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'Plan B' in NYC Schools

In addition to condoms already available at all New York City public high schools, "the morning after pill" Plan B, and Depo-Provera the every three months birth control injection, are now available at 13 NYC schools for girls as young as 14. The CATCH program (Connecting Adolescents to Comprehensive Health), designed to combat teen pregnancy, began in five schools during the 2011-12 school year and expanded to 13 schools for 2012-13.

Deborah Kaplan, assistant commissioner of the health department's Bureau of Maternal, Infant and Reproductive Health, told NBC News, "We've had no negative reaction to the CATCH program. We haven't had one objection. We've just had the opt-outs." However, once the program was publicized by an exclusive *New York Post* story on September 23, that changed.

The program quietly hummed along before exposure, but it and New York City Schools are now facing "widespread opposition and even potential legal backlash" according to the *Daily Backlash*. Mona Davids, president of the New York City Parents Union, said, "They can't even give our kids aspirin or Motrin without informed [parent] consent. This is a chemical hormonal drug cocktail." Davids' group is preparing litigation to stop the program. The New York City Parents Choice Coalition has protested on

City Hall steps demanding that the CATCH program be suspended.

Parents of students in the 13 schools were mailed a letter about CATCH and were required to sign and return a form to the school principal if they did not want their child to participate in the program. The school district claims that only 1-

2% of parents opted out of the program, but some parents claim they never received the letter. Other parents think that rather than having to opt out if they do not want their child to be

given contraceptives, parents should be required to opt in if they do want their child to participate in the program. The city doesn't normally use default consent, even for field trips.

Despite recent notable declines, the United States still leads the developed world in numbers of births to teenagers, which concerns public health officials. "In New York City, over 7,000 young women become pregnant by age 17 — 90% of which are unplanned," Alexandra Waldhorn, a health department spokeswoman, said. "We are committed to trying new approaches, like this pilot program in place since January 2011, to improve a situation that can have lifelong consequences." *NY Times*, 9-25-12

(See Plan B, page 4)



The Politics of Cafeteria Food

The start of the 2012-13 school year also marks the first stages of implementation of President and First Lady Obama's Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The law will increase federal spending on school nutrition programs by \$4.5 billion over the next ten years and, in its early days, the children aren't liking it.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, passed in 2010, is intended to improve the health benefits of school lunches throughout the country by limiting the levels of sodium, protein, calories, and fat, as well as increasing the servings of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains provided in school lunches. The nutritional requirements, such as the percentage of grains that must be whole-grain, will increase over the next few years. The law also includes provisions for offering qualified children three meals a day at their schools and even extending meal offerings into the summer.

This initiative is part of First Lady Obama's efforts to reduce childhood obesity. A recent report released by Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood

Johnson Foundation estimates that about one-third of American children are currently overweight. The report also reports that in the United States, the cost of treating preventable, obesity-related illnesses is currently between \$147-210 billion annually, and this spending could rise by another \$48-66 billion by 2030. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act is aimed at reducing both the rates and costs of obesity.

Concerning the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, the First Lady said:

We know that ensuring that kids eat right and stay active is ultimately the responsibility of parents more than anyone else. . . . But, when our kids spend so much of their time each day in school and when many kids get up to half of their daily calories from school meals, it's clear that we, as a nation, have a responsibility to meet as well. We can't just leave it up to the parents. I think that our parents have a right to expect that their efforts at home won't be undone each day in the school cafeteria or in the vending machine in the hallway.

While few would argue that school lunches meet the optimum levels of nutrition, this law raises questions about the federal government's right to influence

(See Cafeteria Food page 4)



ARE YOU GOING TO EAT THAT?

Chicago Teachers Union Strike

What could be more improbable than the Chicago Teachers Union demanding a 30% pay increase over the next two years when the Chicago Public School District already faces a \$700 million deficit this year? How about expecting Chicago mayor, Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's strategist, fundraiser and former chief of staff, to allow a protracted strike to occur during an election year?

The Chicago strike was resolved after just seven days. The real question is why the strike happened in the first place. The main issues were salary increases, teacher evaluations, job security, and school day length.

Some of the highest-paid teachers in the U.S., who also have the shortest workday, were striking for more money, no accountability, and better job security. The strike also served to distract attention from the elephant-in-the-room issues facing Chicago Public Schools: failure to educate, near bankruptcy, and even total collapse under the weight of previous union victories over salaries, benefits, and pensions.

Polls showed that just over half of CPS parents supported the union's decision to strike. Once the strike was underway, "Many [families] described a week of chaos behind them: missed days of work, a patchwork of pleading for baby-sitting favors, and children who seemed confused and out of sorts to suddenly be missing what for many of them [was] the second week of a new school year." *NY Times*, 9-14-12

District and union negotiators were not very far apart on the issues once the process started, leaving many Chicago residents wondering why the teachers took to the streets. Mayor Emanuel called it "a strike of choice." Leftist author Rick Perlstein wrote at Salon.com, "The CTU stumbled at negotiations out of the gate, asking for a 30% raise that made them look just like the mercenary self-seekers right-wing critics always claim municipal unions are: a cash-extorting cartel against the taxpaying public."

The CTU was already angry with the mayor for trying to halt their 4% salary increase last year, for calling for more charter schools, and for grumbling about the length of the school day. Personalities played a role with Mayor Emanuel and CTU President Karen Lewis posturing for TV cameras, leading Steven Greenhut to write in *Human Events* online, "The only enjoyable aspect of the Chicago-strike spectacle is watching two bullies — Emanuel and the leader of the union — battle it out in front of the TV cameras." He fatalistically added, "And, whatever progress Emanuel makes under the settle-

ment, the system will slog along in its current shape, one way or another."

The Issues

Salary: The CTU asked for a 30% salary increase for teachers over two years. This is laughable when the average Chicago teacher already makes \$76,000 a year, *before* benefits, while the average Chicago family earns \$47,000 annually. The union rejected a 16% salary increase over four years and ended up accepting a 17% increase at a time when most American families are praying to keep current jobs or struggling to find work. This is before benefits, which remarkably includes paying only 3% of their medical premium.

Teacher evaluation: The CTU was satisfied with no accountability for teachers but student test scores will be phased in over three years to become 30% of each teacher's evaluation (with a healthy appeals process and the first year being a trial run). Teacher accountability was already mandated by Illinois state law so this was a dubious victory.

CTU President Karen Lewis said, "After the initial phase-in of the new evaluation system it could result in 6,000 teachers (or nearly 30% of our members) being discharged within one or two years. This is unacceptable." She seemed to be admitting that almost one-third of teachers are underperforming.

Job security: Emanuel pushed for principals to have sole discretion over hiring for their own schools, but the settlement will force them to draw from previously laid-off teachers to fill some positions. CTU wanted priority re-hiring for laid-off teachers based on seniority regardless of their previous effectiveness or performance record.

School day: The 350,000 students in Chicago attend school fewer hours than any student in the top ten U.S. metro areas. The settlement changes the school day for 350,000 Chicago students to seven hours from under six.

Just how successful are Chicago Public Schools, which employ highly paid teachers and spend \$13,000 per student? There is a 56% graduation rate and in 2010-11 only 31% of CPS high school students met or exceeded Illinois state academic standards. In 2011, only 21% of Chicago public school 8th-graders ranked proficient or better overall in the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and only 20% of Chicago 8th-graders rated proficient or better in math on NAEP tests.

Perhaps most telling of all is that 39% of the 26,000 CPS teachers send their own children to private schools; they have

(See Teachers Union Strike page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Between 350-400 doses a year of Plan B, "the morning-after pill," are being dispensed from a vending machine in the campus health center at a small Pennsylvania public college. Shippensburg University sells the "morning after pill" to be used after unprotected sex for \$25 a dose. Condoms and pregnancy tests are available from the same machine.

California Governor Jerry Brown signed a law encouraging teachers in California to teach the history of the Bracero program of Mexican guest workers in grades 7-12 social studies classes. Braceros were allowed into the U.S. temporarily from 1942-1964 to work in fields and on railroads. Some had wages withheld and were mistreated. Brown and state lawmakers are under heavy pressure to pass "anti-Arizona" immigration laws although California is in deep fiscal trouble partially caused by the weight of social services for undocumented workers.

Cheating on Standardized Assessment Tests in elementary schools has occurred in two adjoining states, facilitated by school employees. In St. Louis, MO and East St. Louis, IL, school employees changed students' answers, supplied questions to students in advance, and coached students during testing. The East St. Louis district dismissed a school principal and two instructional employees after most of their school's test results were invalidated after cheating was discovered. In the Missouri district where cheating was discovered the previous year, math scores dropped the following year from 40% passing to 14% passing at Ford Elementary School and from 43% to 8% proficient or advanced at Herzog Elementary School. School officials said there is not adequate funding to prevent or analyze cheating.

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Obama Campaign Recruits in the College Classroom

The Democratic Presidential campaign almost gained a foothold inside public universities in Ohio and Colorado. An attempt by a professor to persuade colleagues to recruit volunteers for the Obama campaign during class was made at Ohio State University and at Adams State University in Colorado, an opportunity to volunteer for Obama's campaign was offered for credit.

In a memo titled "How to turn students into voters," Brian McHale, an English professor at Ohio State University, suggested fellow teachers allow 5 minutes of class time to a volunteer aiming to register students to vote and if they were "willing," another few minutes would be taken to interest students in volunteering for the Obama campaign. One of the two individuals listed as a contact, Matt Caffrey, is a paid Obama presidential campaign field organizer in Ohio.

The OSU Board of Trustees Academic freedom and responsibility statement says, teachers must "differentiate carefully between official activities as teachers and personal activities as citizens, and to act accordingly."

At Adams State University in Colorado, Government 279 — The Obama Campaign Internship — offered for credit "in depth involvement in one of the closest and most expensive Presidential races in recent history." Students would have received credit for volunteering 15 hours

each week after attending an all day training seminar on September 20. The offering included a link to the Obama campaign official website. School officials said it was cancelled due to lack of interest.

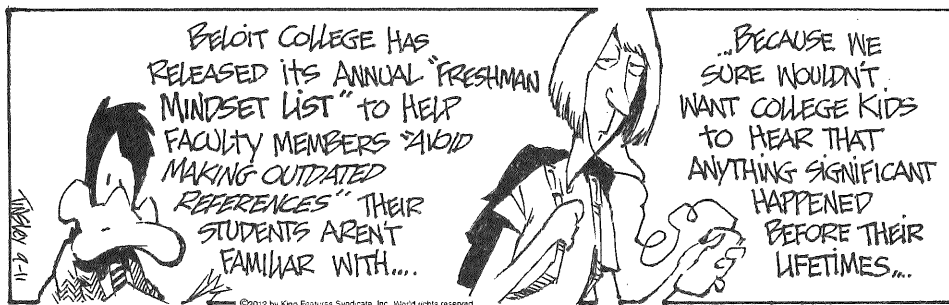
The class disappeared from the school website shortly after Campus Reform, a conservative student blog, declared the internship inappropriate at a public institution.

The Colorado Fair Campaign Practices Act guarantees that no public resources are spent for any campaign and that while students may engage in political expression without limitation, they may not use university resources in advocating for or against a campaign issue. A professor overseeing this internship would be paid using public funds. Peter Wood, President of The National Association of Scholars said, "The Public funding that goes into a university is not there to advance political campaigns" and that no school should extend credit for any political activity. He stresses this is the case no matter what party is involved.

Adams State University spokesman Julie Waechter told the DC News Foundation, "The Obama campaign did approach the school. Other campaigns did not."

Register to VOTE

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Fall Freshman Seminars Fall Short

Through its freshman seminars, The University of California, San Diego — like many universities throughout the country — offers entering students the chance to explore and discuss unique subject matter in a casual classroom setting. At UCSD these one-credit classes are offered pass/no-pass and focus on asking, and attempting to answer, "outside the box" questions in narrow and unique areas of interest. According to the program description, "The seminars are taught by faculty in their fields of expertise and explore topics of intellectual importance while participating in critical discussion with a small group of peers and faculty." The benefits of these seminars include smaller class sizes and the chance to engage with a professor about matters of interest — both rare opportunities for freshmen students who will spend the majority of their first year at college in large, anonymous lecture halls or being taught by teaching assistants.



This chance at discussion and relatively self-guided exploration is a fitting introduction to college studies. A university education would not be complete without the chance to think outside the box, to banter over theoretical questions, and to learn how to learn. But a closer look at Freshman Seminar course offerings reveals that at UCSD, the "topics of intellectual importance" and "critical discussion[s]" the seminar program promises might be more trivial and biased than students or their parents would hope.

The UCSD Department of Literature offers freshmen the chance to explore the background of what Google defines as "a soulless corpse said to be revived by witchcraft" in the seminar "Zombies: An Unnatural History." The same department gives students the chance to "study gender, race, and sexuality in family drama, sitcom, TV news, and reality TV" (with-

(See Freshman Seminars, page 4)

Book of the Month



Charter Schools in Action, Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno V. Manno, Gregg Vanourek, Princeton University Press, 2001, \$37.50.

Charter Schools in Action is an overview of the charter school movement and what it offers: to students and parents, to the public school system and to communities. The book's purpose is to educate on the topic, not to help parents decide if a charter school is right for their child.

The authors boldly state their position on the need for reform of public school systems, calling for a "top-to-bottom makeover of its ground rules and institutional practices." They hope to see public schools adopt the best strategies of charters on a broad scale, leading to widespread improvement and revitalization.

Part One of the book focuses on charter schools, offering case studies, interviews and profiles of prime players at charter schools, along with tables analyzing all manner of pertinent data. The title of Part Two of the book is "Renewing Public Education," and although it describes a number of successful charter schools specifically, each description points the way toward larger-scale improvements to the public system.

Successful charter schools "engage parents," have the freedom to be different, and are "a community unto themselves" as well as a "source of neighborhood stability." They are intended to be "autonomous and idiosyncratic." They can serve as idea incubators for the district where they are located.

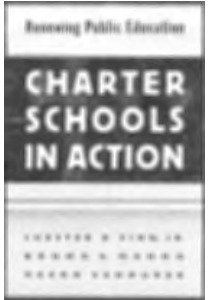
Charter schools are run rather like a business, with children and parents as customers who must be kept satisfied or they will go elsewhere, as opposed to the public school assumption that power is vested in the producers, not the consumers.

States require charter schools to participate in assessment tests, but it is the stories of individual charter schools that define their successes and failures. One successful attribute of many charter schools is "accountability-via-transparency" versus the public school axiom of "accountability-via-regulation." The transfer of this attitude to the public schools would be epic, even if nothing else were gained from the charter school experiment.

Student success at charter schools is seen across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines.

Both amusing and profound, the imaginary school district the authors create in "New Pensylina" shows great promise

The authors are "betting on charter schools," whether they are an end in and of themselves or a means of innovation and renewal of the public school system.



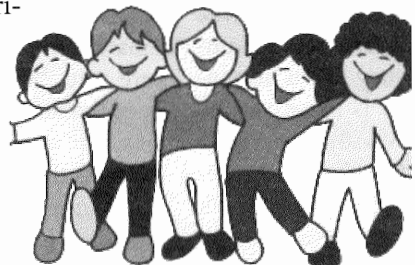
FOCUS: Training Teachers To Be Radicals

by Robert Holland and Don Soifer of the LEXINGTON INSTITUTE

RADICALIZING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS



The value of early childhood education in closing achievement gaps is a concept that has continued to gain prominence across American education. High-quality pre-kindergarten classrooms that incorporate research-based instructional programs are increasingly demonstrating that children from financially disadvantaged households do not need to arrive at their first day of kindergarten less prepared to learn than their peers from more prosperous homes.



But educators looking to make gains in early reading readiness are not the only ones eyeing the pre-kindergarten classroom door. Others harboring various agendas are also maneuvering teacher training channels, seeking opportunities to gain leverage in influencing young minds, some of which include decidedly murkier and even definitively radical elements.

"We believe that social justice and ecological teaching offers a much-needed vision for early childhood education in the face of the challenges weighing on the field and confronting the planet," surmises Ann Pelo, editor of the anthology *Rethinking Early Childhood Education*, published by Rethinking Schools, which actively promotes a social-justice agenda.

Among the ways the textbook instructs early childhood educators to raise awareness in their classrooms is this observation, in a section about ways gender labels can be confusing: "Between 3 and 5 years of age, children try to figure out . . . what aspects of self remain constant. They wonder: Will I always be a girl or a boy?" Such a discussion raises questions of gay and lesbian identity, as well as bisexual and transgender (GLBT) roles. Far from the earshot of parents, introducing children to transgender identities does certainly empower teachers with opportunities to frame the ways children perceive the world and their role within it.

Education journals, such as that of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, direct teachers to pursue such questions further, using such approaches as "Adapt stories and songs to reflect and include GLBT families," while warning that, "silence on this issue will have damaging outcomes for children."

Often, teacher training programs move quickly past questions of race to focus early childhood teachers on perceptions of white privilege. "In order to develop robust action plans to challenge racism and privilege in their classrooms,

early childhood education students need access to a range of anti-racist education resources," argued a 2001 article in the journal, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. Its author proceeds to discuss "anti-racist leadership camps" where "unlearning racism" is a central element to teacher preparation.

Beyond simply publishing articles, some activist organizations espousing political agendas have become directly in-

involved in early childhood education. Teaching for Change, a Washington, D.C.-based group that operates a popular chain of progressive coffeehouses and bookstores, has expanded into professional development and training programs for early childhood educators.

The group, whose stated mission is to "provide teachers and parents with the tools to transform schools into centers of justice where students learn to read, write, and change the world," encourages teachers to "question and re-think the world inside and outside their classrooms."

Teaching for Change places

emphasis on civil rights history and lessons, but is rarely hesitant in associating its work with more radical progressivist proponents. It maintains a partnership with Rethinking Schools on the Zinn Education Project, dedicated to advancing the radical teachings of popular author Howard Zinn, and works closely with the National Coalition of Education Activists and the National Association for Multicultural Education. Since 2003, the Teaching for Change Early Childhood Equity Initiative has conducted professional development training for early childhood educators in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

TEACHING 'SOCIAL JUSTICE' IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

Advocates typically fail to define the term "social justice" with any clarity. However, from the writings of long-time University of Illinois/Chicago education professor Bill Ayers, and teacher workshops conducted by organizations like the National Association for Multicultural Education, the premise is clear: the United States is a culturally and economically oppressive nation in dire need of radical transformation. The objective is the redistribution of wealth and power by means of government action.

As Nobel laureate economist F.A. Hayek once observed, the price of such a course would be "the complete abolition of personal liberty," but that does not deter social-justice advocates who value the rights of groups over individuality.

Parents and taxpayers deserve to know when and where teachers of their children are being indoctrinated to work for this radical-left agenda instead of teaching pupils literature, math, history, science, and computer skills. And school boards and governing bodies should guard against letting taxpayer funds be misused to support such propaganda.

Many schools of education have elements of social-justice advocacy in their curricula, but two examples that deserve special attention are:

The University of Massachusetts Amherst's School of Education offers an entire "Social Justice Education Concentration," complete with numerous required courses and a practicum for implementing social-justice initiatives in schools starting with kindergarten.

The menu of 3-credit courses begins with EDUC 522, an exercise in "self awareness" whereby students are to ponder their own group identity and analyze "multiple forms of oppression and [their] impact on leadership ability." In EDUC 609, students explore the dynamics of working in small "multicultural groups." EDUC 624, required for first-semester SJE majors and doctoral students, "fo-

cuses on a range of theoretical issues related to different manifestations of oppression," with attention to "historical roots" and "contemporary constructions of social justice issues as they play out in educational contexts."

As an indication of how deeply SJE's tentacles are to reach into everyday education, EDUC 627 is all about how to plan, implement, and evaluate social-justice curricula for local schools. The would-be teachers visit schools where this ideology is practiced and then collaborate with classmates in designing their own curricula.

Among other courses of note is one (EDUC 691E) that requires students to attend a series of weekend seminars, each of which delves into a "different form of social oppression," such as "sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, and classism." One Practicum (EDUC 693N) entitled "Social Justice in Schools" is designed "to guide students in implementing, evaluating, and reflecting upon social justice education initiatives in elementary and secondary schools. Among other things, this course promises students 'an introduction to action research methods.'"

Clearly, this course of study is intended to send its graduates into classrooms to be agents of radical social change rather than as teachers of basic knowledge and upholders of values parents would like their children to hold dear.

At California State University Fresno ("Fresno State"), the Kremen School of Education & Human Development offers online a Master of Arts in Teaching that is heavily focused on social justice, multiculturalism, and action research. Plainly, so-called action research does not entail pursuing objective evidence wherever it may lead, but instead means strengthening one's case to implement an

agenda of radical social transformation.

One Fresno State course, "Social Justice and the Multicultural Classroom," envisions "enhancing educational equity, providing a multicultural classroom, employing culturally responsive pedagogy, and using culturally appropriate assessment." It places emphasis on using the Internet "to conduct classroom research" and to communicate with colleagues and members of the community.

Among other objectives of the online courses are: students learning to persuade each other and members of the community about tenets of social-justice multiculturalism; preparing to conduct their action research by "exploring various aspects of the movement in education

where teacher-practitioners are viewed as researchers of their own practice and where teaching is viewed as a form of educational inquiry"; and completing the master's candidate's own action research study.

A unit on "Critical Pedagogy" calls on students to "develop knowledge and skills to critically examine and improve planning, instructional decisions, assessment, and student learning. Students engage in systematic reflection of teaching practices consistent with multicultural, social justice education."

A final project "consists of a significant undertaking appropriate to multicultural, social justice education such as the development of curricula and instructional materials, educational policy, educational theory, and educational technology."

Programs such as those at UMass Amherst and Fresno State clearly seek to have teachers carry a distinct sociopolitical agenda with them into their classrooms. Teachers with a conservative or politically neutral orientation or those who want to teach academic disciplines in a traditional way need not apply.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Middle School Drug Testing

A Pennsylvania family wondered why their middle school daughter had to take a drug test in order to join the scrapbooking club or play junior varsity volleyball, so they are suing Delaware Valley Middle School to protect her right to privacy. (*M.K. v. the Delaware Valley School District*).

In Missouri, before implementing a drug-testing program that pulls thousands of dollars directly from the school's general operating budget, Maryville R-II School District officials spent 18 months reviewing state drug testing programs and conducting a survey of parents, in which 72% agreed that drug testing was necessary. The resulting policy states, "Because it is concerned about the health and safety of students, the Board directs the superintendent or designee to implement a drug-testing program where students in grades 7-12 are required, as a condition of participating in certain extracurricular activities, to consent to random drug screening."

States participating in middle school drug testing include Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and West Virginia. Because California has strict privacy laws, the ACLU won a settlement there in 2011 halting drug testing for nonathletic students unless there are grounds for suspicion of drug use.

Why are middle schools testing stu-

dents who want to join choir, drama, and scrapbooking clubs? School officials cite both their desire to catch students using drugs and their hope to deter students from using drugs. Schools share results with parents and students, but rarely with law enforcement. No middle schooler has tested positive for any performance-enhancing drug but a few have tested positive for marijuana. "Such drug testing at the middle school level is confounding students and stirring objections from parents and proponents of civil liberties," according to *The New York Times*.

Dr. Linn Goldberg, head of the Division of Health Promotion and Sports Medicine at the Oregon Health and Science University, says, "Drug testing is a multi-billion dollar industry." He goes on to say, "Drug testing has never been shown to have a deterrent effect."

Outside companies under contract with schools conduct the testing and send results to a laboratory. In 2003 the Department of Education began a program, which will phase out this fall, offering grant money to pay for drug testing in grades 6-12.

The Kiederer family in PA has won an injunction allowing their daughter to join the scrapbooking club and to play volleyball without drug testing as their case moves forward. *New York Times*, 9-22-12

Cafeteria Food *(Continued from page 1)*

school lunches. School officials and students alike are arguing that the federal government should not be able to influence what is or is not served in local cafeterias. Students are outraged about the federal limits placed on the condiments they can consume and the removal of desserts and whole milk from their menus. Furthermore, parents are upset that they are often paying more for their children to have less food in the school cafeteria.

Accompanying the increased nutritional requirements, the law limits the maximum number of calories allowed in each lunch, allowing set maximum numbers of calories for students by age. For high schoolers, lunches may offer between 750-850 calories. K-5 kids can have 550-650 calories. Thanks to the increased emphasis on fruits and vegetables, main portion sizes in particular have decreased and many students claim they are still hungry after finishing lunch.

The complaint that students are not receiving enough calories may be well grounded. The Baylor College of Medicine Children's Nutrition Research Center indicates that an average teen girl who exercises an hour a day needs to intake 2400 calories. According to Mary Hartley, Registered Dietitian for the website *Diets in Review*, "850 calories [at lunch] will meet the needs of all girls . . . but it is not enough for moderately and very active boys, ages 15-18."

Some students have tried to start a movement of "Brown Baggin' It" to pack lunches in protest of their cafeteria's smaller portions and missing desserts. Following a Twitter trend, #BrownBagginIt, that started in Pittsburgh, PA, high schoolers



at Rockford High School in Rockford, MN have organized a Facebook page promoting their cause and encouraging students to boycott the new school lunches with their own lunches from home. Jayme Sundby, Rockford High's food service director from Taher, Inc., explained: "They show up the first day of school and things have changed. . . . To tell a high school student they can only have one ounce of dressing . . . it's a challenge."

Students at Wallace County High in Sharon Springs, Kansas created a music video entitled "We Are Hungry" (based on the song "We Are Young") in order to express their dissent to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. The video emphasizes the words "Hunger Free" in the name of the law and depicts high school athletes falling over from hunger while trying to play sports, as well as elementary-age students, wearing backpacks and crawling through the hallways, as the song says "We are crawling home tonight." The YouTube video had almost 800,000 views as of October 1, 2012.

In response to the complaints she is hearing from local students and parents, Maureen O'Neil, director of The Abbey Group that provides food for schools in southwest Vermont, explains the scope of the problem:

"It's not the Abbey Group that's just come in and raised your prices and said now you're getting smaller portions. I think the information needs to get out there that we are part of a national school lunch program . . . and unless we want to run our own lunch program and raise our taxes and come out of this national school lunch program, we need to follow the guidelines."

Plan B *(Continued from page 1)*

Of the unplanned teen pregnancies in the city, about 64% are terminated, the city says. This statistic does not consider pregnancies terminated by Plan B. Plan B's high dose of the hormone progestin works in two ways: it can prevent ovulation from occurring so there is no egg to fertilize or it can cause changes to the uterine wall that stop the implantation of a fertilized egg. The latter outcome is the reason Plan B is sometimes called "the abortion pill." Which outcome occurs depends on whether or not ovulation or conception has already taken place.

To receive the "morning-after pill," a student tells the school nurse she had unprotected sex, a pregnancy test is administered, and if the result is negative, the student receives Plan B without parental notification. Girls under 17 need a prescription that is provided by city Health Department doctors. A pregnancy test will only detect pregnancy beginning about

two weeks after conception, so virtually all tests taken in the nurse's office will be negative unless conception is from a previous incident of unprotected sex.

In last year's five-school CATCH pilot program, 567 students received Plan B and 580 received birth control pills. While there are some 40 privately run health clinics at New York City public schools, these 13 schools were chosen for the CATCH pilot because they have no nearby clinic and do have high rates of teen pregnancy.

In a statement issued by the Independent Women's Forum, Hadley Heath, senior policy analyst specializing in health care said, "Of course the point is to reduce the number of unexpected pregnancies, but we shouldn't pretend that pregnancy is the only result of sex. Aren't we de-valuing sexual intimacy by giving students the impression that their decisions come with an 'undo' button?"

Teachers Union Strike *(Continued from page 1)*

the funds to do so and perhaps this signifies their own fear that CPS cannot adequately educate.

In addition to its other troubles, CPS faces a growing pension crisis. Out of every dollar set aside for public education in Illinois in the past 5 years, a full 71 cents have gone to teacher retirement costs, according to the *National Review*. The Illinois State teacher pension fund is less than 20% funded. In order to cut budgets, the school district has only partially funded teacher's pensions and even skipped contributions completely in some years. According to the Illinois Policy Institute, Chicago Public schools' contribution to teachers' pensions will jump from \$231 million to \$684 million between 2013 and 2014, as state law forces them to catch up on delinquent pension contributions.

"There's a huge [pension fund] crisis and the problem does not get easier by waiting. The problem gets bigger, and starts to become an insurmountable obstacle," said Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation, a nonpartisan research organization in Chicago that works on fiscal issues.

On Saturday, Sept. 15, a large rally in Chicago included numerous teachers and labor members from out of state, emphasizing the strike's importance to teacher unions and school districts nationwide. Both unions and municipalities elsewhere could be emboldened by the Chicago strike. Teachers around the

country have grievances. States and school districts are facing budget shortfalls. Timothy Knowles, director of the Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago, told *Education Weekly* that, "If labor prevails or is perceived as prevailing, it's probably going to motivate more AFT [American Federation of Teachers] affiliates to take a harder line in negotiations."

Michelle Rhee, former head of the Washington school system and an advocate of changes in education, said that Emanuel standing up to the union signaled "a new day." She continued, "When someone like that is willing to take those issues on in a lot of ways it gives cover to other mayors."

One parent summed up the Chicago strike and settlement this way: "I feel like [the children] were completely used as pawns in this." For now, Chicago schoolchildren are back in school. But in Wisconsin a lower court judge has struck down the anti-union law championed by Gov. Scott Walker even after a strike, huge demonstrations, and a recall election. Could similar judicial intervention unhinge the settlement deals made in Chicago?

As Mike Antonucci stated at HotAir.com before the final vote, "Every member of CTU will get an opportunity to vote up or down on any tentative agreement. The voters of Chicago will not get that privilege, but they will still have to pay for it."

Freshman Seminars *(Continued from page 2)*

out mention of literature itself, despite the department's name) in the seminar entitled "Reading Television."

Perhaps the most predictable course offering of all, the Department of Biological Sciences seminar entitled "Earth's Fragile Biosphere," will address "species extinction, global warming, habitat destruction, individual responsibility to future generations, and human values/morals."

Finally, in the Department of Cognitive Science, freshmen enrolled in "How Minds and Groups Make Religion and Superstition" are promised the chance to explore such questions as: "How does the human brain accept religious beliefs, even in the face of contradictory evidence?"

The Freshman Seminar program also

includes opportunities for legitimately critical discussion, such as the Department of Bioengineering course entitled "Engineering of the Heart." And the program offers exploration of matters of intellectual importance, such as the impact Jane Austen had on society, women, and etiquette, in the Department of Literature's "Jane Austen's World."

But for a large number of these courses — and the similar ones that fill university course catalogs throughout the country — there surely are better alternatives. There must be topics of more "intellectual importance" and offering greater opportunity for "critical discussion" than "Zombies: An Unnatural History" and "How Minds and Groups Make Religion and Superstition."