

# EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 317

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

JUNE 2012

## New Law Boosts Tennessee Science Standards

A new Tennessee law protects science teachers who choose to discuss the controversies surrounding climate change and evolution in the classroom. The Teacher Protection Academic Freedom Act, which became law on April 17, states that:

Neither the state board of education, nor any public elementary or secondary school governing authority, director of schools, school system administrator, or any public elementary or secondary school principal or administrator shall prohibit any teacher in a public school system of this state from helping students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught.

The law does not require teachers to teach alternatives to scientific theories like evolution. Instead, it assures that teachers who do discuss alternate theories will be protected, in keeping with the No Child Left Behind requirement that “the curriculum should help students to understand the full view of scientific views that exist.”

Tennessee state Senator Bo Watson (R-Hixson) told the *Los Angeles Times* the new law would protect teachers whose fear of possible legal repercussions prevents them from adequately addressing student questions:

There appear to be questions from teachers like, ‘What can we discuss and not discuss that won’t get us in trouble as far as nonconventional, nonscientific ideas, things that student may see videos about on YouTube?’ [The bill] doesn’t allow for religious or nonreligious ideology to be introduced.

Opponents disagree, saying the new law will allow teachers to bring religion into the classroom. The bill encountered stiff opposition from groups including the National Association of Biology Teachers and the American Institute for Biological Sciences. Becky Ashe, president of the Tennessee Science Teachers Association, told the *Los Angeles Times*,

Our fear is that there are communities across this state where schools are very small and one teacher is the science department, and they also happen to teach a Sunday school class, and this gives them permission to bring that into the classroom.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State urged Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam to veto the bill, claiming it was unconstitutional. Hedy Weinberg, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee, told the *Wall*

*Street Journal* the law was “very clever” but “would clearly gut science education in our schools.” Both groups warned that the new law would expose the state to lawsuits. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Tennessee ACLU is on the lookout for “the right set of facts” and is “certainly ready to pursue litigation.”

Family Action of Tennessee, a conservative public-policy group, helped draft the legislation. The group believes the new law will help address weaknesses in the state’s science curriculum standards:

America is lagging behind other nations in the subject of science. And for science to advance, critical thinking skills and an understanding of the scientific method must be developed and strengthened. Yet such skills and understandings are often discouraged, particularly when it comes to certain scientific subjects. For example, in many classrooms, Darwinian evolution is currently taught in a completely one-sided manner, with most students never learning anything about growing scientific controversies about the theory. This may be particularly true in Tennessee where the curriculum standard regarding evolution requires only that students know “the supporting evidence for the theory of evolution,” with no allowance for knowing anything about the controversies surrounding the theory.

Family Action denies allegations that the new law will inject religion into classrooms:

The bill specifically states that the information discussed must be “scientific” and must relate to scientific theories “required to be taught under the curriculum framework developed by the state board of education.” The bill does not change the existing curriculum frameworks that govern



the subject matter covered. Consequently, the amendment makes it clear that the bill is only addressing the curriculum framework adopted by the state board of education. Thus the bill does not allow the teaching of creation science or intelligent design as they are not “existing theories” being “covered” in the courses taught pursuant to our curriculum frameworks. Further, teaching those subjects has been ruled contrary to the “establishment clause.” State law cannot “trump” the U.S. Constitution.



## Texas Takes on Student Debt Crisis

When Texas Governor Rick Perry challenged Texas’ public universities last year to find ways to offer a four-year degree for \$10,000 or less, not everyone thought his goal was realistic. “I don’t know whether the \$10,000 figure is practical reality or not,” Raymund Paredes, the state’s higher education commissioner, told Austin’s *American-Statesman*. “I interpret the governor’s remarks as a call to be creative and find solutions to the spiraling costs of higher education.”

Just one year later, Texas A&M officials say they have found a way to meet Governor Perry’s challenge.

The university announced in March its plans to partner with Alamo Colleges, a system of local community colleges, and with San Antonio area high schools

to offer a four-year bachelor’s degree for just \$9,672. Comparable degrees at other Texas public schools average nearly \$32,000.

Beginning this fall, Texas A&M-San Antonio will offer a four-year bachelor’s degree in information technology, with an emphasis on information security. High-school juniors will be admitted based on test scores, and will be eligible to complete up to 60 units at no cost. The exact number will vary based on input from the program’s academic advisors, and not all courses taken will be college level. After high school these students will spend a year at an Alamo community college, and then finish with a year at A&M-San Antonio. Students will graduate with little or



(See Student Debt, page 4)

## Talking Pineapples? NY Drops Weird Q&A on Standardized Test

8<sup>th</sup> graders in New York state were baffled in April when the following story and questions appeared on a standardized test meant to measure reading ability:

Directions: Read this story. Then answer questions 6 through 11.

### The Hare and the Pineapple

In olden times, the animals of the forest could speak English just like you and me.

One day, a pineapple challenged a hare to a race.

(I forgot to mention, fruits and vegetables were able to speak too.)

A hare is like a rabbit, only skinnier and faster. This particular hare was known to be the fastest animal in the forest.

“You, a pineapple have the nerve to challenge me, a hare, to a race,” the hare asked the pineapple. “This must be some sort of joke.”

“No,” said the pineapple. “I want to race you. Twenty-six miles, and may the best animal win.”

“You aren’t even an animal!” the hare said. “You’re a tropical fruit!”

“Well, you know what I mean,” the pineapple said.

The animals of the forest thought it was very strange that tropical fruit should want to race a very fast animal.

“The pineapple has some trick up its sleeve,” a moose said.

Pineapples don’t have sleeves, an owl said.

“Well, you know what I mean,” the moose said. “If a pineapple challenges a hare to a race, it must be that the pineapple knows some secret trick that will allow it to win.”

“The pineapple probably expects us to root for the hare and then look like fools when it loses,”

said a crow. “Then the pineapple will win the race because the hare is overconfident and takes a nap, or gets lost, or something.”

The animals agreed that this made sense. There was no reason a pineapple should challenge a hare unless it had a clever plan of some sort. So the animals, wanting to back a winner, all cheered for the pineapple.

When the race began, the hare sprinted forward and was out of sight in less than a minute. The pineapple just sat there, never moving an inch.

The animals crowded around watching to see how the pineapple was going to cleverly beat the hare. Two hours later when the hare crossed the finish line, the pineapple was still sitting still and hadn’t moved an inch.

The animals ate the pineapple.

MORAL: Pineapples don’t have sleeves.

(See Standardized Test, page 4)

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**Teresa Wagner, a law professor, is suing a former dean at the University of Iowa College of Law (UICL) over what she has termed a "Republicans Need Not Apply" policy.** Wagner claims UICL would not hire her because she is a conservative Republican — a claim backed up by statements like the following, from a UICL Associate Dean: "Frankly, one thing that worries me is that some people may be opposed to Teresa serving in any role, in part at least because they so despise her politics."

**When Salecia Johnson threw a tantrum in her Kindergarten class at Creekside Elementary School in Milledgeville, Georgia, the school called the police.** Officers handcuffed the 6-year-old and took her to the police station, where a juvenile complaint was filed. The girl's family has called for city policies to be changed so that other children aren't treated the same way.

**Education officials removed a question from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Test in May after parents complained the question was "outrageous" and pried into private family affairs.** 4,000 third graders were asked to reveal a secret and then explain why it was difficult to keep. Richard Goldberg, whose twin 9-year-olds both took the test, told Fox News, "How could you put these children in that position on a test where you are just supposed to be testing whether they can write and spell?"

**High schools all over the U.S. will offer prom goes free condoms this year** through a program initiated by NuVo Condoms, which distributed 400,000 condoms to high schools in 2011. NuVo, which acknowledges that many of the donated condoms will be used by underage students, has advertised the initiative to school administrators by arguing that "many teenagers are going to have sex after prom anyway."

*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: Rachel Motte. 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)

## School District Fears Popular Bible Class Might Offend Funders

High school students in Ohio's Vinton County will not have access to a widely used Bible History and Literature elective course because district officials fear legal challenges and the potential loss of federal funding.

The National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS) says its popular Bible curriculum has been used by hundreds of thousands of students in 593 school districts. The curriculum will not be used in Vinton County because, according to school board members, the district is concerned about "time, money, Highly Qualified status of a teacher that would be required, and lack of alignment with what must be taught as mandated in the new standards for Ohio high school students."

Though school board members are concerned about possible legal risks, NCBCPS says its curriculum has been popular in public schools for over a decade. Vinton County School District officials cited two instances in which court challenges had led districts to remove the curriculum from use, stating, "current court decisions are the law and

cannot be ignored without risks of a lawsuit." They also argued that, since the district is prohibited from using state or federal funding to pay for "religious worship, instruction, or proselytizing," use of the curriculum could put the district's receipt of \$4.1 million in annual federal funds in jeopardy — despite the fact that only a tiny percentage of school districts already offering the Bible course

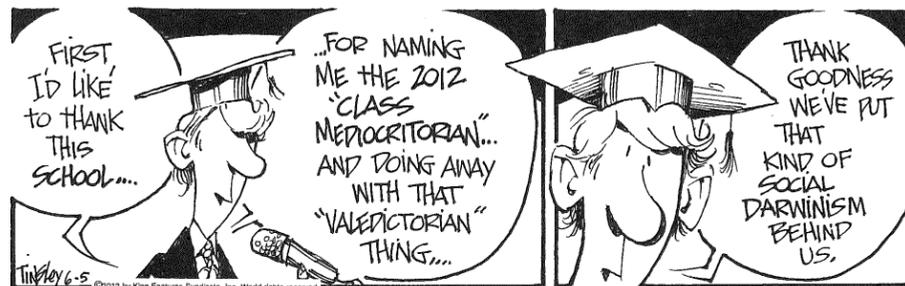
has encountered problems.

NCBCPS argues that Bible electives ought to be made available to interested high school students simply because Bible knowledge is essential to understanding Western history and literature:

The curriculum for the program shows a concern to convey the content of the Bible as compared to literature and history. The program is concerned with education rather than indoctrination of students. The central approach of the class is simply to study the Bible as a foundation document of society, and that approach is altogether appropriate in a comprehensive program of secular education.



### MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



## Report Helps Bring Historical Texts Back to Ohio Schools

While Ohio's Vinton County School District is busy protecting its federal funding from the supposed risks of using a popular Bible History and Literature curriculum, the state is working to return the United States' foundational documents to public schools.

A new Ohio law requires students in grades 4-12 to study "the original texts of the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitution of the United States and its amendments, with emphasis on the Bill of Rights, and the Ohio Constitution, and their original context."

The new law marks an important change in the way American history is taught in the state of Ohio. A February report by the Thomas B. Fordham Foun-

danation found that Ohio and 27 other states deserve D or F grades for their teaching of U.S. history:

Ohio's standards offer, at best, an exceedingly broad and basic outline of U.S. history. Huge swaths of history are covered in a few brief strokes, and specific events and people are all but absent. . . . Unfortunately, the state does not seem to consider substantive historical content to be essential, since very little is included.

The law, which aims to correct such inadequacies, was not passed without opposition. An editorial in the *Columbus Dispatch* opined on December 19, 2011:

Rep. Debbie Phillips of Athens is right that the bill strays into micromanagement, by mandating, for example, that by July 1, 2014, at least 25 percent of questions on new end-of-course

(See *Historical Texts*, page 4)

## Book of the Month



**America-Lite: How Imperial Academia Dismantled Our Culture (and Ushered in the Obamacrats)**, David Gelernter, Encounter Books, 2012, \$23.99.

American culture changed dramatically in the 1960s and '70s, and not for the better. That's no secret. What's less well known is what caused the culture to change so much so quickly.

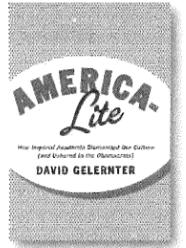
David Gelernter, a professor of computer science at Yale, and a contributing editor at the *Weekly Standard*, believes two important changes in higher education helped further the spread of radical leftist ideas that so changed America. He details these changes in his newest book, *America-Lite: How Imperial Academia Dismantled Our Culture (and Ushered in the Obamacrats)*. The book offers a history of American higher education that tracks how postwar changes at elite universities such as Columbia and Yale changed the way the nation's future leaders were trained and spread leftist ideas throughout society.

Education, argues Gelernter, was replaced with political indoctrination when the nation's elite universities were hit by the "Great Reform," which changed them from society colleges to centers for the "intellectuals" who rejected facts in favor of leftist theory, and by "Imperial Academia." When elite schools lurched leftward, less prominent schools followed. At the same time that Universities were inviting radicals into the establishment, the G.I. Bill helped more people attend college than ever before. Together, these events resulted in an unprecedented spread of radical leftism that dramatically changed what many Americans of a certain generation thought about God and country. When that generation grew into local and national leadership positions, the leftist theories in which they had been trained spread even further.

Gelernter argues that President Obama is not an ideologue bent on spreading his radical leftist theories so much as he is a member of a nominally educated leadership class which takes its unexamined leftism for granted. This makes him all the more dangerous, because there are so many more like him. President Obama, writes Gelernter, is not just a man, but also:

. . . a symbol, a living embodiment, of the failure of American education and its ongoing replacement by political indoctrination. He is a symbol of the new American elite, the new establishment, where left-liberal politics is no longer a conviction, no longer a way of thinking: it is built-in mind-furniture you take for granted without needing to think. . . . Obama is no ideologue; he doesn't rise to that level.

Gelernter offers a simple solution to the crisis: conservatives must take American education back from the "liberal airheads." If we can do that, he writes, "we have barely begun to bloom."



# FOCUS: The Unteachables: A Generation that Cannot Learn

by Janice Fiamengo

“The honeymoon is over.” Instructors who award low grades in humanities disciplines will likely be familiar with a phenomenon that occurs after the first essays are returned to students: former smiles vanish, hands once jubilantly raised to answer questions are now resentfully folded across chests, offended pride and sulkiness replace the careless cheer of former days. Too often, the smiles are gone for good because the customary “B+” or “A” grades have been withheld, and many students cannot forgive the insult.

The matter doesn’t always end there. Some students are prepared for a fight, writing emails of entreaty or threat, or besieging the instructor in his office to make clear that the grade is unacceptable. Every instructor who has been so besieged knows the legion of excuses and expressions of indignation offered, the certainty that such work was always judged acceptable in the past, the implication that a few small slip-ups, a wrong word or two, have been blown out of proportion. When one points out grievous inadequacies — factual errors, self-contradiction, illogical argument, and howlers of nonsensical phrasing — the student shrugs it off: yes, yes, a few mistakes, the consequences of too much coffee, my roommate’s poor typing, another assignment due the same day; but you could still see what I meant, couldn’t you, and the general idea was good, wasn’t it? “I’m better at the big ideas,” students have sometimes boasted to me. “On the details, well . . .”

Meetings about bad grades are uncomfortable not merely because it is unpleasant to wound feelings unaccustomed to the sting. Too often, such meetings are exercises in futility. I have spent hours explaining an essay’s grammatical, stylistic, and logical weaknesses in the wearying certainty that the student was unable, both intellectually and emotionally, to comprehend what I was saying or to act on my advice. It is rare for such students to be genuinely desirous and capable of learning how to improve. Most of them simply hope that I will come around. Their belief that nothing requires improvement except the grade is one of the biggest obstacles that teachers face in the modern university. And that is perhaps the real tragedy of our education system: not only that so many students enter university lacking the basic skills and knowledge to succeed in their courses — terrible in itself — but also that they often arrive essentially unteach-

able, lacking the personal qualities necessary to respond to criticism.

The unteachable student has been told all her life that she is excellent: gifted, creative, insightful, thoughtful, able to succeed at whatever she tries, full of potential and innate ability. Pedagogical wisdom since at least the time of John Dewey — and in some form all the way back to William Wordsworth’s divinely anointed child “trailing clouds of glory” — has stressed the development of self-esteem and a sense of achievement. Education, as Dewey made clear in such works as *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), was not about transferring a cultural inheritance from one generation to the next; it was about students’ self-realization. It involved liberating pupils from that stuffy, often stifling, inheritance into free and unforced learning aided by sympathy and encouragement. The teacher was not so much to teach or judge as to elicit a response, leading the student to discover for herself what she, in a sense, already knew. In the past twenty years, the well-documented phenomenon of grade inflation in humanities subjects — the awarding of high “Bs” and “As” to the vast majority of students — has increased the conviction that everyone is first-rate.

This pedagogy of self-esteem developed in response to the excesses of rote learning and harsh discipline that were thought to characterize earlier eras. In Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, Mr. Gradgrind, the teacher who ridicules a terrified Sissy Jupe for her inability to define a horse (“Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth . . .”), was seen to epitomize a soulless pedagogical regime that deadened creativity and satisfaction. Dickens and his readers believed such teaching to be a form of mental and emotional abuse, and the need to protect students from the stigma of failure became an article of faith amongst progressive educators. For them, the stultifying apparatus of the past had to be entirely replaced. Memorization itself, the foundation of traditional teaching, came to be seen as an enemy of creative thought: pejorative similes for memory work such as “rote learning” and “fact-grinding” suggest the classroom equivalent of a military drill, harsh and unaccommodating. The progressive approach, in contrast, emphasizes variety, pleasure, and student interest and self-motivation above all.

It sounds good. The problem, as traditionalists have argued (but without much success), is that the utopian approach hasn’t worked as intended. Rather

than forming cheerful, self-directed learners, the pedagogy of self-esteem has often created disaffected, passive pupils, bored precisely because they were never forced to learn. As Hilda Neatby commented in 1953, the students she was encountering at university were “distinctly blasé” about their coursework. A professor of history, Neatby was driven to investigate progressive education after noting how ill-equipped her students were for the high-level thinking required of them; her *So Little For the Mind* remains well-worth reading. In her assessment:

The bored “graduates” of elementary and high schools seem, in progressive language, to be “incompletely socialized.” Ignorant even of things that they might be expected to know, they do not care to learn. They lack an object in life, they are unaware of the joy of achievement. They have been allowed to assume that happiness is a goal, rather than a by-product.

The emphasis on feeling good, as Neatby argued, prevents rather than encourages the real satisfactions of learning.

Of course, the progressive approach has advantages, not the least of which is that it enables university administrators to boast of the ever-greater numbers of students taking degrees at their institutions. Previously disadvantaged groups have gained access to higher education as never before, and more and more students are being provided with the much-touted credentials believed to guarantee success in the workforce. Thus our universities participate in a happy make-believe. Students get their degrees. Parents are reassured that their money has been well-spent. And compliant professors are, if not exactly satisfied — it corrodes the soul to give unearned grades — at least relieved not to encounter student complaints.

More than a few students know that something fishy is going on. The intelligent ones see their indifferent, mediocre, or inept counterparts receiving grades similar to their own, and the realization offends their sense of justice. Moreover, there is little satisfaction in consciously playing the system. The smart student with his easy “A” knows that he has not been challenged to develop his intellect. I remember once walking in the hallway behind a student who had just picked up

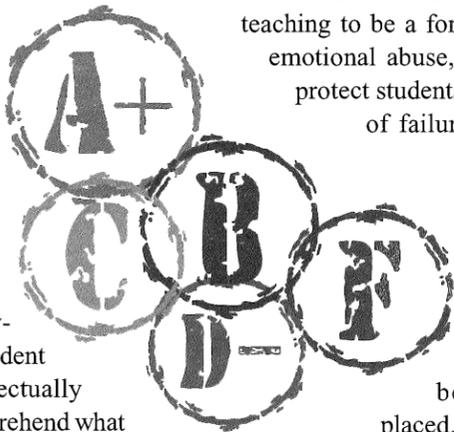
her final term essay; as she joined her friends, she flipped to the back of the paper without reading any of the instructor’s comments. “An A,” she said jubilantly, but with a strong undertone of derision. “And I didn’t even read the book!” As the paper thudded into the trash basket, her friends joined in the disdainful laughter.

In contrast, the weak student who believes in his high grades has also had a disservice done him. He has been misled about his abilities, falsely persuaded that career paths and goals are open that may be out of reach. Eventually, the fraud will be re-

vealed: by an employer who finds him inadequate, by his own dawning recognition that he cannot achieve what he hoped. The reckoning will likely be bitter; evidence exists that the pedagogy of false esteem can even cause psychological harm. When students who have always been praised must confront the reality of their low achievement, their tendency is, as researchers James Côté and Anton Allahar report, not to confront the problem directly but to hit back at its perceived source — the teacher who has given them the bad news, the employer who does not renew a contract. Far more than their adequate peers when faced with difficulties, these students experience a range of negative reactions, including anger, anxiety, and depression.

Even more seriously, such students have not only been misled but fundamentally malformed. They have never learned to listen to criticism, to recover from disappointment, or to slog through difficulties with no guarantee of success except commitment. The person who is never challenged is also never refined, never learns to cope with the setbacks that come on the way to high endeavor. And it is not only in the academic realm, of course, that they may be hampered: a full life outside of university also requires the ability to confront one’s weaknesses and recover from defeat. Despite the admittedly important emphasis on character formation in our schools — on tolerance, anti-racism, refusal of bullying, and so on — it seems that we have failed to show students what real achievement looks like and what it will require of them.

Janice Fiamengo is a professor of English at the University of Ottawa. This article was originally published at PJMedia.com and is reprinted with the author’s permission.



## Standardized Test (Continued from page 1)

6. Beginning with paragraph 4, in what order are the events in the story told?

- A) Switching back and forth between places
- B) In the order in which the events happen
- C) Switching back and forth between the past and the present
- D) In the order in which the hare tells the events to another animal

7. The animals ate the pineapple most likely because they were

- A) Hungry
- B) Excited
- C) Annoyed
- D) Amused

8. Which animal spoke the wisest words?

- A) The hare
- B) The moose
- C) The crow
- D) The owl

9. Before the race, how did the animals feel toward the pineapple?

- A) Suspicious
- B) Kindly
- C) Sympathetic
- D) Envious

10. What would have happened if the animals had decided to cheer for the hare?

- A) The pineapple would have won the race.
- B) They would have been mad at the hare for winning.
- C) The hare would have just sat there and not moved.
- D) They would have been happy to have cheered for a winner.

11. When the moose said that the pineapple has some trick up its sleeve, he means that the pineapple

- A) is wearing a disguise
- B) wants to show the animals a trick
- C) has a plan to fool the animals
- D) is going to pull something out of its sleeve

The *New York Daily News* reported that students, teachers, parents, and even 74-time Jeopardy! champion Ken Jennings all agreed the questions asked were confusing and inappropriate for a standardized test.

Pearson, the national test company which published the story and questions, defended the content in a memo obtained by *Time Magazine*:

- Item 7: The correct answer is C. The question regarding the animals' possible motivation for eating the pineapple requires a reader to infer the correct answer from clues conveyed in the text. While all of the options are plausible motivations, the most likely answer is that the animals were annoyed. Paragraph 13 indicates that the animals support the pineapple to win the race because they assume the pineapple has a clever plan. However, the pineapple never moves during the race. From these clues and events, a reader can infer that the animals are annoyed. The text does not support the inference that the animals are motivated by hunger, excitement, or amusement.

- Item 8: The correct answer is D. The question regarding the wisest animal requires the reader to apply close analytic reading skills to determine which of the choices represents the wisest animal based on clues given in the text. The moose and the crow are the two animals that present the incorrect idea that the pineapple has a clever plan to win the race. This idea is proven false when the hare wins the race. The hare is presented as incredulous that a pineapple would challenge him to a race, but overconfidently agrees to race a pineapple.

Finally, the owl declares that 'Pineapples don't have sleeves,' which is a factually accurate statement. This statement is presented as the moral of the story, allowing a careful reader to infer that the owl is the wisest animal.

Pearson also acknowledged that the story was first used in 2004 and has since been used on tests in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, New Mexico, Florida, Chicago, Ft. Worth, and Houston.

"The only thing more absurd than

'The Hare and the Pineapple' is Pearson's lengthy, verbose, and ludicrous defense of this passage," Sharon Emick Fougner, a principal in Great Neck, NY told the *New York Times*. "If the test had not been so damaging to children, this memo would be comical."

Not only are the pineapple story and its accompanying questions inappropriately confusing, but they are also proof that standardized testing companies like Pearson have far too much influence over our children's education. *Education Week* blogger Anthony Cody wrote on April 20:

The tests have become the ultimate authorities in our schools, and the test publishers are virtually unquestionable. The standardized testing technocracy has convinced our policy makers that the only way we will be competitive in the world is if everyone learns the same information, and has that learning measured in ever-finer increments. We are not supposed to look behind the curtain to see the way this data is arrived at. . . . The truth is that sensitive formative assessment is the proper domain of a well-trained, intelligent teacher, capable of seeing the individual strengths

and weaknesses of children, and guiding their learning. Standardized tests are useful when used as an annual check on that learning, but that is all. Once heavy consequences are attached to them, all the learning in a classroom is re-oriented to focus on pleasing that master, that almighty unquestionable arbiter of what has been learned.

New York Education Commissioner John King responded to parents' complaints by announcing that the pineapple portion of the state's 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading test will not be counted in students' final scores. Unfortunately, Commissioner King seems to think the Common Core curriculum will solve all the problems brought to light by this absurd story. He responded to the pineapple controversy with a statement on April 20:

It is important to note that this test section does not incorporate the Common Core and other improvements to test quality currently underway. This year's tests incorporate a small number of Common Core field test questions. Next year's test will be fully aligned with the Common Core.

## Student Debt (Continued from page 1)

no student loan debt at around age 20, and will be qualified to work in an industry that typically pays between \$16 and \$40 an hour.

This will give them a significant advantage as they enter the work force. As *National Review* reported in April,

The average student today, by comparison, graduates five years after completing high school, with \$25,000 of student-loan debt. Worse still, a study published last year by the University of Chicago Press



finds that 31 percent of recent college graduates have had to move back home with their parents; of those who are able to find jobs, the majority make less than \$30,000 a year.

Texas A&M schools aim to expand their low-cost options with two more degrees that may be available as soon as 2013. Tarleton State University will offer a bachelor of science in business administration, and A&M-Commerce and South Texas College plan to offer a bachelor of applied sciences in organizational leadership.

## Historical Texts (Continued from page 2)

exams for high-school American history and government classes relate to the documents. That's rather technical territory for lawmakers.

Other concerns are less valid, in some cases making the sponsor's point. Rep. Clayton Luckie, D-Dayton, worried that teaching only the documents would leave out important concepts, such as the fact that slaves originally were counted as three-fifths of a human being or that women couldn't vote at first.

Is Luckie unaware that the three-fifths compromise, and all it implies about American slavery, is in the Constitution (Article 1, Section 2)? Per-

haps the need for better history education is more dire than anyone thought.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation's report also found that U.S. history standards suffer from a left-leaning bias, and have for decades. Rep. John Adams, R-Sydney, said the Fordham report was an important motivator behind the new law.

"Would not one better understand social problems, economics, foreign affairs . . . if they first had a grounding in the foundation of this country's origins through the study of these founding documents?" he asked before the law was passed 62-31.