students progress through the test, for accommodations for limited English proficiency learners and kids with disabilities, and more.

“The amount of innovation we’ll be able to carry off [by 2014] is not going to be that much,”

warned Joseph Willhoft, the executive director of SBAC. “There’s an expectation that out of the gate this [testing] is going to be so game-changing, and maybe after four or five years it will be game-changing, but not immediately.”

(See *Common Core*, page 4)



## Union Thuggery 101

The University of Missouri is receiving some unwanted attention after conservative website BigGovernment.com posted video clips from a course on organized labor. Lecture comments from the two instructors sounded more like a seminar in coercive organizing and negotiating tactics than a college-level survey of the American Labor movement.

The videos show course instructors Judy Ancel, director of the Institute for Labor Studies, and Don Giljum, a self-described Communist and business manager of the union representing Missouri power company Ameren UE workers, describing various “creative” union negotiating tactics.

In one clip, Giljum relates a story about how his union gained concessions from management. “So we made all kinds of overtones about sabotaging the equipment,” he said. He described how workers put a “strategically placed screwdriver” near equipment and placed articles about equipment sabotage all around the plant, though he made it clear no equipment was actually sabotaged.

The tape also shows Giljum explaining how to make labor negotiations “personal.” His tells how his union members stalked a company CEO at church and in shopping malls in order to “bump into him” and ask how negotiations were going. Giljum said the CEO was so intimidated that he started wearing a “flak jacket” on the plant floor because he was afraid of being shot.

For her part, instructor Judy Ancel stated that “Violence is a tactic, and it’s to be used when it’s the appropriate tactic.”

Ancel also approvingly told a story about a friend in Peru. His union “couldn’t get access to strike” at the heavily guarded electrical plant, so they sent feral cats into the facility. She explained that “the cats would run around inside and short out

the system and cause power blackouts. And that created enough chaos in the system to get to a negotiating position.” Plus, she joked, they “got rid of a lot of feral cats.”

The University of Missouri and Ancel both charge that the offending clips were a “chop shop” job and, in Ancel’s words, “arranged . . . to give the appearance that instructors of the class advocate violence.” Insurgent Visuals, the group that obtained, edited and released the videos, responded with its own statement denying that the edited clips “distort the context” of Ancel’s and Giljum’s remarks and offered a rebuttal of Ancel’s specific complaints.

“The fundamental context,” said the rebuttal from Insurgent Visuals, “is that [Ancel] and Giljum discussed violence — and militancy, and intimidation, and law-breaking — in the course of teaching impressionable students how to get results through union organizing.” The group also asked why Ancel had not demanded that the university release the full lectures if the clips were so misrepresentative of her remarks, so that the public could make their own decision.

The fallout from the videos is ongoing. St. Louis Tea Party activist Bill Hennessy urged people to “melt the phones” to demand the end of labor studies at the taxpayer-funded university. Giljum submitted his resignation to the university and also resigned from his local and international union positions under pressure from AFL-CIO attorney Ron Gladney, according to the pro-labor website Labor Notes (4-28-11). (BigGovernment.com, 4-25-11 through 5-3-11; columbiatribune.com, 4-25-11; stlouis.cbslocal.com, 4-28-11)



## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**Home-schooler Joel Northrup gave up his shot at the Iowa state wrestling championship rather than compromise his beliefs.** Northrup had every reason to dream of winning the championship after achieving a 35-4 record during the regular season, but found himself matched with a girl. "Wrestling... can get violent at times," he said. "As a matter of conscience and my faith I do not believe that it is appropriate for a boy to engage a girl in this manner." (*Star Tribune*, 2-17-11)

**An Ohio teacher has been fired for teaching students to think critically about theories of evolution and failing to remove a Bible from his classroom.** John Freshwater received positive evaluations throughout his 21-year tenure at Mount Vernon Middle School and is the only science teacher at the school to achieve a "passing" score on the Ohio Achievement Test. His students also earned the highest state standardized test scores of any 8<sup>th</sup>-grade class in the district. Freshwater is appealing his termination in state court. (Rutherford.org, 4-11-11)

**Head Start got a \$340 million increase for a total of \$7.57 billion in the latest federal spending bill, despite Republican efforts to cut the program by \$1 billion.** A 2010 government report concluded enrollment in the program makes no significant difference in a child's academic performance by the end of first grade. Additionally, last year a Government Accountability Office undercover operation reported that eight of the fifteen Head Start centers investigated committed fraud in order to boost enrollment. (NationalReview.com, 3-11-11)

**A Seattle elementary school told a volunteer she could give a third-grade-class plastic eggs filled with candy only if she called them "spring spheres," but the class had other ideas.** When the teacher exclaimed, "Oh look, spring spheres!" the kids shouted out, "Wow! Easter eggs!" (mynorthwest.com, 4-7-11)

*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.

Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>  
E-mail: [education@eagleforum.org](mailto:education@eagleforum.org)

## Court Rules For Fuzzy Math

The Discovery series of math textbooks, based on "fuzzy" or "discovery" principles, started appearing in classrooms across the nation in 2007. By the time the school board in liberal Seattle was considering adopting the series for high school students, enough parents in the area were aware of its failures to strongly oppose it.

The Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors voted 4-3 to adopt the series anyway, despite strong parental objections and testimony that the texts were "unsound" from mathematicians working for the State Board of Education.

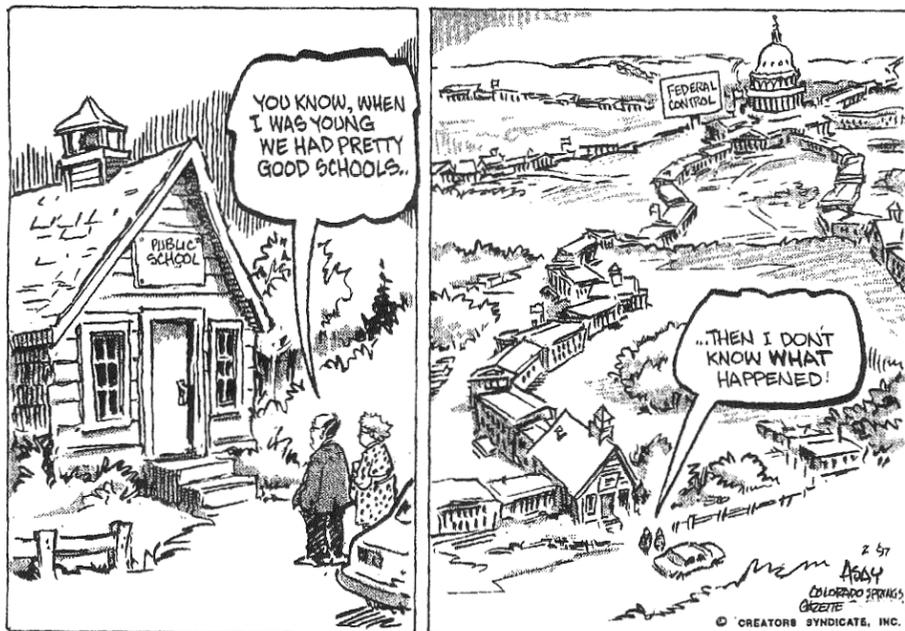
The books are based on "discovery" or "reform" math that replaces learning basic skills such as addition, multiplication, and division with class discussion, group projects, object manipulation, "exploration," and heavy use of calculators.

The theory behind this approach is that kids need to "discover" the age-old principles of math for themselves in order to master and apply them effectively.

Dr. Jack Lee, a well-known professor at the University of Washington, was one of numerous mathematicians who strongly urged the Seattle district *not* to adopt the Discovery series. Regarding the *Discovering Algebra* text, he wrote, "these books have far too much verbiage for students to read, and too little in the way of clearly stated mathematical principles. Definitions, computational algorithms, and formulas seem to be stated vaguely when they are stated at all." Lee also said the *Discovering Geometry* text represented a "highly risky and experimental approach to teaching" that "while well-intentioned, is unlikely to have the desired effect."

Another University of Washington

(See *Fuzzy Math*, page 4)



## 'White Privilege' Conference Spared Budget Axe

Minnesota's Lakeview school district needs to get its priorities straight. Back in February, the school board cut the budget by \$7 million. As a result, 94 teachers will be laid off, an elementary school will close, and art programs will lose funding. What was spared? Not just reading, writing, and arithmetic. The school sent a delegation of teachers to the 12th annual White Privilege Conference in Minneapolis this April, costing taxpayers a \$160 registration fee per teacher attending, plus \$120 per day for substitute teachers.

According to its website, the White Privilege Conference is "built on the premise that the U.S. was started by white people, for white people." One example of white privilege, according to the website, is "being able to assume that most of the people you or your children study in history classes and textbooks will be of the same race, gender, or sexual orientation as you are." In the

2010 conference journal, *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege*, keynote speaker Paul Kivel said, "Our school system has been set up, among other reasons, to perpetuate white supremacy and white privilege. . . . Students of color and low-income students in general do not drop out — they are pushed out." He goes on to say that "Christianity has also played a key role in developing and justifying systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, colonialism, and genocide."

Speech titles for the 2011 conference included "Mi America: Thievery, White Supremacy and the American Continent" by Jorge Zaballos, "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander,

(See *Conference*, page 4)

## Book of the Month



**The Five-Year Party**, Craig Brandon, Benbella Books 2010, 235 pages, \$14.95.

College tuition is climbing at three times the rate of inflation even as recent studies show students are learning very little. Veteran education reporter and former college journalism professor Craig Brandon charges that as many as 400 colleges have become more like expensive adolescent resorts than institutions of higher learning.

These "sub-prime" schools advertise a university education to parents and taxpayers, but deliver a non-stop party to students who want a diploma but not an education. The primary goal for these schools is student retention, which keeps the tuition dollars and taxpayer funding flowing. Satisfying students takes precedence over all else, and education is optional.

These schools spend millions on deluxe features in order to attract students looking for the best party while parents, taxpayers, and student loans pick up the tab. For example, the University of Houston has a five-story climbing wall surrounded by boulders and palm trees, Washington State University boasts a Jacuzzi that seats 53, and The Ohio State University is spending \$140 million to build an entertainment complex with kayaks and canoes, indoor batting cages, ropes courses, and more.

If students are too distracted by drinking parties and entertainment options to actually go to class and study, it's no big deal. Professors are pressured to dumb down courses and give only As and Bs to all students, notwithstanding actual class attendance or academic performance.

Even though little is required of them, many students now take five years to complete a four-year degree. Sub-prime colleges actually view this trend favorably because it means another year of income from the same customers (otherwise known as students).

A party-school campus can also be quite dangerous because of rampant binge-drinking; 1,700 college students a year die from alcohol abuse and an estimated 100,000 are the victims of sexual assault and date rape. Another 100,000 report being too drunk to remember if they gave sexual consent. Even nondrinkers are victims of drunken assaults and property damage.

The book also exposes the drastic steps party schools use to cover up student crimes. Officials hide behind federal privacy laws as an excuse not to notify parents about even serious issues such as addictions or felony arrests.

Brandon concludes with smart questions parents can ask to identify and avoid sending their children to party schools. One of the best: How many of the school's professors send their own kids there?

# FOCUS: Teachers Unions Working Feverishly to 'Organize' Charter Schools

By Kyle Olson

One of the things I've always liked about charter schools is they aren't bound by onerous labor agreements that hamper innovation. Traditional public schools get boxed in with union contracts that literally stipulate when a teacher arrives in the morning and when he or she must depart. And that's just the beginning of union-imposed regulations.

In charter schools, the interest of the students comes first, so adults oftentimes find themselves going above and beyond to ensure that students succeed. In the documentary "Kids Aren't Cars," the story was told of Tindley Accelerated School in Indianapolis. The principal said his teachers stay late and work Saturdays if necessary because they do not accept failure.

That's why it is disturbing to watch labor unions organize charter school after charter school, with little being done about it. Their intent is clear. Consider what United Federation of Teachers Vice President Leo Casey said at the recent socialist Left Forum, courtesy of EAGTV (Education Action Group TV):

If we do not figure out how to organize charter schools and if we are not successful in doing that, we will end up in the same place as the auto workers. So there is no more key question before us as a union and a broader labor movement with regard to education than how we approach charter schools and our ability to organize them.

What he's saying is that the United Auto Workers unionized Ford, General Motors and Chrysler and ignored foreign competitors. As foreign market shares grew, the UAW's membership rolls suffered. Casey's envisioning a similar scenario with school employee unions.

He doesn't care if charter schools benefit students. He just knows that they hurt his union, so they must be changed as soon as possible.

"Organizing a charter school is like organizing WalMart. This is not traditional public sector organizing," Casey went on to say, pounding his fist on the table. To say Big Labor has a distaste for WalMart is an understatement, so the comparison is all the more insulting to charters.

He continued on the WalMart theme, which would make one wonder if the union campaign to organize charter schools is because they believe charter teachers want their representation, or because a unionized charter school will soon turn into a run-of-the-mill, substandard school.

"The battle has to be to organize those schools. If those schools are organized, do you think WalMart is going to be pouring money into them?" Casey's strategy is a political one, not one born of a desire to create quality schools.

Stanley Aronowitz, a professor, union activist and former Green Party candidate for governor, also spoke at the event and concurred with Casey, "I'm for the position that charter schools are

ratty and should be abolished yet at the same time we should organize them — I agree with that position."



It is a shame teachers unions, principally the American Federation of Teachers, are unionizing charter schools simply as a power play

— not because those teachers are seeking to organize or because unionizing creates a better education. It's further proof that teachers unions look out for the adults instead of the children.

*Kyle Olson is the founder and CEO of Education Action Group Foundation, a non-partisan non-profit organization with the goal of promoting sensible education reform. Readers can learn more at EducationActionGroup.org. This article was reprinted by permission.*

## The Toxic Influence of Progressive Education on K-12 Curricula

By Chuck Rogér

In the 1960s, America's education schools began conditioning teachers to peddle impossible social and economic theories to captive human sponges in K-12 classrooms. Since then, teachers taken in by progressive indoctrination have been planting fallacies in students' minds using a pernicious device: the "deconstruction" of reality.

Deconstruction aims to disassemble traditional Western culture and replace that culture with a collectivist utopia operated under rules set by the deconstructors. Between Inauguration Day 2009 and the January 2011 GOP House takeover, a congressional wrecking crew led by President Barack Obama did an amazing amount of deconstructing.

The ouster of much of the wrecking crew in last November's election was a small step toward stopping America's descent into a utopian hell. But it is the 2008 election of a full-bore statist and the statist's still-decent approval rating which suggest that too many Americans embrace socialist-collectivist promises. Such naïveté and ignorance of socialism's miserable track record are stunning.

Though naïveté will always afflict some people, ignorance can be corrected by objective education and heightened awareness. One thing is certain. The non-stop flow of pre-primed, left-indoctrinated university graduates must be stopped, which means that the K-12 education system that feeds the universities must be rehabilitated.

Cleaning up K-12 requires understanding how schools devolved into left-wing ideology centers.

Starting in the 1960s, academics took heightened interest in Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's cultural Marxism. Mem-

bers of the political class glommed onto the resulting "social justice," affirmative action, "diversity," multiculturalism, political correctness, and other malignancies spawned by cultural Marxism. Progressive politicians came to view society as a hodge-podge of racial, ethnic, gender-based, and now also sexual orientation-based groups locked in zero-sum combat with Western whites.

Generally speaking, cultural Marxism's indoctrinees have learned to view morality and knowledge as "constructs" and social and economic power as commodities to be transferred from "oppressor" to "oppressed." Progressives routinely label minorities as oppressed, and anything that benefits minorities as moral. Such thinking dominates the Democrat party platform.

In embracing Western middle class deconstruction, universities took a radical left turn. To ruinous effect, the radicalism gradually descended below freshman level. Cultural Marxism entered high school, then middle school, and now infests elementary schools as well as pre-schools. One illustration of the use of anti-wealth, anti-American fallacies in K-12 classrooms is the showing of the virulently anti-capitalist video, *The Story of Stuff*. The video presents baseless, hysterical vitriol as fact. For instance, school-

children are told that:

... extraction ... is a fancy word for natural resource exploitation, which is a fancy word for trashing the planet. What this looks like is we chop down trees, we blow up mountains to get the metals inside, we use up all the water and we wipe out the animals.

Thousands of schools and churches have the video, while hundreds of teachers have required students to view the propaganda on the Internet. Googling the phrase, "The Story of Stuff," nets 2.2 million hits, and though the web buzzes with concern over exposing schoolchildren to the video's venomous distortions, interspersed amid the alarm is a shocking amount of gushing praise.

What motivates such praise? What motivates teachers to bias students against capitalism? Answers lie within education schools that influence K-12 teachers and curricula.

University of Arkansas researcher Sandra Stotsky found that education schools push "evidence-free theories" to influence curriculum development. One theory, "constructivism," argues that children learn best by constructing class topics and methods in ways which leverage the children's personal experiences. The notion "feels" seductive, but contains no factual basis.

Constructivist theory recklessly assumes that racial, ethnic, gender-based, and sexual orientation-based subgroups learn what's truly important by absorb-

ing teacher-led dissection of Western middle class knowledge and values. Constructivism holds that after such cleansing, the subgroups should be qualified to select study topics of their choosing. The method aligns with the equally baseless views of early progressive education theorist John Dewey, who wanted children to specify "relevant [classroom] material."

Related to constructivism, "reader response theory" teaches students to ignore authors' actual words and assign preferred meanings to written works. Children are conditioned to believe that truth is relative to individual or tribal experience. Ayn Rand captured the tribalistic aspect of minority exploitation in her essay, "Global Balkanization." Rand observed that government "manufactures pressure groups," especially ethnic groups.

The profiteers are those group leaders who discover suddenly that they can exploit the helplessness, the fear, the frustration of their "ethnic" brothers, organize them into a group, present demands to the government — and deliver the vote.

By encouraging minorities to resist socioeconomic assimilation, progressive politicians maintain a nationwide nursery of government-dependent adults from which to draw lifelong votes and income. Progressive teachers steer students toward a strange-brew mindset of anti-assimilation, collectivism, diversity, and we-

(See K-12 Curricula, page 4)



**Free Lunches** *(Continued from page 1)*

peripherally support cafeteria operations (such as human resources and accounting), thus reducing expenses in other departments. Additionally, schools often pay inflated union wages to cafeteria workers. When the wastefulness of kids throwing away large amounts of food is factored in, it's not exactly an efficient operation.

Moreover, schools have plenty of financial incentives for increasing the number of students who receive free and reduced-price lunches. That is because free and reduced-price lunch percentages are commonly used to quantify how many low-income students attend a school, and those numbers determine how much Title I funding a school gets.

Schools are also assigned an "E-rate" based on how many students receive free and reduced-price lunches. An "E-rate" refers to the discount schools and libraries get on telecommunication services. At 20- to 90% off regular service rates, these discounts can be substantial.

If a school has at least 50% of children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, it also receives the highest possible allowance for after-school snacks served through the National School Lunch Program and meals served through the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Some predominantly low-income schools also get government funding to serve free meals to any child in the community during the summertime, whether or not they attend school there, or anywhere, for that matter. Presumably, that funding provides more summer income for school employees who administer the program as well.

Clearly schools have numerous incentives besides "good nutrition" to bulk up the numbers of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches. Most school administrators are probably pretty savvy with regard to maximizing available funding, but if they are new to the game, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) and its affiliates stand ready to help.

According to the Philanthropedia website, FRAC "leads national efforts to improve and expand the reach of programs such as food stamps, school lunch and breakfast, after school and summer food, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program." FRAC has been instrumental in driving legislation and filing lawsuits that have expanded food stamp and other food programs to millions of people since 1970.

In accord with their mission, FRAC provides a manual to help school admin-

istrators "optimize" federal reimbursement rates and "leverage additional funding" by maximizing the number of students who receive free and reduced-price lunches.

An example in the manual shows how schools that miss the opportunity to classify just 75 students at the free rate and 25 students at the reduced-price rate forgo \$63,090 in federal reimbursements over the course of one school year.

One way FRAC advises schools to "aggressively" qualify students for free meals is to use "direct certification" for students already receiving food stamp benefits or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Those families need express no interest in free school lunches to be signed up for the program; all the school has to do is provide student enrollment information to the food stamp office, which will match up the names and add those students to the free lunch list. Homeless, runaway and migrant children are automatically qualified as well.

For families not already receiving government food assistance, FRAC tells schools how to conduct a "campaign to collect meal applications from the remaining student population." One suggestion is to offer prizes, such as a "\$500 office supply gift card to schools that collect over 90 percent of their meal applications," or to give "sporting event tickets to classrooms" with a high application return rate.

FRAC also suggests making the application for free and reduced-lunches "accessible" to parents by filling the forms out with as much student information as possible before asking parents to complete them. Schools should also work with community groups to promote the lunch subsidy program and have applications available in all languages spoken by the parents, according to FRAC.

With or without tips from FRAC, schools are enrolling millions of kids in the subsidized program. Taxpayers forked over \$9.7 billion during fiscal year 2010 for the National School Lunch Program.

On a typical school day, 31.6 million children sit down to a school cafeteria lunch. Twenty million of them — that's 63% — receive free or reduced-price lunches. Will 63% of American school kids really go hungry if taxpayers don't feed them? Or are there what economists call "perverse incentives" in place that reward schools for signing up as many kids as possible for free or reduced-price lunches? (*Chicago Tribune*, 4-11-11 and 4-12-11)

**Conference** *(Continued from page 2)*

and "White Supremacy, the Colonial Commodification of the Land, and the Corporate Structure" by Steve Martinot. In a blog post, a conference alumnus quoted from Martinot's speech that "Slavery, not wage labor, is the basis of capitalism." Another speaker, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, was quoted in the same blog as saying, "The colonists who came to this country might as well have been wearing Nazi uniforms."

This education-focused conference was attended by hundreds of teachers,

and was sponsored by several colleges including the University of Colorado, the University of Minnesota, Hamline University, and Augsburg College. College and high school students were also invited, and could earn one to four hours of academic credit for attending the conference. But is this really education? Niger Innis of the Congress of Racial Equality said on the Sean Hannity Show that "it's absurd, it's disgusting, it's outrageous and it's a mis-education of our children." (*Star Tribune*, 4-9-11; [changefromwithin.org](http://changefromwithin.org), 4-20-11; [foxnews.com](http://foxnews.com), 4-12-11)

**FuzzyMath** *(Continued from page 2)*

professor, Cliff Mass, joined with a retired math teacher and a parent in filing suit to overturn the school board's decision. Mass wrote on his blog that discovery math is "essentially dumbed down for 'equity' reasons," and argued that the curriculum would widen the achievement gap between middle-class and underprivileged students ([cliffmass.blogspot.com](http://cliffmass.blogspot.com), 1-23-10).

Seattle Public Schools have actually been using discovery math at elementary, middle and high schools for several years. Mass offered evidence that discovery math is hampering student achievement in the form of a chart showing the five-year average pass rate on the state math exam for various groups of students.

**Common Core** *(Continued from page 1)*

A major concern is whether school districts have the technological capacity to handle large-scale computer-based testing. For instance, if a school's internet router can't handle 60 or 70 computers at once, a social studies teacher trying to stream video during class could encounter problems if large numbers of students in another part of the building are taking tests.

Michael Russell, director of the Nimble Innovation lab at assessment company Measured Progress in Dover, New Hampshire, also warned the consortia that it might not be possible to deliver tests the same way on a tablet computer as a desktop "without measurement effects." That lack of flexibility is likely to increase pressure on districts to base technology purchases on test compatibility rather than a more comprehensive consideration of student and teacher needs.

The state of Virginia began implementing online assessments in 2000, and state officials advised the consortia to

Blacks and low-income students in particular showed alarming declines in pass rates between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, and whites also suffered significant declines.

Such evidence persuaded King County Superior Court Judge Julie Spector to rule in February 2011 that the board's decision to adopt the Discovery series was "arbitrary and capricious," but the victory was short-lived.

In March, a Washington State Court of Appeals unanimously overturned her decision, not because they found "fuzzy math" superior, but because they did not find the textbook selection so unreasonable as to warrant court intervention. (*The Seattle Times*, 3-28-11 and 5-29-09; [seattlepi.com](http://seattlepi.com), 2-3-10)

address even the most basic questions of capacity. They recounted how one rural district decided to charge the batteries in all its laptop computers overnight; the heating system in every building shut down because the electrical circuits were overloaded. (Virginia did not adopt the common standards or join either assessment consortium.)

Scott Norton, Louisiana's assistant state superintendent for student and school performance, is more worried about another aspect of the project. "The cost makes me the most anxious," he said.

Federal grants do not include funding for administering the tests long-term, and future expenses associated with the assessments are unpredictable. "In today's world if we have a [testing] cost problem, we own that," said Norton. "We can print on lighter paper or something. I'm not sure that holds up when we don't own it alone. If we get into a test we can't afford, we're really left holding the bag." (*Education Week*, 4-12-11 and 4-19-11).

**K-12 Curricula** *(Continued from page 3)*

are-the-world-ness.

Stotsky points out that the "evidence-free" education school theory of "social justice" alleges that minority children learn best when encouraged to embrace grievances against middle-class whites. Social justice-indoctrinated teachers instill resentment in "non-dominant" (minority) children and guilt in "dominant" (white) children. Judging by the abundance of guilt-ridden white Americans, the tactic is working its magic well.

Social justice education deemphasizes knowledge retention and the development of traditionally productive skills. The theory's fanatical adherents maintain that teaching American history to blacks and Hispanics is oppressive. It's also oppressive to force blacks to "think like whites." "Diversity consultant" Glenn Singleton teaches that blacks must be excused from developing "annoying white characteristics, such as being 'task-oriented' and 'intellectual.'" Together, government dependency and social justice education have fashioned a super-progressivism turbocharged by cultural Marxism. Stunted black academic achievement and disintegration of the black family are but two of the many devastating results.

In truth, disintegration of not only the

black family but of wholesome tradition itself begins in preschool, as discussed in my introductory analysis of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky's influence on early childhood curricula. A study by Stanford education professor David Labaree frames the scope of disfiguration of America's education curricula. Education schools fit "solidly in the progressive camp." Teachers are conditioned to "integrate the disciplines," use "socially relevant themes," and push morally relativistic versions of "community, cooperation, tolerance, justice, and democratic equality" in ways that make the concepts appear noble, indeed innocent.

But there is no innocence in the effects of the progressive conditioning of teachers. More K-12 students than ever are now being manipulated through lesson plans warped into platforms for moralizing against capitalism, the white middle class, and America. The deconstruction of American society is proceeding. The ghosts of Gramsci, Dewey, and Vygotsky are probably smiling.

*A physicist and former high-tech executive, Chuck Rogér invites you to visit his website, [www.chuckroger.com](http://www.chuckroger.com). This article first appeared on 4-16-11 at [AmericanThinker.com](http://AmericanThinker.com) and is reprinted here by permission.*