

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 363

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

APRIL 2016

States Should Share Best Practices

How much American K-12 students are learning is an issue that remains under a constant cloud of debate. Some warn of dismal results and failing systems. Others say the achievement tests used to rank students are often inadequate and frequently measure the wrong things. Some even say fake crises are dreamed up in order to fundamentally transform the way Americans educate children.

An informative Briefing Paper completed by the Economic Policy Institute is titled “Bringing it Back Home: Why state comparisons are more useful than international comparisons for improving U.S. education policy.” It was written by a Stanford education and economics professor, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, and a Russian economics researcher. They believe we should look at our own successful education systems in various states, rather than gazing internationally. (The full report can be found at EPI.org, 10-30-15)

Martin Carnoy, Emma Garcia, and Tatiana Khavenson wrote a commentary in *Education Week* that summarizes their EPI findings. They say, “Schools in the United States are not doing as poorly as international-test scores suggest.” They continue, “It makes sense to look to high performers in Europe and Asia for new education strategies if we lack our own success stories, but that is not the case.” They say that “the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides a state-by-state picture of our schools that is much more relevant than either PISA or other major international tests, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).”

Results from their study of two decades of PISA, TIMSS, and NAEP scores led them to conclude that education policymakers need to calm down about American students’ international test results. They report:

After we adjusted for socioeconomic differences in the samples of students taking the PISA and TIMSS tests, we found that performance on international math and reading tests in states such as Massachusetts and North Carolina is as high as, or higher than, in the highest-scoring countries in Europe. We also showed that gains in TIMSS mathematics scores over the past 12 to 16 years in several states are much higher than gains in other countries.

When some states are successfully educating students, it makes sense to look to those states for policies, curriculum, standards, and tips to improve results in other states. The authors suggest:

If students with similar family ac-

ademic resources attending schools with similar socioeconomic and ethnic composition in some states make much larger gains than in other states, those larger gains are more likely to be related to specific state policies that could be applied elsewhere in the United States.

This doesn’t always result in hero states to be emulated by all others. Some states achieve better results in reading than in math, and vice versa. The researchers say:

States that made large reading gains were not necessarily the same states that made large math gains. For example, Maryland and Florida made relatively larger gains in reading than in mathematics. And Texas and Massachusetts made large gains in math, but not reading.

(See *Best Practices*, page 4)



Oops! They Did It Again

For the third time, personally identifiable information about Washington, D.C. students has been made public. In February, information about 12,000 students who receive services due to a disability was put online. Information given out includes each child’s identification number, race, age, school attended, disability, and services received from the district. The data was mistakenly released by an outside agency. Students whose privacy was breached attend public and charter schools and range from kindergarten through 12th grade.

After the latest breach, the D.C. Superintendent of Education wrote, “Our families deserve to know that their students’ personal information is being kept confidential and secure in the education system.” This is true.

The *Washington Post* reports that the superintendent’s office identified the individual who downloaded the document as someone from a “commu-

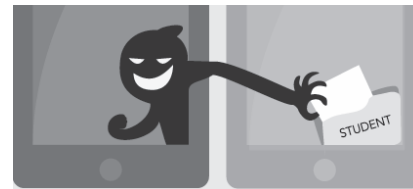
nity organization.” Some wonder why a person outside the school district had access to such sensitive information in the first place, let alone the ability to release it. Parents were expected to take heart that the outside organization has “verbally agreed to delete the document.” The superintendent’s office said its “legal department is now in touch with [the outside organization] to sign off legally that they will delete the file.” Some would say that is both too little and too late.

D.C. schools previously released sensitive student data. In March of 2015, “district officials released an Excel file in response to a Freedom of Information Act inquiry from the news website BuzzFeed that included audited enrollment data about individual students, and information about suspensions and expulsions.” Administrators sent the information in a format that had student information redacted and *locked*, but it was done in such a faulty manner that it could easily be unlocked, making “personal details available.”

From 2010 until 2015, “personal information for special education students in the District had also been publicly available online.” In that incident, training documents were “inadvertently posted to an internal website that was not secure.” (*Washington Post*, 2-11-16)

Such security breaches have become commonplace across the nation and are the reason the public, parents, teachers, and students have lost faith in school systems’ ability to control the massive amounts of data they collect. It is particularly disturbing when data is shared with outside entities who are not authorized by parents to view their children’s information in the first place.

In March, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce held a hearing about safeguarding student privacy. It was mainly a cheering and back-slapping session for those who believe in massive student data collection. Among those testifying was Rachael Stickland, a parent advocate for student privacy. She said, “Parents continue to seek answers to exactly what information pertaining to their children is being collected, who has access to the information and for what purpose, and when that information will be destroyed.” (*EdWorkforce*. House.gov, 3-22-16) Someone should tell Stickland that the information collected is meant to follow children from kindergarten through college, and to keep track of them throughout their entire lives in the “workforce.”



Escalating Student Misbehavior

Schools are increasingly becoming unsafe places for teachers, students, and even police officers who are assigned to remain onsite to try to keep the peace. Three recent incidents were serious enough to become national news.

In March, a teacher was beaten by two students who disrupted his technology classroom at Como Park High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. The disruption was caused by “a pot (marijuana) deal gone bad.” The teacher was hospitalized. In December of 2015, a different St. Paul high school teacher was hospitalized for injuries received while trying to break up a lunchroom fight. His lawsuit states that the school district is aware that the school is “dangerous” for teachers. (*TwinCities.com*, 3-9-16)

After the second St. Paul teacher was beaten, another Como Park High School teacher was suspended for speaking out on Facebook about out-of-control students. He wrote that administrators have “deconstruct[ed] adult authority in [the] building by enabling student misconduct.” He said that students use phones and iPads during class time “for social media and gaming.” Lamenting the lack of discipline, he wrote: “There have always been rules for ‘devices,’ and defined levels of misconduct. We now have no backup, no functional location to send kids who won’t quit gaming, setting up fights, selling drugs, . . . or cyber bullying.” Many students and parents who

believe the teacher is stating the obvious have rallied to his defense. But Black Lives Matter activists want him fired because they consider his Facebook post to be racially insensitive. (*CityPages.com*, 3-14-16)

Mesa Mess

At Sun Valley High School in Mesa, Arizona, the principal escorted a student to the office after breaking up an argument in which he was involved. Once in the office, the student attacked the school police officer. The officer unsuccessfully tried to control the assailant with the use of a Taser.

A student on the scene said the pugilistic teen told the principal and the police officer, “I told you not to [expletive] with me,” and then boom, right in the face.” A brother of the student, who happened to also be in the principal’s office, joined in the attack on the law enforcement officer. Another student reported, “The cop was on the ground getting beat up.” Another officer arrived to help, but “the fight continued to escalate.”

The charter school was put on lockdown until more police arrived. The first two officers were taken to the hospital, one with scalp lacerations and under concussion protocols. The teen brothers were arrested at the school and are expected to face aggravated assault charges. (*EAGnews.org*, 3-22-16)

(See *Student Misbehavior*, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Every morning since the 9/11 terrorists attacks in 2001, students at Glenview Elementary School in Haddon Heights, New Jersey, said the words “God bless America” right after they recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The tradition started as a way to honor first responders and continued for 14 years, until the ACLU complained on the basis of “separation of church and state.” Fearing a costly legal battle, school administrators decided to stop the practice. But, the Pledge is often said outside when weather permits, so some parents plan to stay for it and to join their children in still asking God to bless their nation. (CBS, 1-5-16)

As a student government leader at Harvard in the 1970s, President Obama’s nominee for the Supreme Court was involved in a fight to keep the campus ban on the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. Merrick Garland supported a leftist group called the New American Movement that got 2,500 signatures on a petition that favored the ban on campus ROTC. His actions “could give Senate Republicans opposing his nomination to the high court ammunition to say he did not sufficiently defend the U.S. military in the face of left-wing activists.” (Boston Globe, 3-18-16)

Elementary education theorist, retired professor, unrepentant former terrorist, and pal of President Obama, Bill Ayers, was among the mob that made it impossible for Donald Trump’s presidential campaign to hold a rally in Chicago in March. Ayers co-founded the Weather Underground, a group of radicals who bombed the U.S. Capitol, the Pentagon, and police stations in the 1960s. The winner of the Chicago fiasco was Trump, to whom followers sickened by such attacks on free speech will flock. The losers — all the other Republican candidates who failed to blame the mob and instead seemed to side with the leftist disrupters. (AmericanThinker.com, 3-13-16)

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: Virginia Barth. 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.

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Engaging Shakespeare

The late nineteenth-century educator Charlotte Mason wrote, “Thought breeds thought; children familiar with great thoughts take as naturally to thinking for themselves as the well-nourished body takes to growing; and we must bear in mind that growth, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is the sole end of education.” Mason believed children should be exposed directly to great literature. Many would agree that the works of William Shakespeare represent some of the best literature in the world.

Shakespeare may seem out of the reach of children, but that’s not the case. Talented writers have made the Bard accessible to younger students in ways that will make their later experience with the complete works more enjoyable and more readily understood. An early introduction allows children to savor the genius of the storylines and to experience personal growth provided by exploring the themes.

Bruce Coville has adapted several works of Shakespeare for children as young as age four. Each of his picture books retells an individual play, using original language when possible. In his beautifully illustrated, 48-page adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, important quotes are true to Shakespeare. “The course of true love never did run smooth.” “What fools these mortals be.” Although abridged, the stories remain coherent. The artwork helps to bring the works to life for small children.

When *The Railway Children* and *Five Children and It* author E. Nesbit sought to share Shakespeare with her own young children, she found the language too complex for them to follow. In 1900, Nesbit created *Shakespeare’s Stories for Young Readers*, which is still popular today. She presents twelve tales in about six pages each, with the most difficult of Shakespearean English changed to Victorian English, although some of the original wording remains. This is recommended for children ages 8-14, but some as young as six will be enthralled.

Nesbit presents *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *King Lear*, *Cymbeline*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Pericles*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Winter’s Tale*. The stories aren’t sanitized; Romeo and Juliet still commit suicide.

Shakespeare’s Stories author Leon Garfield won numerous literary awards and honors, including the Carnegie

Medal, before his death in 1996. Sixteen gorgeous color plates combine with numerous black and white illustrations by Michael Foreman to enhance the Shakespeare experience for middle schoolers and older. Garfield’s 1985 work presents a dozen of the Bard’s best, with some overlap with Nesbit. He drops four that Nesbit included and ventures into the more sober and mature *King Richard the Second*, *King Henry IV Part One*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. Narration is in modern English, while all spoken words are in the original language. Garfield tells the stories in 20-30 pages each.

In 1807, noted Victorian essayist Charles Lamb and his sister retold twenty of Shakespeare’s plays, using original language as much as possible. Charles summarized the tragedies and Mary the comedies. Children from age six and up will enjoy this, although it is officially recommended for ten and older. In Lamb’s own words, from the Preface:

The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare, for which purpose his words are used whenever it seemed possible to bring them in; and in whatever has been added to give them the regular form of a connected story, diligent care has been taken to select such words as might least interrupt the effect of the beautiful English tongue in which he wrote: therefore, words introduced into our language since his time have been as far as possible avoided.

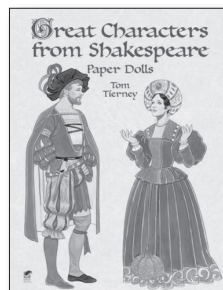
Bring Shakespeare to Life

Noted American playwright and theatre director Ken Ludwig believes memorization and interaction enhance children’s knowledge. He wrote *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, which offers passages to memorize and background information that will increase students’ appreciation of and interest in the plays.

The *Great Characters from Shakespeare Paper Dolls* are a fun way to introduce actual, physical characters to students of any age. The representations are historically correct, as one would expect from Tom Tierney, a leading authority on fashion history. These teaching aids are a way to bring the Bard’s characters to life for \$7 or less.

Actually going to see a live Shake-

(See *Shakespeare*, page 4)



Book of the Month



Life Under Compulsion: Ten Ways to Destroy the Humanity of Your Child, Anthony Esolen, ISI Books, \$27.95

In *The Republic*, Plato wrote, “The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful.” How far we have fallen from that noble objective. Anthony Esolen says we can no longer educate young people because we no longer understand what people are for. He says that children are made in the image of God, and we should teach them about beauty, truth, goodness, and love.

But Esolen says that America today is “united solely by the conviction that no conviction must be permitted to unite us. . . . There is nothing to celebrate and no one to worship. . . .” Something must occupy the attention of children, and much of what often does is vulgar and empty, and leads to compulsions.

Freedom has become *license*, says Esolen. License with no moral, ethical, or religious counterpoints leads to engagement in lust, wrath, avarice, envy, vanity, and pride.

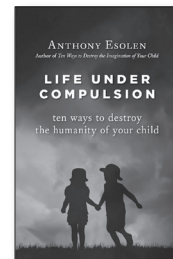
Induced panic about how much American children “learn,” including focus on international test results, is really a “battle between incompatible views of human life.” Leftists wish to make children cogs in the machine, and aim to start their long and tedious march toward “career- and college-readiness” by kindergarten. They eschew the “joy of learning.” Instead, children suffer under “the politics of compulsion, which depends upon a continually instigated sense of urgency.”

At Princeton, the author’s alma mater, once Shakespeare was the focus of the English department. Nowadays the most popular course, which has a larger enrollment than all other English courses combined, is “Youth Fiction,” a tawdry parade of “vampires, adolescent murderers, orgiasts, and bad prose.”

Esolen is at heart an English professor (Providence College) and he peppers this book with enough passages from great literature to whet the appetite of any reader to plunge back in to the classics. This is antithesis to Common Core’s focus on informational texts. CC also usually allows students to read only portions of literary works, which is a deprivation.

Esolen tells us that those who created Common Core desire to treat reading like a “skill.” According to them, “What you read is of no import; only how complex the text is, judged according to various quantitative algorithms and a few subjective checklists that do not touch upon goodness, beauty, or truth.”

This book shows how to improve not only education, but American lives. Esolen asks and answers, “What sort of child shall you raise, my readers?”



MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



FOCUS: What's Wrong with Today's Universities? Can It Be Remedied?

Originally published in the July of 2015 Mindszenty Report (Mindszenty.org). Reprinted with permission of the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation.

Today's colleges and universities have become centers for high-cost political indoctrination. It is a unique system in human history, where those being indoctrinated and poorly trained for the real world have to pay their indoctrinators either through spending their family's savings or obtaining government-subsidized loans. To ensure that the indoctrination does not deviate too much from the politically correct line, teachers and administrators have erected a control system to guarantee that only those who accept groupthink about racial, ethnic, environmental, and economic injustices are allowed to teach.

This system of control begins with who gets admitted to graduate school, which dissertation topics are approved, who is hired into the professoriate, who is tenured, and later, for a chosen few, who get to become high-salaried administrators. Then just to make sure there are no cracks in the system, professors organize gender studies and ethnic studies programs so they can mobilize campus activists to attack any deviationists in their ranks. As a further fail-safe to this iron cage, federal bureaucrats impose and interpret an array of regulations on colleges and universities. Title IX has proved an effective tool for cracking male-dominated athletics at universities and even a better instrument for enforcing groupthink on campus.

George Orwell's Big Brother Newspeak appears crude by comparison with the current academic understanding of "academic freedom," "community of scholars," "social justice," and "free speech zones."

Orwellian 'Academic Freedom'

Across America, universities and colleges are creating "free speech zones" and restricting free speech. There used to be a "free speech zone" called America, but no longer on college campuses. Instead of allowing professors and students to speak freely in the classroom or on campus, university administrators have undertaken policies to restrict free speech.

Of course, "hateful" speech is restricted. The zone might allow an evangelical preacher to talk about sin and the Bible (surrounded by mocking students in most cases), but speech that might offend minority students, Muslim students, female students, or other favored groups is actually forbidden. In the classroom, faculty talk on and on about identity politics, how privileged white males oppress racial minorities, committed genocide on Native Americans, enslaved Africans, kept women in their homes, and created political systems, like American

democracy, to maintain white privilege. This sort of speech is acceptable and, indeed, encouraged.

What they cannot talk about, without being extraordinarily careful, is anything that appears to be blaming the victim. This means that professors have to tread carefully on subjects pertaining to racial, gender, or religious issues. If these topics are raised either in a "free speech zone" or in the classroom, both teachers and students have to preface their remarks with a myriad of qualifications showing they understand the complexity of these issues.

Yet restricted speech goes beyond just thinking twice about what might be said. The code word today is "micro-aggression." Speech, body language, or tone can be taken as "micro-aggression" if a sensitive student sees it as such. The University of California (UC) system president, Janet Napolitano, actually issued examples on her website of what might be considered micro-aggressive behavior (TheCollegeFix.com, 6-10-15). Included in the examples of aggressive speech are phrases such as "Land of Opportunity" or "Affirmative Action is racist." Other forbidden comments are "Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough"; "Where are you from?" or "Where were you born?"; and "When I look at you, I don't see color."

Committing a micro-aggression is subconscious racism, sexism, white male privilege, xenophobia, and homophobia. The guidelines assume that "micro-aggressive" behavior can be well-intended. Telling female or black male students that if they work hard, they can succeed suggests that women and blacks who have not succeeded lack ambition or are lazy. The lesson should be that women who have not broken the "glass ceiling" or blacks who live in poverty should blame the full complexities of racism, sexism, cultural hegemony, and white male privilege, historically and today.

To ensure that faculty got the message, the UC system organized faculty leader training systems throughout the 2014-15 academic year at all nine of the UC campuses. The sessions were aimed at teaching faculty how to avoid offending students and peers, and devoted time to explaining how to hire a more diverse faculty. The assumption is that faculty of color and women will be more sensitive because they have experienced overt and subtle expressions of oppression.

In his novel *1984*, George Orwell's Big Brother uses fear of torture to break Winston Smith's subversive thoughts. Big Sister in 2015 does not use physical torture to impose academic conformity, although one suspects that these training sessions on "micro-aggression" must have been excruciatingly torturous to sit through. No concern was seen about the

macro-aggressive imposition of a publicly supported university's administration restricting commonplace expressions by individual faculty members.

Devouring Their Own?

Laura Kipnis, a feminist faculty member at Northwestern University in Illinois, drew national media attention when she came under attack by students at her university for an essay she penned for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in February 2015. Her essay, "Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe," in flamboyant language intended to elicit emotion, defended professors dating undergraduate and graduate students. She declared that when she was a student, "The gulf between students and faculty wasn't a shark-filled moat; a misstep wasn't fatal. We partied together, drank and got high together, slept together. The teachers may have been older and more accomplished, but you didn't feel they could take advantage of you because of it. How would they?" She objected that "sexual paranoia" was stalking university life, and she abhorred it.

Strict codes of conduct between professor and students, she argued, have seeped into every aspect of campus life, language, curriculum, academic discussion, and social life. Faculty are expected to warn students that what they might read or hear in a lecture or class discussion could be upsetting. To protect student sensibilities, professors are required by university administrators to issue "trigger warnings" about such material. Students assigned the Latin poet Ovid, for example, need to be warned that they would read about Romans raping Sabine women.

Kipnis took particular aim at the use of Title IX to impose these codes. Shortly after the Northwestern University administration issued its code of student and professor conduct, the university Title IX coordinating committee issued further language clarifying the code. "We all received a long email from the committee," Kipnis recalled. "The committee was responding to a student-government petition demanding that 'survivors' be informed about the outcomes of sexual-harassment investigations." She took particular umbrage with the committee's repeated use of the word "survivor." "Wouldn't the proper term be 'accuser'?" How can someone be referred to as a survivor before a finding on the accusation — assuming we don't want to predetermine the guilt of the accused, that is."

Her essay was intended to be inflammatory, and that it was. She came under attack from two directions, student protest and legal complaint. Student demonstrators began hauling mattresses around campus, suggesting that Kipnis wanted to turn Northwestern in a student-professor bordello. The worst was to come, however. Kipnis's defense of a philosophy professor who had been found not



guilty of charges of sexual assault led to other students filing a Title IX complaint against her. Kipnis was brought before a university committee under Title IX. She was not allowed legal representation, the right to call witnesses on her behalf, or the right to confront her accusers. The charges were dropped, but the whole proceeding reeked of a star chamber. Even progressive *The Nation's* cultural columnist Michelle Goldberg found it difficult to defend the students' actions. Goldberg concluded, "The politics of liberation are an uneasy fit with the politics of protection."

What made this episode so painful for the left was that Kipnis was one of them. No one doubted her feminist credentials. In her essay, she called for the chemical castration of rapists and celebrated the feminist revolution in higher education. Her defense of professor-student sexual liaisons certainly did not emanate from a conservative moral outlook.

Deeper Issues: Cost, Quality

While some conservatives gloated that the academic left was devouring itself, and progressives fretted about whether to support the feminist professor or student feminist activists, the overarching issue that university administrators and professors should be worrying about is the quality of education colleges are providing at a very high cost to students.

Today's college student pays on average about \$13,300 per year at a four-year public institution. This is double what a college student paid (\$6,800) in 1967, after adjusting for inflation. Private college costs have tripled during this time. This increase has led to student debt of more than \$1 trillion, creating a bubble that should cause national anxiety. What are students getting for this education in a global market? Not much, it appears.

A 2015 study by Educational Testing Service (ETS) of millennials in the U.S., Europe, and Japan reveals the failure of our educational system to train future workers for an increasingly knowledge-based economy (*Educational Testing Service, America's Skills Challenge: Millennials and the Future*, 2015). Competency in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving is essential for success in an advanced, complex economy.

The ETS study shows just how woefully handicapped our youth are in developing these skills. The figures are startling:

- Literacy: American millennials rank lower than 15 of the 22 participating countries, only above Spain and Italy.

(See *Universities*, page 4)



Zero-Tolerance Costs Taxpayers \$83k

Katie Sherman filed a complaint in January of 2015, stating that a Vermont school failed to provide some of the accommodations they agreed to on her disabled son's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Mrs. Sherman later complained about the system, seemingly in confidence, at the Vermont Family Network (VFN). According to the VFN website, the organization "seeks to help families facing challenges at school, home, or in the community," particularly related to medical diagnosis or other health concerns. Sherman expressed frustration to a VFN worker, saying that she might be beginning to understand why a father had resorted to violence. That man was convicted of killing two teachers in 2006.

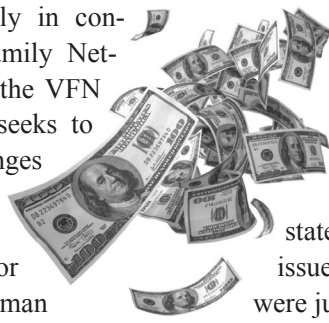
This mother never expressed any intent to become violent, either to the VFN source, to any school official, or to anyone else.

The VFN employee related the

comment to school officials, who got a "no-trespass order" against Mrs. Sherman. She was barred from the grounds of Barre Town Middle and Elementary School. There was no appeals process.

The lawyer Mrs. Sherman hired to help her regain access to her child's school, which was also her polling place, called the school administrator's response "very heavy-handed." He stated, "There was no need to issue a no-trespass order. They were just getting rid of a thorn in their side." Her lawyer continued, "She had been complaining and vociferously challenging the school in terms of their failures to comply with her son's IEP, as any mom should."

The school settled the lawsuit, leaving Vermont taxpayers responsible for paying the mother \$83,750 in damages. The child now attends a different school. (*Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*, 7-16-15) (*Reason*, 2-9-16)



Best Practices (Continued from page 1)

The authors use Massachusetts and Connecticut as examples, since students in these neighboring states had the same NAEP math score in 2003. They report, "By 2013, Massachusetts students had increased by 17 points over similar students attending similar schools in Connecticut. We need to learn why students in Massachusetts took off in math after 2003, while students in Connecticut did not." (*Education Week*, 2-10-16)

Common Core national standards, which impose unproven concepts written by those who know little about teaching, should be replaced in every state. Common-sense sharing across state lines is less expensive, not copyrighted, and doesn't result in oddball requirements like reading informational texts instead of great literature, or doing math in dis-

tinctly weird and unnecessarily complicated ways.

Looking to international trends in education can be interesting, but it is not always useful or productive. Americans certainly don't want their children attending parent-funded, after-school math tutoring until late at night just to achieve a test score. Students in South Korea, China, and Japan score well on international tests, but the quality of life for those students and for their families is greatly diminished in order to achieve that distinction. Test results aren't necessarily indicative of how well students can think. Many also say that the curriculum, methods, and focus on testing used in those Asian nations kill creativity. It is that same creativity and innovation that has made America the epicenter of innovation. We must not kill it.

Student Misbehavior (Continued from page 1)

Florida Fracas

Students at William Dandy Middle School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, face felony charges for assaulting a student they say "snitched." The saga began when a 13-year-old student stole a teacher's car and took it for a "joyride." A school resource (police) officer caught the sixth grader, who had stolen a teacher's car keys.

The next day at school, five students ages 13-15 jumped and stabbed a student they believe told police about the initial theft of car keys. "Three boys and two girls were charged with aggravated bat-

tery and taken to the Juvenile Assessment Center. The student who allegedly stole the car was charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle and placed in his parents' custody." (*Sun Sentinel*, 3-11-16)

During the 2009-10 school year, the most recent for which statistics are available, over 60% of American high schools had one or more security guards, school resource officers, or other sworn law enforcement officers on full-time duty. During the same school year, 16% of elementary and 46% of middle schools had a full-time policing presence. (NCES.ed.gov)

Shakespeare (Continued from page 2)

sperean play after it has been well introduced is the ultimate treat for students of any age. Call ahead to be certain the production is suitable for children and presented traditionally. Some directors take great license with interpretation or even add inappropriate content. The best plays

for youngsters to start with are *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Comedy of Errors*. Be kind to adults who didn't study Shakespeare — allow your children to explain the plot and character motivations during intermission.

Universities (Continued from page 3)

- Numeracy: American millennials rank last along with Spain and Italy.
- Problem solving: American millennials rank last, along with Slovak Republic, Ireland, and Poland.

The details of this report are even more alarming. American millennials in the 90th percentile of academic achievement scored lower than the other top-scoring peers in 15 countries, beating only Spain. Worse yet, the scores of our U.S. millennials with low levels of educational attainment (in the 10th percentile) were less than those of their counterparts in almost every other participating country. The youngest age cohort of this generation (16- to 24-year-olds), those who could be in the workforce until 2065, ranked dead last among their peers in numeracy and were at the bottom in problem solving. We are graduating more students from college, and we spend more than most European countries on public education, but we are failing to train our children for a globalized, competitive economy.

University budgets have soared since the 1960s. The demands of students, professors and administrators have all contributed to the cost of higher education. Today's students demand more than a single dorm room with bunk beds. They expect to live in campus apartments. No longer will a cup of regular coffee at the local diner do; instead, caffè lattes at the campus Starbucks are required. They demand fancy recreational facilities, with workout machines, treadmill, and cycling machines. Classrooms with a lectern and a blackboard aren't good enough. Classrooms need to be smart, with equipment allowing professors to put on PowerPoint presentations so students can learn visually, even while they look at their computers or iPhones instead of taking notes. All of this costs money.

Professors' salaries have risen faster than those of any other professional group except doctors. A full professor today at a public four-year doctoral institution makes on average \$126,981. Of course, there are wide disparities within universities and between universities. Nonetheless, higher salaries for professors contribute significantly to the cost of education. Professors demand more pay for teaching fewer classes. Meanwhile, more university administrators are being paid corporate-level salaries. Added to this are the high costs of athletic coaches and staff.

The rising costs of university and college education have been subsidized by the federal government through student loans and research grants. These federal subsidies have allowed colleges and universities to increase student tuition. It's a pyramid scheme. Students go into debt to pay for a college education in hopes of a well-paying job to pay off their debt. Meanwhile, billions of dollars of unpaid student debt build the wobbly pyramid.

Administrators Respond to the Crisis

Under pressure to pay for rising costs, university administrators have turned to expanding their pool of students by online education, while cutting

their labor costs. Few people in higher education truly believe that online education is as good in terms of quality as an on-the-ground education. The promise is that online education will improve. It probably will, but there is a big difference between having a classroom discussion with actual students in the classroom, and an online chat room. One-on-one conversations with professors after class or during their office hours about the course a student is taking or career plans are hard to replicate in a virtual course. Chatting online does not allow for much in the way of a personal experience.

While expanding their customer base, colleges and universities are cutting their labor costs through the hiring of adjunct professors. Tenure is a declining status at most universities. Today only about 20% of all classes are being taught by tenured professors. In the meantime, adjunct professors have an incentive to give higher grades. Students with higher grades give more favorable course evaluations, increasing the likelihood that the adjunct teacher will be rehired the following year.

What Can Be Done?

Nineteenth-century colleges were mostly private and denominational schools, Protestant or Catholic. Their purpose was to train their students in moral character and leadership. It was common in Protestant colleges for the president of the university to teach the capstone class on moral character. The primary text was Francis Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* (1835). This book was rooted in Scottish Common Sense Realism, Christianity, and laissez-faire economics. The purpose of colleges was to train virtuous citizens.

We cannot return to the past. The 19th-century college is dead, except for a few small colleges still concerned with concepts such as virtue, honor, and higher values. Public and private colleges, with few exceptions, are under financial stress, especially as state governments have cut funding. This is a perfect time for donors, alumni, and the public to insist that universities be concerned with civic literacy and the contributions of Western culture (even within a global context). Alumni, donors and foundations can entice administrators and faculty to endow centers and professors who offer traditional courses that introduce students to Aristotle, Plato, the Federalist papers, Abraham Lincoln, and authors of great literature.

As Winston Churchill once said, never let a good crisis go to waste. In this perfect storm within universities, an environment has been created for real climatic change.

The Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation is named after a saintly hero who refused to compromise with Nazism and Communism, and endured 23 years of imprisonment for his faith. Founded in 1958, it's a worldwide educational organization that provides reliable information on the secular attacks on faith and family values; upholds the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church; and exposes persecution and abuse of human rights around the globe.