

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## Louisiana Governor's School Reform Under Siege

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal wants to fundamentally change education in his state. *The Wall Street Journal* compared Jindal's school reform program to a "moon shot," noting "it would be one giant leap for Louisiana students." (1-31-12) Opponents of the governor's education program — the teachers unions and the federal government — are thwarting Jindal's vision every chance they get. *Act 1* and *Act 2*, passed in 2012, include parental choice through the use of vouchers, the end of tenure protection for ineffective teachers, and creation of more charter schools. Charter schools may have improved New Orleans's school landscape.

### Race and Vouchers

After lower court battles, the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled in early 2012 that the state could not use public education funds to pay for vouchers, which allow low-income parents to send their children to private schools. Vouchers are now funded not from the state education budget but from general funds and must be pieced together each year. This leaves the voucher program with an unstable funding source.

In August the U.S. Department of Justice filed suit to stop Louisiana from awarding school choice vouchers to low-income families. Atty. Gen. Eric Holder cited concerns over desegregation. "The federal government argues that allowing students to attend independent schools under the voucher system could create a racial imbalance in public school systems protected by desegregation orders." (Fox News, 8-25-13) Critics are baffled because 91% of the Louisiana Scholarship Program vouchers go to minority students; how can the vouchers impede racial balance when they simply provide minority parents a way to remove their children from failing schools?

Gov. Jindal says Pres. Obama and Atty. Gen. Holder are disregarding the "rights of parents to make choices for their children." Jindal calls the lawsuit filed by the federal government that seeks an injunction to stop the vouchers "shameful." (Fox News, 8-25-13)

During the 2012-13 school year 5,000 students were served by vouchers. Another 8,000 will be issued for 2013-14. (US News & World Report, 8-26-13) A Justice Department win would deny vouchers to more than 500 students, but would not halt the program completely because only districts under a desegregation order are affected.

### No More Ineffective Teachers

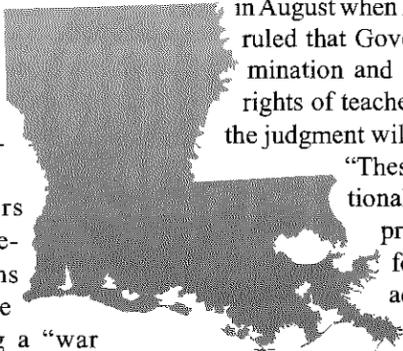
Louisiana teacher unions are unhappy with Gov. Jindal's education reforms; particularly troubling to the unions is tenure revision. Previously, teachers got lifetime tenure after three years of teaching, regardless of performance. Only under extraordinary circumstances could any tenured teacher be fired.

Under the Jindal reforms, "teachers

would receive tenure only after being rated as "highly effective" for five years in a six-year period, while teachers rated as "ineffective" would lose tenure and be required to re-earn it." (Union-Watch.org, 3-5-13)

When legislators passed the tenure reforms, teacher unions accused them and the governor of starting a "war against teachers." Protests were held at the state capital in Baton Rouge. Four school districts were forced to close schools for a day because so many teachers attended to protests.

Louisiana's two major teachers' unions filed lawsuits to block the reforms. They also called for a recall of Gov. Jindal,



but that fizzled out from lack of support.

Although teachers unions celebrated in August when District Judge Ben Jones ruled that Governor Jindal's *Act 1* termination and appeal process violates rights of teachers, Gov. Jindal believes the judgment will be set aside. He stated, "These reforms are constitutional and will continue improving Louisiana schools for children and families across our state." (Louisiana.gov, 8-20-13) Once the legal dust settles, there will be fewer ineffective teachers in Louisiana classrooms.

### Parents and Their Children

The Louisiana Association of Educators interviewed on April 29th, "There isn't anything fair about using [reforms,

including charter schools] only against the public schools and then taking our children from us, and sending them where we don't know what they're getting." In response to this, one *National Review* writer asserted that "the head of the state's largest teachers' union has essentially claimed that children belong to teachers' unions as much as they do their parents." (4-30-13)

Attempts are being made to improve education and assert parental control over students in Louisiana. Gov. Jindal is pushing against the education monopoly, on behalf of students and parents. Louisiana schools were consistently ranked amongst the worst in the nation by all criteria, including dropout rate. Some want the status quo to remain, but most Louisianans, including parents, think more must be done to enable all Louisiana children to achieve a solid education.

## Michigan Fights Common Core

Michigan is one of several states rethinking Common Core. With few exceptions, the monumental revision of education standards that is Common Core took effect in states without the knowledge of citizens and legislators; they are now left questioning the efficacy of the standards and wondering how to fund implementation and testing. Federal money won by some states under Race to the Top competitions, the federal "carrot" for implementing Common Core, was a one-time financial boost and does not provide continuous funding. It never covered testing, which is proving to be expensive and complicated, requiring a computer for every student.

The Michigan state school board adopt-

ed Common Core in 2010 without legislative approval and without public knowledge. When parents and legislators found out about Common Core, they were concerned. A budget decision made earlier this year by Michigan legislators halts financial support for the Common Core implementation and testing after October 1.

Legislative subcommittees are holding meetings in Michigan to explore the implications of Common Core. Public comment has been allowed and experts have answered legislators' questions.

### Follow the Money

On August 13 the Michigan House panel that is reviewing Common Core (CC) heard fifteen hours of testimony. Tes-

tifying in support of Common Core, Chester Finn, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Insti-

tute, was questioned about money his organization received from influential CC proponents.

Rep. Tom McMillin brought up \$6.7 million dollars that the Fordham Institute has received from the Gates Foundation. McMillin questioned whether Fordham could be objective about Common Core after receiving so much money from the Gates Foundation. Gates is a primary proponent and promoter of CC. Fordham claims *only* \$2 million directly funded Common Core research, and an additional \$1.5 million went into general operating expenses, stating that the rest of the Gates money was used on an Ohio charter school project. Even if some of the Gates money was used for purposes other than for Common Core, this freed up other resources to be used as Fordham chose. Results can become tainted when an entity's research supports claims made by the major funder of the research, as is the case with Fordham and Gates.

### How About Cursive Writing?

Another issue addressed in Michigan is the percentage of non-Common Core subject matter that is allowed by Common Core standards. Common Core allows 15% of curriculum to be outside that which conforms to CC standards. Teaching cursive handwriting is one concern of some parents and teachers. Common Core standards require keyboarding but no time is allotted for teaching students to write. It has been noted that 15% of all classroom time is barely enough to allow for teaching cursive writing, let alone other curriculum supplements individual states may wish to add.

(See *Common Core*, page 4)

## Sneaking Student Eye Scans

Parents in Polk County, Florida schools are outraged because students' eyes were scanned to track bus riding without parental permission or knowledge. The Polk County Schools interim superintendent didn't learn about the program until eye scanning was underway. Biometric information gained from iris scanning is as individual as fingerprints.

A contract approving iris scanning was supposed to be signed by the superintendent before scanning began. Parents would then be notified about the scanning and told to contact the school principal if they did not want their children to participate.

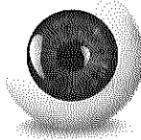
Stanley Convergent Security Solutions technicians showed up prematurely at schools and 750 students' eyes were scanned, without a signed contract or any parental approval. The company and school district officials told furious parents that the scans would

be destroyed. "Some parents, however, aren't appeased. They cite an Internet age maxim: Nothing can be deleted completely." (*TheLakelandLedger.com*, 6-14-13)

The purpose of the scanning program was to enable the district to track student bus riding. Some feel iris scanning was an extreme reaction to tracking when students get on and off the bus.

"As a result of the parents' opposition to the pilot program [the district transportation and security administrator] said the district is no longer considering using biometric devices on school buses." (FoxNews.com, 6-17-13)

In 2009 the Polk County School District attempted to implement a fingerprint scanner system to track students getting on and off buses. The system was never enacted. Then a transmitter-card tracking system was implemented, but it was ultimately unsuccessful because students frequently lost their identifying cards.



# EDUCATION BRIEFS

**Parents, teachers, and state legislators continue to be concerned about the untended and low standards represented by Common Core.** Some states are delaying implementation until lawmakers can review the scheme, and other states have pulled out of the planned testing consortia. "There is some irony in the fact that Arne Duncan keeps saying that the Core is not the work of the federal government while he, the federal secretary of education, goes around attacking its critics." (*Washington Post*, 6-25-13)

**A Wichita, Kansas charter school has taken down the "five pillars of Islam" bulletin board that appeared on the wall of a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade classroom on the first day of school.** Although the editors of the *Wichita Eagle* claimed "in context, the bulletin board fit perfectly into the core knowledge curriculum's study of the five major religions of the world," others wonder what the reaction would be to a display of the Ten Commandments in a public school classroom.

**In August, California Gov. Jerry Brown signed a law mandating that all public school students be allowed to use whatever bathroom they wish based on their self-identified gender.** Even the youngest students will be introduced to transgender issues because the law applies to all students, including those in kindergarten. Older students will use whatever locker room they wish.

**Only 36% of Americans aged 16 to 24 who aren't enrolled in school are working full-time.** This is down 10% from 2007. Young people are leaving school without skills. Many who do have jobs are not working in long-term jobs; dog-walking and yoga instructor are fun for now, but not so great at age 45. This may result in much of "the American labor force never achiev[ing] middle-class wages in a relatively secure full-time job." (*The New York Times*, 9-7-13)

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## Teachers Union is Pro-Abortion

Each year at the NEA convention, a stalwart group of pro-life advocates bucks the status quo of abortion-friendly union policies and protests the flow of their dues money to support abortion. They ask that the NEA become "abortion neutral." At the 2013 convention, a Bylaw Amendment was presented and voted on by delegates. Although it was voted down, it is a partial success for pro-life delegates because often the voices of those who oppose abortion are not heard at all. Several proposed actions have in past years been immediately "referred to committee," effectively killing them.

Bylaw Amendment 3 stated: "NEA will not use dues monies for politically supporting abortion."

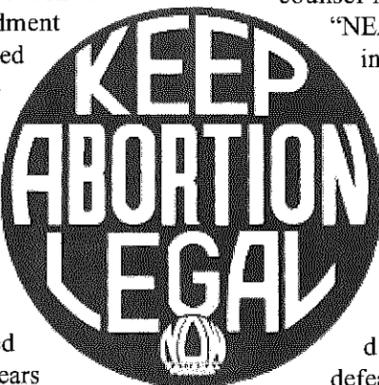
In the Amendment impact statement, the union's legal counsel wrote: "NEA supports reproductive freedom, which encompasses the right of a woman to choose to have a baby or not to do so." The selection of the word "baby," in place of the usual term "fetus," disconcerted some delegates. There was concern that this might indicate union support for or condoning of partial-birth abortion or

even the Gosnell-esque practice of killing babies born alive.

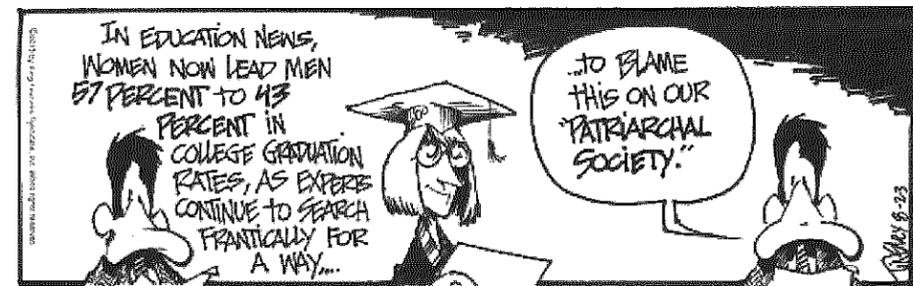
Hoping for clarification, a delegate asked on the convention floor if this wording meant the NEA supports the death of a live baby. Union general counsel Alice O'Brien responded, "NEA supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom." No further comment was offered by union leadership.

Discussion was brief; only a few comments were allowed before a motion was made to end discussion. The following day the amendment was defeated in a secret ballot vote with a vote of Yes (33.79 %) and No (66.21%). The vote indicates that one-third of delegates support halting the union's use of dues for political support of abortion.

Delegates at the convention voted to support pro-abortion Texas state Senator Wendy Davis's 11-hour filibuster against a pro-life bill that would stop abortions after 20 weeks gestation. The union adopted this statement: "The NEA Representational Assembly commends Texas State Senator Wendy Davis for her courageous filibuster to protect women's rights. . . ."



### MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



## NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards

A dozen individuals were honored at the National Education Association Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner that was held in Atlanta on July 2. Former President Jimmy Carter received an award honoring the "accomplishments of the Carter Administration" and his activism after his one term in office. His grandson accepted the award for him.

The union gave the Martin Luther King Award to Reverend Dr. William J. Barber, II, a North Carolina pastor and NAACP activist. Barber has led months of "Moral Monday" protests that have resulted in hundreds of arrests at the state capitol in Raleigh. The protesters oppose policies of the Republican governor and legislators. Barber's group is currently fighting against the state's attempt to pass a law that more effectively monitors abortion clinics.

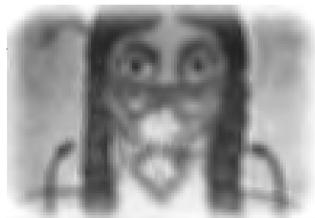
An award for seeking to "promote international understanding" and "motivate youth to work for world peace" was given to a San Diego teacher who

works with "Schools for Chiapas," which "supports the autonomous, indigenous communities of Chiapas." Chiapans are rebel Zapatistas in Mexico; some refer to them as Marxists with an added element of anarchy.

The NEA State Affiliate award went to the Missouri NEA affiliate, which "sought out, recruited, and trained minorities and women for union leadership positions."

An NEA Human and Civil rights award went to entertainer Cyndi Lauper who is a lobbyist and activist who promotes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning rights. Her song "True Colors" is heralded as an anthem for LGBTQQ people.

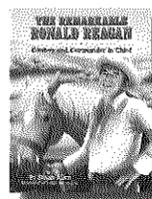
A Maryland NEA member and award winner, Judylynn Bailey-Mitchell, educates students and parents about African-American history. In her acceptance speech, she called for protection of the human and civil rights of "even yet the unborn." She was the only speaker of the evening who did not receive a standing ovation after her speech.



## Book of the Month



**The Remarkable Ronald Reagan: Cowboy and Commander in Chief**, by Susan Allen, Regnery Publishing, 2013, \$16.95



How did Ronald Reagan get the nickname "Dutch"? What was he most proud of during his presidency? Answers to these questions and more are offered by an inspiring introduction to our 40th president in a new book for children. It is written by Susan Allen, the former first lady of the Commonwealth of Virginia, with charming illustrations by Leslie Harrington.

*The Remarkable Ronald Reagan* tells the story of a man who worked hard and made all his dreams come true. He was an all-American boy who played football, basketball, and ran track. A strong swimmer, Reagan worked seven summers as a lifeguard to help pay for college.

Reagan enjoyed performing on stage and being a leader; he was student body president at his Illinois college. When he visited a friend in California, he hired a studio. His stage name was his real name, which was quite unusual in those days. Reagan made 53 movies and served as the president of the Screen Actors Guild.

Reagan ran for governor of California and served two terms. He was elected President of the United States at a time when the country desperately needed a positive and enthusiastic leader. Allen states that Reagan "always seemed to have the right words to say at the right time" and that "he spoke powerfully to unite the nation." Those are two very important abilities for a president to possess.

For older children there are three pages of dated highlights of his life and two pages of important things Reagan said.

Reagan was nicknamed "Dutch" by his father who said his baby son Ronald looked like a "fat little Dutchman." Reagan said the two accomplishments during his presidency that made him happiest were that Americans had created many jobs and that America was again respected by the world.

It is important for children to be introduced to Ronald Reagan as he really was. His son, Michael Reagan, recently exposed the falsehoods in the new movie, *The Butler*, which portrays his dad as a racist. Michael states that his father's best friend at Eureka College was a black man and that he believed all racism was wrong. Michael states that the Hollywood movie is "not even the storyline of the real butler."

Children must be made aware of Reagan's greatness so his legacy can live on.

# FOCUS: Public Schools: Sexual Perversion “Good,” Christian T-Shirt “Inappropriate”

by Gina Miller

Originally published on February 26, 2013 at *RenewAmerica.com*.

The godless, communist Left has commandeered the public education system. This is not news to those of us who have paid attention to our society's steady crumble into immoral oblivion. The government-run public school system routinely cranks out undereducated kids while constantly clamoring for more money for “education.” It's sickening and scary because the kids are coming out of school today sorely deficient in basic reading and writing skills, and knowledge of history, math and science, but they are quite proficient in the tenets of leftist indoctrination, like belief in the hoax of man-made global warming, narcissistic “self-esteem,” and the embrace of homosexuality as just another legitimate lifestyle.

It is also not news that in the schools, just as in society in general, there is a distinctly anti-Christian bigotry present. We see examples regularly, and another one has occurred in Florida. As reported at *The Blaze* on February 25, 2013:

Earlier this month, Summer Schreiner, a 15-year-old student at Clearlake Middle School in Cocoa, Fla., was told to change her pro-abstinence t-shirt after officials deemed it ‘inappropriate.’ The teen acquired the shirt, which read, ‘Don't drink and park . . . accidents cause kids,’ at a Christian conference she recently attended. But the message was apparently too offensive for education officials — so they took action. ‘I got through lunch, and on my way back, the assistant principal tells me I need to go to the office and change my shirt,’ she told WOFL-TV. ‘I was pretty upset. I thought it was silly. It's not like I was wearing a curse word or something that was promoting violence.’ Schreiner got the shirt at “The Silver Ring Thing,” an abstinence conference that is held in cities across the nation. During the event, teens pledge to wait until they're married to have sex. In exchange for this promise, they get a silver ring.

With all the filth marketed to kids, from violent video games, to obscene “music,” to Hollywood's teen sex films filled with witchcraft, vampirism, and other devilish themes, a school in Florida decides a t-shirt from a Christian conference that promotes abstinence is “inappropriate.” Yeah. Heaven forbid that school kids should be exposed to the message that sex is meant to be a sacred act reserved for the marriage union, rather than abused as just another soul-destroying “free toy” to be played with anywhere, anytime with anyone.

As with the rest of the poisoned ideology of the communist Left, truth and reality are turned on their heads in our public schools. While Christianity is regarded as a dangerous, “inappropriate” thing, homosexuality and its various manifestations are considered something to be proudly celebrated.

Look at two states where the militant homosexual movement has waged an aggressive battle for admittance into the public school systems. Massachusetts and California are leading the dark way in forcing the acceptance of in-your-face homosexuality on kids as young as kindergarten-aged. Massachusetts is slightly ahead of California in that it has decreed that “transgenderism” is to be forced on the public schools to the point that boys who “feel like girls” must be allowed to go into the girls' bathrooms and locker rooms and even be permitted to play on girls' sports teams, and vice versa for girls. There is also an effort there to abolish the distinctions between male and female. [California has now passed a comprehensive law, even stricter than that in Massachusetts.]

This is utter insanity.

There is a gut-wrenching report by the pro-family watchdog group *MassResistance* that outlines the terrible details of this wicked campaign which was launched as result of state legislation back in 2011, the “transgender rights

and hate crimes” law. I recommend you read it for a preview of what is coming to a state near you, if we don't stop it.

California is also at the tip of the homosexual spear, having passed state legislation mandating that homosexuality be infused into the public school curriculum and portrayed in a positive light. There is no opt-out for parents who want to shield their children from this immoral, unnatural and unhealthy indoctrination.

The *Rescue Your Child* website has a list of problems facing California school kids, and these problems are present all across the nation in varying degrees. As they write: “Because of bad laws, lack of pro-family laws, and politically-correct trends, here's what kids are guaranteed to receive in California public schools.”

The *Rescue Your Child* list includes homosexual-bisexual-transsexual indoctrination without parental consent, including off-campus pro-homosexuality counseling; pro-abortion indoctrination, “confidential” abortion referrals and off-campus “counseling” without parental consent, condom and birth control pills indoctrination and distribution without parental consent, with “abstinence-only” education prohibited; anti-God, pro-evolution indoctrination, anti-Christian indoctrination, widespread rejection of

religious and moral values; political correctness, dumbed-down academics, and anti-parent sentiments. The website offers solutions to these problems, which mainly include getting your kids the heck out of the festering cesspool of the government-run public schools.

In a world that “celebrates” perversity and castigates Christianity, it is no surprise that we see an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade Christian girl's abstinence message t-shirt earning her a forced shirt change in the degenerate public school system in Florida, while it's perfectly fine for Little Johnny to don his “gay” apparel so that he looks like a girl in Massachusetts public schools.

And the school in Cocoa, Florida is not backing down on its refusal to let the girl wear her abstinence t-shirt, because they claim the shirt violates the school's policy that no clothing may bear a message that has “sexually explicit or oriented wording” or that “infringes on the rights of others.” Her shirt did none of that, but it doesn't appear that these school officials are concerned with truth. The bottom line is that the message is rooted in *Christian* truth, and that is a grand offense in our degenerate culture today.

*Gina Miller, a native of Texas and current resident of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, is a conservative Christian political writer and radio/television voice professional.*



## More on Yoga in the Public Schools

by Mark Movsesian

Originally published on August 9, 2013 by *First Things*.

Last month, a California state court ruled that including yoga in an elementary school physical education program does not violate the Establishment of Religion Clause of the Constitution. The program was funded by a half-million-dollar grant from the Jois Foundation, a private organization that promotes the form of yoga known as Ashtanga. The court ruled that the Encinitas Union School District had scrubbed religious references from the classes, so that what remained was simply a fitness and stress-reduction program for kids. To use the language of the so-called “endorsement test,” the court concluded that a reasonable observer would not believe the school district had impermissibly endorsed a religion — in this case, Hinduism.

This week, the Oxford University Press blog published an interesting interview with Candy Gunther Brown, an Indiana University religious studies professor who served as an expert witness for the plaintiffs in the case. Brown argues convincingly that Ashtanga yoga is in fact deeply religious. “Ashtanga,” she says, “emphasizes postures and breathing on the premise that these practices will

‘automatically’ lead practitioners to . . . ‘become one with God’ . . . ‘whether they want it or not’”:

Although EUSD officials reacted to parent complaints by modifying some practices, EUSD classes always begin with “Opening Sequence” (Surya Namaskara) [a prayer to the sun god] and end with “lotuses” and “resting” (AKA *shavasana* or “corpse” — which encourages reflection on one's death to inspire virtuous living), and teach symbolic gestures such as “praying hands” (*anjali mudra*) and “wisdom gesture” (*jnana mudra*), which in Ashtanga yoga symbolize union with the divine and instill religious feelings.

It's quite possible for people, especially kids, to be influenced by these religious messages, she says:

Scientific research shows that practicing yoga can lead to religious transformations. For example, Kristin is a Catholic who started Ashtanga for the stretching; she now prefers Ashtanga's “eight limbs” to the “Ten Commandments.” Kids who learn yoga in public schools may also be learning religion.



Perhaps Brown overstates the difficulty of separating religious and non-religious elements in yoga; I don't know. After reading her interview, though, the question I have is this. How could anyone not think that Ashtanga yoga is religious, and that by sponsoring this class — especially with funding from an organization that promotes Ashtanga's religious message — the school district has endorsed religion in a manner that current law forbids?

Perhaps, with our deeply Protestant religious culture, Americans simply dismiss the notion that physical practices can be genuinely “religious.” Religion is a matter of mind and spirit, not body; stretching is purely physical, just a nice way to relax. Stretching isn't prayer, after all. Brown's point, however — and it is a very important one — is that these practices are a kind of prayer. Ashtanga yoga purports to instill religious feelings and lead one to God, whether one intends it or not. (In fact, Hindus might find the claim that yoga is just a stretching exercise rather insulting). And the school district has students participate in these prayers, not just learn about them from a book. The Supreme Court has said the Constitution forbids even displaying

(See *Yoga*, page 4)

## Acting Up On Campus

College students have long found ways to act wild and shock their elders. "Sex Weeks" and "Undie Runs" are popping up on college campuses, even some that are funded by taxpayers. College administrations turn a blind eye or even encourage students to step beyond what seems appropriate to many.

The University of Texas, Austin, Arizona State University, San Diego State University, and several University of California campuses have an annual "Undie Run." Events include female coeds running in lingerie and males in underpants. Proceeds from the events fund charities, including cancer research. Boston University's "Nearly Naked Run" has the theme "Undress, De-Stress and Do Good"; the proceeds from the event provide clothes for the homeless. Washington University in Saint Louis features a December "Nearly Naked Run" to raise money for an arts outreach program for underprivileged students.

Former Presidential speech writer and conservative commentator Colleen Carroll Campbell told *The College Fix* "that these students have been raised in a sexualized culture and 'absorbed its messages all too well, mistakenly equating exhibitionism with liberation and objectification with positive attention.'" (1-21-13)

Begun at Yale in 2001, "Sex Week" has since spread to ten more colleges, including Brown and Harvard Universities and the University of Pennsylvania. Sex Week consists of activities and seminars that most Americans would find inappropriate and disturbing.

When the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK) decided to institute a Sex Week in 2013, they faced swift and firm opposition. State legislators eliminated state tax funding for the event, which amounted to \$11,145. The student fee funding of \$6,500 remained in place. An online fundraising campaign was begun; one of the first donations was \$1,000 from Planned Parenthood.

The UTK event garnered 4,000 attendees and featured art and a musical production, as well as demonstrations, seminars, and discussions. (*Inside Higher Ed*, 7-29-13) The UTK Sex Week website indicates that events were held for straight, lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer, and questioning students.

As students are dropped off at colleges this fall, parents, grandparents, alums, and other citizens may be wise to look into what is happening at universities.



## Jr. High Students Text STD Status

A program for students called Qpid.me has been launched by the Los Angeles Unified School District. "Qpid" is pronounced like "cupid." Qpid.me is a "sex education tool" that enables students thirteen years old and older to find nearby HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) testing services and then receive their test results on their cell phone or computer. Students can send their disease results to potential sex partners, as well as receive an acquaintance's report, before having sex. The motto of the company that developed Qpid.me is "Spread the Love, Nothing Else."

The National Abstinence Education Association issued a statement about Qpid.me being a part of California's sex education curriculum for children beginning in 7th grade. It said that "[Qpid.me] provides tacit endorsement of teen sexual activity, sending the message to teens as young as 13 that sexual experimentation is expected and risk-free as long as they are tested for STDs and use a condom." (*NY Daily News*, 5-30-13)

The Qpid.me program allows students to share test results for the STDs gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, and HIV, but does not include genital herpes or HPV results. Human papillomavirus

(HPV) is the most prevalent STD in the nation.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that there are 110 million Americans with STDs, amounting to \$16 billion a year in medical costs. Young people ages 15-24 account for 50% of the almost 20 million new STD infections annually. (CDC Fact Sheet, 2-13-13)

Other critics of the Qpid.me program mention that clean STD results are only up-to-date until the student has sex with just one additional person.

The Los Angeles school district issued the following statement in defense of the Qpid.me program:

The educational system has the most direct contact with youth; our ability to impact and empower them is endless. Our responsibility is to give them the best information and skill necessary as they venture through their entire lives, because sexuality is with them for their entire life.

Shouldn't parents "have the most direct contact with youth," and also be responsible for giving their children information about sex and disease? The rates of teen pregnancy and STDs have increased dramatically since schools have taken on the role of sex education.



## Yoga (Continued from page 3)

the Ten Commandments inside a public school classroom, lest students feel pressured to read and meditate on them. But this is OK?

Let's try a thought experiment. Orthodox Christianity has a tradition known as hesychasm, in which hermits discipline themselves to meditate, shut out the world, and experience God inside them. It's a very difficult mystical practice, not for everyone — though some people like to dabble. Apparently it gives great inner peace. The key element is repetition of the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner." Suppose some enterprising Orthodox Christian foundation adapted these practices, put the Jesus prayer in an esoteric language, and

proffered the package to a public school district as a stress-reduction program for kids. Would anyone think such a program constitutional under present law?

The plaintiffs in the case have indicated that they plan to appeal. I hope they do, because this could turn out to be a very significant case. As Eastern religious practices continue to seep into mainstream culture, situations like this are bound to recur. They may lead to a change in the way Americans understand religion.

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## Common Core (Continued from page 1)

Chester Finn of the Fordham Institute testified at the Aug. 30 hearing, "To my knowledge, there's no Common Core police checking to see whether you add 15% or 27%, or 3% to what's in the Common Core." While that may be true, if a school is to successfully implement the massive and complex CC standards, there is no way they can diverge from the 15% rule. Some question whether even the 15% of alternative curriculum will make it into lesson plans, since it will not be tested.

Sandra Stotsky, a retired education professor at the University of Arkansas; Williamson Evers, a research fellow from Stanford University's Hoover Institution; and Diane Ravitch all testified against Common Core in Michigan.

### What Next?

Some Michigan school districts are moving forward with Common Core as school starts this fall. But the superintendent of Saginaw schools feels cautious and is not allocating funds to Common Core curricula or teacher training, since it may be wasted money.

The superintendent of the Plymouth-Canton school system believes Common Core will eventually be fully funded. The district has so far spent \$500,000 on a new English and language arts curriculum that is "explicitly aligned to the Common Core" for the 17,000 district students. Plymouth-Canton School Superintendent Meissen says of Common Core, "The train's on the tracks and it's left town." (*Education Week*, 8-28-13)

But a math teacher from Mr. Meissen's own district criticized Common Core math standards in testimony at an Aug. 14 legislative review meeting. Teacher Stephanie Keiles doesn't approve of Common Core's new method of teaching geometry. She said, "We've taught mathematics the same way from 500 B.C. up until the Common Core." (*MichiganLive.com*, 8-14-13)

Massive amounts of money were spent to promote, enact, and fund Common Core long before parents were even aware of what was happening at schools their children attend. No one asked parents if they were in favor of Common Core.

## Feds Over-Informing Girls

GirlsHealth.gov is a website created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2002. It is aimed at helping girls ages 10-16 "learn about growing up." "Growing up" is an interesting euphemism for the type of information the federal government now offers directly to girls as young as ten.

The website defines masturbation and offers the commentary, "From a medical point of view, experts say it's almost always not a problem — unless it's interfering with your responsibilities or your social life." Among other topics are anal sex, the clitoris, and pubic lice. The website addresses "club drugs," saying they are "most often found at events like parties, dance clubs, raves, and concerts." GirlsHealth.gov tells girls that date rape drugs, methamphetamine, ecstasy, and LSD "can possibly make you very sick ... and can have a big effect on your mind and can cause you to make poor decisions." A

dozen slang words for cocaine and crack are offered at the website.

One statement at GirlsHealth.gov claims:

Having information can help you take care of yourself and feel more confident. Here at girlshealth.gov you can check out lots of helpful information, from the pluses of abstinence to different types of birth control and much more.

The website tells girls about dating. There is a "Rate Your Date" interactive tool that allows girls to make decisions on pretend dates and then get feedback on possible outcomes of choices they've made.

Girls can follow GirlsHealth.gov on Facebook and can receive Twitter messages about a variety of subjects from the website. Recent messages encouraged girls to make a video addressing dating violence for which they may win a \$500 prize. Another Tweet encouraged girls to get the HPV vaccine. A

