

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## Turkish Charter Schools in America

Recent developments in Loudoun County, Virginia have brought national attention once again to Imam Fethullah Gülen, the Turkish cleric whose followers allegedly run at least 120 charter schools in America. The Turkish-operated schools, if taken as a combined unit, would make up the largest charter school association in the country. They are funded by U.S. tax dollars, and are run by independent boards, often made up solely of Turkish expatriates.

It has been reported that the FBI and other federal agencies are investigating various aspects of the Gülen empire, said to be worth billions of dollars, but details of those investigations are scarce. De-

tails about the operators of the schools are often equally murky.

Several states have launched investigations into the administration of Gülen schools, the awarding of contracts to build and supply the schools, and the practice of hiring Turkish teachers to work in the U.S. using H-1B visas. H-1B visas are issued specifically to allow highly skilled foreign workers temporary residency in the U.S. to work for employers in “specialty occupations” requiring “highly specialized knowledge.” Turkish schools claim they can’t find Americans to fill positions teaching math and science.

### Gülenist links

Imam Gülen came to the United States in 1999, after Turkish governmental authorities accused him of promoting an Islamic state there. He was tried (in absentia) and acquitted of the charge in 2006.

The charter schools linked to Gülen sometimes teach Turkish language and culture, and usually employ Turkish citizens as teachers, but administrators often deny any link to Gülen. However, *USA Today* reported that:

Documents available at various foundation websites and in federal forms required of non-profit groups show that virtually all of the schools have opened or operate with the aid of Gülen-inspired “dialogue” groups, local non-profits that promote Turkish culture. In one case, the Ohio-based Horizon Science Academy of Springfield in 2005 signed a five-year building lease with the parent organization of Chicago’s Niagara Foundation, which promotes Gülen’s philosophy. . . . Gülen is the foundation’s honorary president. In many cases, charter school board members also serve as dialogue group leaders. (08-17-10)

Gülen has denied connection to the schools, but when denied a visa by the

U.S. Immigration Service in 2007, he sued, claiming he was an “alien of extraordinary ability in education.” He claimed his followers “had established more than 600 educational institutions” worldwide. As Prof. Joshua Hendrick summarized in the *USA Today* article, “Gülen is both the reason behind his schools, and he has nothing whatsoever to do with them.” Hendrick, whose doctoral dissertation focused on the Gülenist movement, commented in a *New York Times* article about Gülenist connections that Gülen’s denials “had only deepened the ambiguity and helped fuel suspicion.”

He asked, “Why do leaders deny affiliation when affiliation is clear?” (06-06-2011)

Gülen won the immigration lawsuit and is in the U.S. courtesy of a green card he obtained in 2008. He now resides at a secluded and well-guarded compound in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania.

The *New York Times* stated that even though the schools are inspired by Mr. Gülen’s philosophy and religious outlook, they do not teach religion. (06-06-11) But some critics say the schools impart Islamic values and that Islamic prayer is sometimes included in the school day.

In a 2010 interview in *USA Today*, Mehmet Argin, then the principal of Tucson’s Sonoran Science Academy (SSA), said it is wrong to link charter schools founded by Turkish-Americans to the Gülen Movement “just because Turkish-Americans may be inspired by Mr. Gülen.”

SSA was awarded a 2012 gold designation from *US News & World Report* that ranks it #144 among American schools, #25 among the best charter schools in America, and #4 among charter schools in the state of Arizona.

It is the academic success achieved in some of the schools, particularly in math and science, which attracts students and parents, many of whom are unaware of the links to a Muslim cleric, and other controversial aspects.

### Cronyism

Complaints that the Turkish schools favor Turkish-owned businesses are widespread. From building new schools to supplying cafeteria food, non-Turkish American businesses are usually shut out of the supply line.

In Texas, the Cosmos Foundation was started in the ’90s by a group of Turkish educators and businessmen with the intent to build Turkish schools using the name Harmony Schools. A *New York Times* review of new construction, reno-

(See *Turkish Charter Schools* page 4)

## Michigan Passes Right-to-Work

In a move that some say is pro-worker and pro-job-creation, Michigan in December 2012 became the 24<sup>th</sup> state to pass a Right-to-Work law. Michigan workers will no longer be forced to pay dues to unions, and non-union workers can work in the state at jobs previously controlled by union membership.

Teachers unions vehemently opposed this outcome and members showed up in force at the state capitol to protest. Witnesses said the protestors were loud and angry. Crowd estimates varied between 10,000 and 12,000.

Two Michigan school districts had so many teachers call in “sick” in order to attend the protest that the entire districts had to shut down. The day was treated as a snow day in the Warren and Taylor school districts. Warren school district had more than 750 teachers missing.

Detroit Public Schools’ newly re-elected union president Keith Johnson encouraged members to attend the protest. He said, “We’re encouraging our members to stand in solidarity as a show of anger, defiance and frustration for this whole legislature.” (*Detroit News*, 12-10-12) It is instructive to note that only 7% of Detroit public school 8<sup>th</sup>-graders are proficient in reading, and only 4% rank proficient in math, according to the 2011 National Assessment of Educational

Progress. (*Forbes Magazine*, 12-13-12)

Videos widely posted following the rally show one protester assaulting a Fox News journalist and a large event-style tent being torn down by an angry mob.



The tent belonged to Americans for Prosperity, a group in favor of Right-to-Work. Also destroyed was a

popular local hot dog vendor’s cart. A reward has been offered for information leading to the arrest of those who stepped outside the law. Sympathetic Facebook users set up a page to help the hot dog vendor recoup his losses. There is no evidence that any teachers were involved in the violence.

A kindergarten teacher from the Warren district, where all schools were closed because so many teachers called in sick in order to attend the Lansing rally, told the *Detroit Free Press*, “We just want our voices heard. This is important to us to belong to a union, and we want to keep it that way.” (12-11-12)

Some union members brought a large inflatable rat to the Capitol steps referring to it as the “Snyder rat,” as an effigy of the governor. (*Detroit Free Press*, 12-11-12) For his part, Governor Rick Snyder told Fox News, “Too often the educational

(See *Right-to-Work*, page 4)

## New Illinois School Report Cards

Next year, when the Illinois State Board of Education releases its annual school report card for each public school in the state, the data will look different from recent years. Following a model developed in 1987-88, Illinois school report cards have been primarily driven

by students’ results on statewide tests and, according to former State School Superintendent Glenn “Max” McGee, “the [current] report card obfuscates rather than clarifies.”

Beginning next year, school report cards will offer a much more holistic and transparent picture of the quality of education offered in each of the state’s schools and districts.

In 2009, Illinois created an education reform group called the P-20 Council. This group, together with the Boston Consulting Group, has conducted nearly 60 focus groups with administrators, teachers, parents, students, and

community members across the state in order to create a more comprehensive and understandable method for reporting on schools’ performance.

The P-20 Council announced that “[t]he new report card is organized to help parents understand how a school or



district is performing in three key areas: (1) student outcomes, (2) student progress, and (3) the school environment.” The data will include such measures as the pass-rate of 8<sup>th</sup>-graders who take algebra; the availability of Foreign Language and college-level

Advanced Placement courses; how often teachers are absent and how they rate on performance evaluations; and how safe students feel at school.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported: “Test scores will be listed on the new report cards, but the data will emphasize the percentage of students who score on the high end — called ‘exceeding’ standards

(See *Report Cards*, page 4)

## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**A Louisiana law allowing the use of vouchers to pay for private school tuition was overturned by a district court judge who claims it is unconstitutionally financed.** It is expected that the court ruling will not stop voucher use because it will be appealed and the voucher funding method can be changed. Gov. Bobby Jindal maintains that vouchers are crucial to equal opportunity in education.

**In an attempt to eliminate stereotypes, a Swedish public preschool has dropped all personal pronouns, instead using a newly created gender-neutral word, "hen."** Nicolaigarden School has also eliminated gender references in the classroom by calling boys and girls "friends." Supporters of the idea say it's the best way to start at an early age to assure equal opportunity for men and women, but some Swedes call it "gender madness," according to a report in the *New York Times*.

**The Supreme Court refused to review a lower court decision, brought against the Spartanburg, SC school district for allowing credit for high school students who take elective religious classes off-campus.** The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, whose legal and financial support enabled the district to fight the lengthy legal battle, stated, "This is a big win for public school students and for religious education."

**In an effort to reduce tension between district schools and charter schools, The Gates Foundation has awarded grants totaling \$25 million to seven school districts.** The Boston, Denver, Hartford, CT, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, and Spring Branch, TX, school districts will each receive between \$2-5 million. This will be spent on programs to foster collaboration, such as: central enrollment systems, joint professional development, and common evaluation systems. The grants are aimed at decreasing the competition for resources and students between the districts and charters.

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## TIMSS and PIRLS Results

The Boston College (BC) Lynch School of Education has released results of reading, math, and science achievement tests of 4<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in America, compared to those of other countries. BC is the home of the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center in association with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. TIMSS stands for Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and PIRLS stands for Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

More than 20,000 students in more than 1,000 U.S. schools took either the TIMSS or PIRLS assessment in the spring of 2011. Worldwide, more than 60 countries and 500,000 students took the assessments. TIMSS has been given every four years since 1995 to 4<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students. PIRLS has been given every five years since 2001 to 4<sup>th</sup>-graders.

Results released in December 2012 show that U.S. 4<sup>th</sup>-graders are holding their own in reading literary texts and informational passages compared to students in other countries.

U.S. mathematics and science results, however, are disappointing. Although American students remain among the top dozen countries tested in the TIMSS, a closer look at the statistics paints a dismal picture of mathematics and science education in America.

### Reading

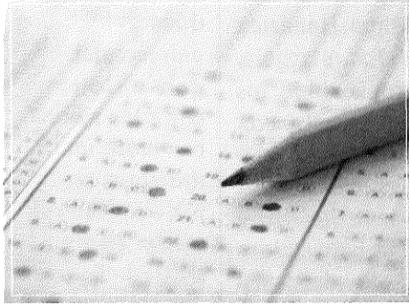
The literacy study, PIRLS, is administered at grade four. The best reading results were achieved by Hong Kong, the Russian Federation, Finland, and Singapore. Those countries were followed by Northern Ireland, the United States, Denmark, Croatia, and Chinese Taipei (Taiwan). The U.S. is one of ten nations that improved its reading achievement levels from 2001 to 2011.

Singapore has the highest number of students at or above the Advanced international benchmark at 24%, with 62% achieving the High international benchmark. The figure for the U.S. Advanced level is 17% and High is 56%.

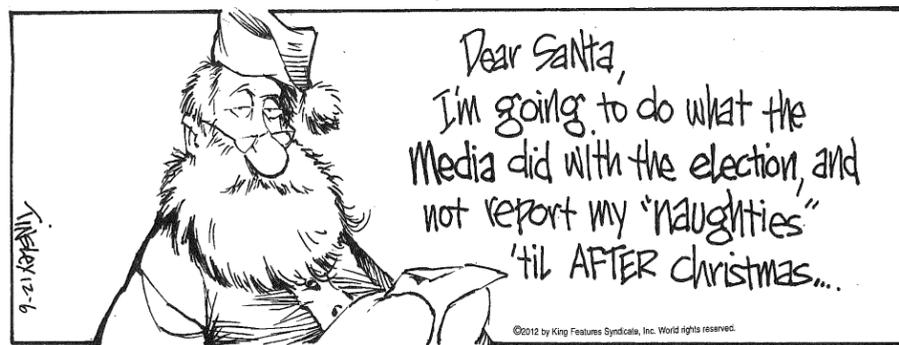
### Science

South Korea, Singapore, Finland, Ja-

(See *TIMSS and PIRLS Results* page 4)



### MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



## Teachers Unions Launch Video Propaganda

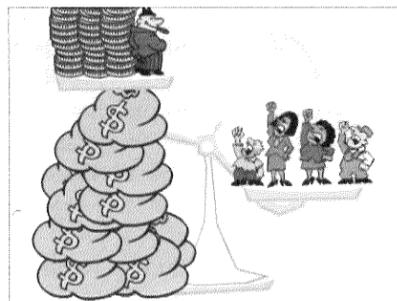
The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) union released a video titled "Tax The Rich" that has sparked controversy nationwide. In a similar video, "Fat Cats," the Chicago Teachers Union attacks Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel and others who are trying to save the bankrupt Chicago school system from complete collapse. Both union-created videos attempt to fuel class warfare, and to influence education reform debates.

The CFT effort, narrated by leftist actor Ed Asner, had to be edited once released. It originally showed a "rich person" urinating on the heads of "poor people." Viewers were outraged and the movie's creators removed the yellow stream. The video remains only slightly less provocative without the bodily functions.

"Tax the Rich" has as its premise that "the 1%" do not, but should, pay "their fair share" of taxes. As Michelle Malkin

said at Townhall.com, "Think Occupy Wall Street meets Sesame Street." (12-07-12)

Claiming the government bailed out big business but did not give a bailout to "ordinary people whose houses and jobs were broken by the crash," the CFT apparently missed



reports of the billions of dollars President Obama's stimulus packages gave to fund elementary, secondary, special, and higher education, extend unemployment benefits, extend COBRA health care coverage, increase the food stamps program, and give direct cash payments to citizens.

The "Fat Cats" video by The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) disparages Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who agreed to a 17% pay increase for teachers to end their September strike. Accusing "The Rahminator" of bringing a "litter box of Fat Cats" to Chi-

(See *Video Propaganda*, page 4)

## Book of the Month



**Indoctrination: Public Schools and the Decline of Christianity,** Charles LaVerdiere, Editor, Master Books, 2012, \$14.99, 343 pp.

Although organized education in America started as an endeavor of Christian entities, public schools have been secularized. Even the most basic rules for a civil society, as advocated by the Ten Commandments, have been tossed out of schools.

*Indoctrination* contends that education is never neutral and that even secular humanism is a form of religion. The book declares, "The state school system has become resolutely hostile to Christianity and to this country's founding principles."

In essays on a variety of subjects, contributors to *Indoctrination* suggest that sending children to public schools is a mistake. John Taylor Gatto asks: "Is there an idea more radical in the human race than turning your children over to total strangers whom you know nothing about, and having those strangers work on your child's mind, out of your sight, for a period of twelve years?"

Public schools present a risk to the 90% of Christians who send their children to them. The attacks on Christian values in favor of a humanistic worldview in an environment that accepts moral relativism and situational ethics is a strain on faith. Stating that, "whoever is educating is discipling," one essay reveals that 70-88% of children of evangelicals leave the church by the end of their freshman year of college, while 90-95% of homeschool students "remain in faith through college."

Although mainly focused on Christianity, *Indoctrination* offers many reasons to homeschool. Parents may consider schools' poor academic performance, high dropout rates, low teacher morale, school violence, and the overuse of psychotropic drugs.

Public schools' propensity to go along with educational fads is also addressed. The preference given "whole language" sight-reading over phonics is an example. *Indoctrination* states that by the end of 4<sup>th</sup>-grade a student who learns the 44 basic sounds of phonics may know 24,000 words. Using whole language education "reform," 4<sup>th</sup>-graders may know as few as 1,500 words. And, 75% of public schools teach whole language.

*Indoctrination* questions the ability of politicians to correct public schools' downward spiral. In 1980, the Republican platform stated the intent to eliminate the Department of Education. But during the Reagan years, funding for that bureaucracy "went from \$14.8 billion a year in 1980 to \$21.5 billion in 1989."

A cleverly named section titled, "The Dog Ate My Homeschool Plans" discusses reasons (or excuses) parents use in order *not* to homeschool. This section describes the fundamentals of teaching children at home.

# FOCUS: The Freedom to Homeschool

By Matthew Hennessey

Published in *First Things*, 08-17-12

“It’s a free country.” You used to hear that a lot. *Mind if I have the last piece of pie?* “It’s a free country.” *Mind if I smoke?* “It’s a free country.”

Too bad it has receded from everyday lingo, replaced by the ubiquitous, meaningless, “Whatever.” Something has been lost. “It’s a free country” was more than just *whatever*, it was, “Yeah, I mind. But I ain’t gonna stop you.” Isn’t that where the rubber hits the road in a truly free society?

My wife homeschools our oldest daughter. We are among the relatively few American families to exercise this freedom. According to the National Home Education Research Institute, only about 2 million of the roughly 55 million school-age students in the United States are educated in the home. While we do it for mostly personal reasons, we are keenly aware that the practice is viewed by many (if not most) as a political act. As such, it is a contingent and precarious freedom. A sudden shift in the political atmosphere could imperil our right to educate our children at home. Gun owners have known this feeling for a long time. The Catholic Church became familiar with it recently.

In Spain, where my brother-in-law and his wife are raising two young boys, if you don’t send your kids to school at the age of six, you get a visit from the cops. While homeschooling is technically illegal in Spain, about 2,000 Spanish families have taken advantage of vague language in the Spanish Constitution to homeschool while the issue wends its way through the courts. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a U.S.-based advocacy group, reported last year that a shift in the Spanish political climate “has quickly gone from one of bureaucratic indifference to active hostility” toward homeschoolers. Daragh McInerney, president of La Asociación para la Libre Educación (ALE), the largest homeschool association in Spain, told HSLDA, “There are at least 25 families in Spain, that I am personally aware of, who are facing difficulties with the authorities over homeschooling.”

Do the Spanish live in a free country? I don’t know. They probably think they do. Compared to Saudi Arabia or China, Spain is practically a libertarian paradise, yet this capricious attitude of the government toward homeschooling seems to suggest otherwise.

“It’s a free country” may not continue to resonate with Americans for much longer either. As Obamacare’s individual mandate was predicated on the notion that costs incurred by an individual but borne by society necessitate government intervention, politicians in this country could easily be convinced — by, say, teachers unions — that homeschoolers are no different than the uninsured in the costs they

impose on the rest of us. Doesn’t society suffer if kids aren’t being properly socialized? Don’t institutions suffer if children aren’t being properly educated into citizenship?

In fact, the argument is already being made. In a 2010 paper in the journal *Philosophy and Public Policy Quarterly*, Georgetown Law School professor Robin L. West characterized homeschooling families as a political “army,” whose objective “is to undermine, limit, or destroy state functions. . . . Also sacrificed is their exposure to diverse ideas, cultures, and ways of being.” Others see homeschooling as a potential threat to public health; a 2008 *USA Today* article claimed that some families homeschool in order to avoid mandatory vaccinations.

Stanford University political scientist Rob Reich has argued that homeschooling should be strictly regulated both to ensure that children become good citizens and to prevent them from becoming “ethically servile,” or victims of their parents’ blinkered worldviews. His idea is founded on what he perversely calls the “freedom argument.” Of his proposed regulations requiring parents to check in with the state he writes, “The minimal standard will include academic benchmarks as well as an assurance that children are exposed to and engaged with ideas, values, and beliefs that are different from those of the parents.”

Reich and West would like to see parental rights subordinated to those of the child. They see unregulated education in the home — especially in the homes of religious believers — as insufficiently committed to diversity, secular progressivism’s cardinal virtue.

Earlier this year in a *Slate* article subtitled “Why teaching children at home violates progressive values,” journalist Dana Goldstein asked, “Does homeschooling serve the interests not just of those who are doing it, but of society as a whole?”

Like Reich and West, Goldstein cannot imagine homeschooling that doesn’t resemble involuntary confinement to a Wahhabi madrasah. But most homeschooling families I know make ample use of their scheduling freedom to pursue enriching and, yes, diverse opportunities: field trips to city halls and statehouses; substantive volunteer opportunities in hospitals, homeless shelters, and nursing homes, athletic contests, etc.

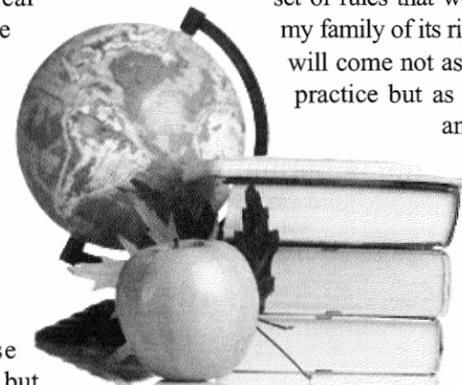
The progressive critics of homeschooling are less interested in

promoting tolerance than they are in promoting compliance. It’s the freedom that bothers them, not what kids learn or how well they learn it. It’s about who decides. In other words — here, as in Spain — it’s about politics. And it won’t be long before some enterprising American politician proposes a set of rules that would effectively deprive my family of its right to homeschool. This will come not as an outright ban on the practice but as an array of guidelines and edicts couched in the most unobjectionable terms — ensuring diversity, promoting responsible citizenship, safeguarding public health.

If the state appoints itself to guard against indoctrination by parents, who is to protect children from indoctrination by the state? Critics of homeschooling rarely grapple with this question for the likely reason that they are committed to a value system that is as uniform and intolerant in its own way as they imagine the value systems of American homeschoolers to be.

Forget broccoli. A government that can force you to buy health insurance can surely force children into the public school system. When that happens, will we still be a free country?

Whatever.



## Shall We Homeschool?

Most people would agree that deciding how to educate one’s children is a serious personal choice. Although some may robotically send their children off to public school, most parents don’t easily decide whether to give public schools a chance. Whether deciding to send a child to public school, taking on the obligations of homeschooling, or committing to the financial burden of private education, parents struggle, and then wonder if they have made the right decision.

Choices must be made according to the needs of each child and the dynamics of each family. Whatever choice parents make, monitoring and readjustments are required to be certain all is going as well as possible, as parents try to rear children to be persons of good character, ready for the challenges of adult life as citizens, and providers for their own families.

Regulations on homeschoolers vary from state to state. The following requirements are by the Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

**No notice:** No state requirement for parents to initiate any contact.

Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Texas.

**Low regulation:** State requires parental notification only.

Alabama, Arizona, California,

Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

**States with moderate regulation:** State requires parents to send notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation of student progress.

Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.

**States with high regulation:** State requires parents to send notification or achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements (e.g., curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualification of parents, home visits by state officials).

Massachusetts, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

In some parts of America, there are many homeschooled children while in others a family can feel estranged and looked upon as weird for making such an “unusual” choice. Support from other homeschoolers can be critical to a suc-

cessful start and, thanks to the internet, support is available no matter where one resides.

Here is a list of websites and books that will help families make decisions about homeschooling, and which will also be of interest to anyone who wants to learn more about the subject.

### Websites:

- ▶ Home School Legal Defense Association: [www.hsllda.org](http://www.hsllda.org)
- ▶ National Home Education Research Institute: [www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org)
- ▶ Homeschool World, the website of *Practical Homeschooling* magazine: [www.home-school.com](http://www.home-school.com)
- ▶ The Homeschool Post (encouraging, informing, and connecting the homeschool community): [hsbapost.com](http://hsbapost.com)

### Books:

- ▶ *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home*, by Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise
- ▶ *Educating the WholeHearted Child*, by Clay Clarkson with Sally Clarkson
- ▶ *For the Children’s Sake*, by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay
- ▶ *How Children Learn*, by John Holt
- ▶ *So You’re Thinking about Homeschooling: Fifteen Families Show How You Can Do It*, by Lisa Whelchel



## Turkish Charter Schools *(Continued from page 1)*

vation, and service contracts from 2009 to 2011 revealed that all but three of 35 contracts, worth a total of \$82 million, went to Turkish-owned businesses. Local companies claim they were not awarded contracts, despite submitting lower bids. (06-06-11)

In Georgia, Gülen schools allegedly ignored bidding requirements and purchased “t-shirts, teacher training, and video production services from organizations with connections to school officials, or Gülen followers, . . . businesses, and groups with ties to the Gülen Movement.” (*New York Times*, 06-05-12)

### Loudoun County, VA

After months of questions from citizens, a select committee of the Loudoun County School Board in Virginia, in December 2012, recommended that the full board deny the charter school application of the Loudoun Math and Information Technology Academy (LMITA). The school was opposed when clear answers about the Turkish and Gülen connection of the proposed school and its leadership were not forthcoming.

Another reason for the recommenda-

tion to deny the application is that the Turkish school, after which LMITA was modeled, the Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter in Anne Arundel County, Maryland has shown some disappointing results and has been in financial distress. According to the *Washington Times*, “there is significant evidence [at Chesapeake Science Point] of chronic violations of federal, state and local policies and regulations throughout its six years of operations, with little or inconsistent improvement, reflecting deficiencies in fiscal responsibility and organizational viability.” (12-10-12)

The *Loudoun Times* reported that during a school board committee meeting, James Cha, a Presbyterian pastor in Herndon, VA, claimed he taught in a Gülen school in Uzbekistan. He stated that while religion was not directly taught during the school day, teachers and students were pushed toward Gülen’s brand of Islam. “There was recruitment for students into religious programs outside of the classroom,” Cha said. “Those who showed a lot of interest were actually taken to Turkey and trained in their religion and came back as jihadists.” (11-26-12)

The Virginia Board of Education

unanimously endorsed the LMITA application in July of 2012, so the final decision moved to the local school board committee. It is unknown whether the full Loudoun County School Board will abide by the committee’s recommendation to decline the application.

The schools linked to Imam Gülen bring hundreds of teachers to America from Turkey each year. In Texas, the Cosmos Foundation that operates 25 Harmony schools imported 731 Turkish employees using H-1B visas between 2001 and 2010. (*USA Today*, 08-17-10)

*FrontPage Magazine* reported that at Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania Charter School in State College, Pennsylvania, the former president of a parents’ group said that “certified, American teachers were being replaced by Turkish male teachers with limited English-speaking skills.” (11-01-12)

### Stealth Agenda?

Even *60 Minutes* was forced to admit in its flattering May 2012 report on Gülen that the organization “does lack transparency: its funding, hierarchy, and ambitions remain hidden—leading our State Depart-

ment to wonder in cables between Ankara and Washington if Gülen has an ‘insidious political agenda.’” (*Front Page*, 11-13-12)

In response to threats by the Prime Minister of Turkey to close schools in Turkey run by his followers, Imam Gülen declared with defiance, “If they close your schools, you will respond by opening a university. And when they close your university, you should open ten schools. You should never stop marching.” (*Hurriyet Daily News*, 11-27-12)

Gülen’s own words give rise to speculation concerning his methods and motives. He stated in a 1999 video concerning the secular Turkish government:

“You must move in the arteries of the system without anyone noticing your existence until you reach all the power centers. . . . Until the conditions are ripe, they [the followers] must continue like this. If they do something prematurely, the world will crush our heads, and Muslims will suffer everywhere. . . . The time is not yet right. You must wait for the time when you are complete and conditions are ripe, until we can shoulder the entire world and carry it. . . .” (*The Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2009)

## TIMSS and PIRLS Results *(Continued from page 2)*

pan, the Russian Federation, and Taiwan all scored above U.S. 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Science on the 2011 TIMSS. Top-performing Korea scored 587 and American students scored 544. American students showed no measurable progress between the 1995, 2007, and 2011 tests. Singapore students scored 33% Advanced and 68% High, compared to America’s 15% Advanced and 49% High.

In 8<sup>th</sup>-grade science, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Finland, Slovenia, the Russian Federation, Hong Kong, and England all ranked higher than the United States. Singapore achieved 590 and the next international result was Taiwan at 564, a significant drop. The U.S. score was 525, eight points behind its next-best contender, England. American students made no measurable gains between the 2007 and 2011 tests.

In the Advanced science performance rank, ten nations ranked higher than U.S. 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students. In Singapore, 40% of students are Advanced and 69% are High or better, while in the U.S. results, just 10% of 8<sup>th</sup>-graders scored Advanced and 40% scored High or better.

### Mathematics

In mathematics, 4<sup>th</sup>-graders in America ranked behind Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Northern Ireland, Flemish Belgium, Fin-

land, England, and the Russian Federation. Since the last test in 2007, American scores rose by 12 points. Singapore, the top achiever, scored 606, and the U.S.A. scored 542.

43% of Singapore’s 4<sup>th</sup>-grade test-takers scored at or above the Advanced international level in math, while only 13% of U.S. students achieved that distinction. 78% of Singapore’s 4<sup>th</sup>-grade test-takers scored at or above the High international level, compared to only 47% of U.S. participants.

For 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the Russian Federation, Israel, and Finland all scored better than American students. The top three countries scored 613, 611, and 609 respectively, while the U.S. scored 509, at least a hundred points below the leaders.

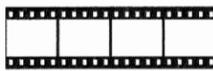
While the top three countries’ results show 49%, 48%, and 47% of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students scored at or above the Advanced international benchmark, only 7% of American students were Advanced. 30% of U.S. students scored High, 68% were Intermediate and 92% achieved at least the low level. The percentage scores are cumulative, so Advanced, High and Intermediate scorers are all included in the Low score. Unfortunately, if you are an American 8<sup>th</sup>-grader, you may not be able to grasp that concept.

## Video Propaganda *(Continued from page 2)*

ago to take over schools, the video also portrays Bill Gates, who supports school reform, as “Bill the Fence.” The video’s purpose seems to be to express anger that some want to curtail CTU power. Despite the large concessions given to teachers in order to end their strike, teachers are still unhappy that some schools in Chicago must be closed and that charter schools continue to open in the city. The union

seems unaware that Chicago schools, plagued by poor student performance, also face a billion dollar deficit next year, or that open schools have about 200,000 more seats than students.

It is unclear if either video was intended for use in classrooms. We hope the unions would not show such blatant propaganda to children.



## Right-to-Work *(Continued from page 1)*

system’s all about the adults. To see schools shutting down because of an issue like this is not appropriate in my view.” The governor added, “Indiana’s had a strong experience. . . . They’ve seen thousands of jobs come to Indiana. Those jobs could also come to Michigan.”

The nearby states of Indiana and Wisconsin recently passed laws at least limiting the collective bargaining power of unions. A similar law in Ohio was overturned. The Michigan law was written in a manner that makes referendum repeal unlikely.

President Obama weighed in on the issue, stating, “These so-called ‘right-to-work’ laws, they don’t have anything to do with economics. They have everything to do with politics. . . . What they’re really talking about is they’re giving you the right to work for less money.”

A *Forbes Magazine* contributor, James

Marshall Crotty, summarized the issue:

Well, if you are a person that wants to see a greater privatization and disaggregation of the nation’s public school system — and advancement based on performance, not seniority or union participation — then you would naturally support right-to-work laws.

However, if you think public education is a right, and public education workers, and public education itself, should be protected at all costs — even [if] it means stomaching occasionally low student and teacher performance in the classroom, and a lack of rigorous accountability from self-perpetuating union leadership — then you should vehemently oppose Michigan’s right-to-work laws. (*Forbes Magazine*, 12-13-12)

## Report Cards *(Continued from page 1)*

—not just the percentage of kids who pass, or meet standards, on the tests. ‘We’re not going to be satisfied just looking at the number of students meeting (standards),’ McGee said. ‘It is too low a level.’”

In addition to more comprehensive information, McGee and his colleagues hope to present the new report cards’ data in “a good format that they (parents and the public) can use to make decisions.”

The new report cards will be presented in three tiers, each targeting a different audience. The first tier will include condensed data in a format the Council hopes an average parent will look through. The second will provide more details to the general public and school leaders, and the third will include even more comprehensive data, geared toward educators and researchers.

The creation of Illinois’s new report cards has not been without its challenges. The process of determining what to include on the new report cards generated

controversy as educators struggled to determine which measures accurately reflect or misrepresent a school’s educational quality. Additionally, in turning to a more holistic view of schools, the new system will focus on standards besides the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements set forth in No Child Left Behind. Since the federal law is still in force, Illinois is seeking permission to stop judging their schools according to AYP status.

Despite these challenges, the P-20 Council reports that they have received “overwhelmingly positive” feedback from focus groups in response to their draft report card: “90% of participants said they are likely to use the new report card” and “80 to 90% of participants found the report card to be easy to understand.” Illinois State Board of Education spokeswoman Mary Fergus explained: “Whatever we do, our goal is to make a rating system that is transparent and informative.” *Chicago Tribune*, 10-31-12