

Chronically Absent Students Diminish Outcomes

Federal law passed in December of 2015 and called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) supposedly returns responsibility for education back to individual states. But it requires each state to submit detailed plans to the U.S. Department of Education for approval.

According to *Education Week*, “ESSA requires states to track at a school level how many students miss 15 days or more in excused or unexcused absences.” The article continues, “The federal law also requires states to expand their accountability systems — used to determine which schools need intervention and support — to include at least one additional indicator that differs from traditional measures such as student test scores.”

Education Week reports that “researchers have found that students who rack up absences score lower than their peers on achievement tests, are less engaged in the classroom, and are at a higher risk of dropping out as they get older.” Some may be surprised that any “research” was required to reach the conclusion that public school students who don’t come to school in the first place do worse than those who show up. Even more surprising could be the ways some schools are addressing the problem of frequent absences.

Oregon Native American Absenteeism

When one Oregon school district found that many Native American children “failed to show up on a regular basis,” they decided to look for solutions. They began with “home visits with parents, constant encouragement for stu-

dents, and lots of listening.” The definition of chronic absenteeism in Oregon is “missing more than 10 percent of school days.” According to *Education Week*, “In 2015-16, 33% of American Indian/Alaska Native students missed at least 10% of school days.” The state average was 19% of students.

Oregon had a pilot program for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years supported by state funds awarded to tribes. The Tribal Attendance Pilot Project hired “coordinators to track attendance, identify problem spots, and work with families to address the issues that kept students out of school.” In the Willamina District, comprised of 835 students, the elementary student level of chronic absenteeism fell from 43.2% to 36.5% among American Indian students. Among other ethnicities in Willamina, the rate change was from 38.4% to 29.9%.

Education Week reports use of these strategies:

Participating schools took steps to build stronger relationships with tribes. They incorporated native handcrafts, like basketweaving, into classroom work and brought native drumming into school assemblies. One school changed its signs to the tribe’s native language as a show of respect.

The school attendance coordinator for the Grande Ronde tribe is Rebecca Arredondo. She found that sometimes students missed the bus and car transportation was unavailable. *Education Week* reports, “Arredondo has made the

15-mile drive to tribal housing to pick up students in her Toyota Prius and drop them off at school herself.” She has also provided them with alarm clocks, “rewarded students with prizes like e-book readers and gas cards for their families when they had especially good attendance, and did cheers with classrooms that had every student present.”

More State Strategies

In Texas, schools offered free flu shots in an effort to keep students well and in school. Grand Rapids, Michigan sought to “inform families about the importance of attendance” using a public-awareness campaign. Maine sends “teams of teachers and volunteers through neighborhoods to help walk young students to school, addressing safety concerns and helping them feel motivated to go to class on chilly winter days. Baltimore uses a “community schools model,” which “coordinates” student services like health care and other “out-of-school factors” in an attempt to get more children to attend school more regularly.



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seven-million students were absent for two or more weeks of school. Absenteeism becomes more prevalent in high school and occurs most often in areas of greater poverty.

Executive Director of Attendance Works, Hedy Nai-Lin Chang, says:

My biggest worry is blame. Blaming isn’t going to help us. We all have to take responsibility. ... If we blame each other rather than using the data to unpack why kids aren’t in school and what would change those conditions, we will miss that opportunity.

Chang’s organization helps communities and schools attack absenteeism in numerous ways, including educating parents. Handouts provide tips for smoother mornings, encouraging parents to set regular bed times, have a morning routine, and lay out clothing and backpacks the night before.

More suggestions include: find out what day school starts and make sure children have required shots; attend back-to-school open houses so children have met teachers and classmates before school starts; and talk to teachers or school counselors anytime a child exhibits signs of anxiety about attending school to explore possible reasons.

One section of the handout that encourages parents to get children to school states: “Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school — and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.”

(*Education Week*, 10-17-17) (AttendanceWorks.org)

Needed: Teachers in Classrooms

In order for children to learn at their optimum level, their teachers must show up to school. Even when teachers leave lesson plans and substitute teachers do their best, teacher absences result in less productive days for students.

A recent study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute found that chronic teacher absences are more prevalent in traditional public schools than in charter public schools. A teacher is called “chronically absent” when he or she is out more than ten days in a 180-day school year. Absences include sick days and “personal” days.

David Griffith who wrote the Fordham report titled *Teacher Absenteeism in Charter and Traditional Public Schools*, found that 28.3% of teachers in traditional schools are chronically absent while only 10.3% of charter school teachers meet that threshold. That’s nearly a three-fold difference.

While the Fordham analysis allows that teachers are only human and will be absent, it found that “compared to their counterparts in other industries and other

countries, U.S. teachers seem to have poor attendance.” Fordham found, “On average, they miss about eight school days a year due to sick and personal leave (in addition to the breaks they get for school vacations and national holidays); meanwhile, the average U.S. worker takes about three-and-a-half sick days a year.”

Even more important are the findings about a “subset of teachers” — those who are in teachers unions. The report indicates that “there’s a very clear link between state collective bargaining laws and the number of days teachers are entitled to, and teacher chronic absenteeism.” There are about 6,900 charter schools in the nation and only about one in ten of them have unionized teachers.

Griffith analyzed teacher absenteeism by state and found the following:

- In eight states plus the District of Columbia, traditional public school teachers are at least four times as likely to be chronically absent as their charter school peers.

(See Teachers, page 4)

The most recent year for which nationwide federal data are available is the 2013-14 school year. That year, about

Scope of the Problem

For a short time in September, the traitorous transgender formerly known as Bradley Manning was named as a

Visiting Fellow at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government Institute of Politics. The outcry against the appointment of the individual who is now called Chelsea Manning was so swift and great that the offer was quickly rescinded.

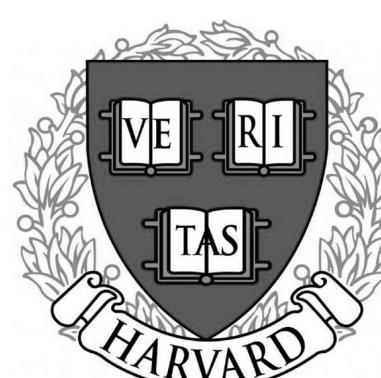
In 2013, Manning was convicted of 17 serious crimes, including six counts of espionage after leaking over 700,000 classified documents. Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison. But as one of his final acts as president, Barack Obama pardoned Manning who as an Army sergeant had put hundreds of Central Intel-

ligence Agency employees and others in grave danger.

When news of the Harvard appointment was announced, the former deputy and acting director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Michael J. Morell, resigned as a non-resident senior fellow at the Kennedy School in protest. Morell said he “cannot be part of an organization” that “honors a convicted felon and leaker of classified information.” Morell

continued, “Senior leaders in the military” stated that Manning “put the lives of U.S. soldiers at risk.” Morell also said the appointment would “legitimize the criminal path” Manning had chosen and “may encourage others to leak classified information.”

(See Harvard, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Teachers union dues were used to fund an anti-charter school movie titled “Backpack Full of Cash,” in which filmmakers assert that charter schools are unsuccessful, unregulated, and that they privatize public schools. Mike Antonucci of the Education Intelligence Agency obtained an invoice showing that the American Federation of Teachers union paid \$25,000 to Stone Lantern Films, Inc. The April 7, 2017 invoice is annotated “advocacy.” Actor-activist Matt Damon, who sends his own children to private school, is the narrator. Charter schools are public schools whose teachers most often are not union members. (EIAonline.com, 10-12-17)

In a 2,700-word speech Bill Gates delivered to the Council of the Great City Schools in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 19, he never used the words “parents” or “family.” The Microsoft billionaire and main private funder of Common Core recapped some of the past education ventures of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, including its infusion of about \$1 billion into the education sector. Then he said, “Overall, we expect to invest close to \$1.7 billion in U.S. public education over the next five years.” Gates continued, “As we have reflected on our work and spoken with educators over the last few years, we have identified a few key insights that will shape our work and investments going forward.” It is unknown whether he has sought counsel of or insight from parents. (GatesFoundation.org)

In a recent analysis of Common Core results, Shane Vander Hart reports, “Some are getting excited about less than one-half of California’s third graders meeting and exceeding standards.” He continues, “Also, apparently the definition of ‘relatively high’ has changed. These students have been under Common Core since the beginning and still, only 47% meet or exceed the standards.” Test results for the same children decreased between 2015 and 2016. Vander Hart concludes that “students’ collective scores worsen the longer they are under Common Core.” (TruthIn-AmericanEducation.com, 10-9-17)

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Is Some Danger Good?

While most playgrounds today are very, very safe for children, they are often ultra-boring. Many believe too much protection is more harmful than the occasional bump or bruise would be. Parents who essentially keep children physically and emotionally bubble-wrapped could actually be endangering the well-being of their children. Overprotection tends to make youngsters unable to face challenges and increases the likelihood that they will crumble, or erupt, when faced with the decisions, confusion, or opposition that occurs naturally in the real world.

What has changed in society that encourages parents to overprotect their children and shield them from challenges is a perfect storm of media hype, litigiousness, and inexperience. Many young parents are distant from grandparents and great-grandparents who could tell them about running the streets from a very young age. Parents erroneously believe that the world used to be safer.

Today it is considered daring to leave swings at schools or a community playground. The area beneath play equipment is covered in bark chips or other safety padding.

Historically Speaking of Safety

Focus on playground safety increased after consumer advocate Theodore Briggs Sweeney became active in the late 1970s. In an effort to make playgrounds safe, Briggs asserted that children could die from falls of as little as one to three feet. Sweeney said, “The name of the playground game will continue to be Russian roulette, with the child as unsuspecting victim.”

In a 2014 *Atlantic* article titled “The Overprotected Kid,” the author says:

It’s hard to absorb how much childhood norms have shifted in just one generation. Actions that would have been considered paranoid in the ’70s — walking third-graders to school, forbidding your kid to play ball in the street, going down the slide with your child in your lap — are now routine. In fact, they are the markers of good, responsible parenting.

Some believe that the world is more dangerous than it was in the 1970s, but that is statistically untrue.

Bucking the Trend

While it’s right up to parents to decide how much they wish to shelter and protect their own children, some choose to allow adventure play and fewer restrictions.

The Alliance for Children encourages adults to create playgrounds with “psychological safety and calculated risk.”

Its publication *The Playwork Primer* addresses what happens when we “mollycoddle” children. It says:

If we refuse our children the chance to play because

they may get a bump, or a cut, or a scrape, or get into an argument, if we try to make sure that nothing in the world upsets them, if we stop kids from having the chance to experience the perilous range of human experience, then we are not protecting them. We are endangering them. They will develop no coping mechanisms for themselves. They will have no resilience, no depth of character. They will not understand how to come at the world.

It also says, “The mollycoddled child is prevented from learning these things because the deep love of the parent manifests itself through a desire to bubble-wrap the child and protect her utterly from the possibility of experiencing any of the harshness of the world.” (AllianceforChildren.org)

Playgrounds are being made absolutely boring for children. Even swing sets are being removed from school and community playgrounds in an effort to make certain that children don’t get hurt. But what actually happens when swings are removed is that younger children are denied the opportunity to learn not to walk in front of a swing in motion and older children fail to learn caution and to be solicitous and aware that young children could walk in front of them.

More about this in the next issue of *Education Reporter*, including an introduction to Adventure Playgrounds.

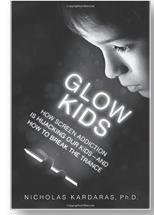
MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Book of the Month



Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction is Hijacking Our Kids — and How to Break the Trance, Nicholas Kardaras, St. Martin’s Press, 2016, \$25.99



Nicholas Kardaras, Ph.D., is a mental health professional who teaches at the university level and runs an addiction treatment center. *Glow Kids* is his attempt to warn that children need to put down devices, both in school and at home. Tax money is being wasted by those who want a “device” in the hands of each and every student, preschool through college. The emotional, psychological, and physical harm this is doing to children makes the wasted money seem irrelevant.

Kardaras reports that “97% of American children between the ages of 2 and 17 play video games.” He writes: “the video game phenomenon was about kids seeking something and parents, albeit misguided, thinking that they were keeping their kids safe indoors.” He says some parents prefer their children remain inside engaging with some form of computer screen because they fear the (almost non-existent) stranger danger that is continually hyped by news media.

When subjects using technology are hooked up to brain monitoring devices, researchers can see increased dopamine production, which causes a pleasure sensation. Kardaras worries that we are condemning our children to an opioid-like addiction to screens.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of Kardaras’ research is his revelation about who benefits when schools distribute tech devices to students. It isn’t children.

In 2007, when Joel Klein was the chancellor of New York City Schools, he committed \$95 million taxpayer dollars to ARIS, the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System, with the aim of tracking and then improving student performance. ARIS was quickly discovered to be nearly useless to educators. Klein then awarded \$12 million a year to an internet startup to improve and maintain ARIS.

In 2011, Klein resigned his \$252,000-a-year state job and went to work for Amplify, from whom he received a one million dollar signing bonus along with a two million dollar-a-year salary. Amplify was in reality a new iteration of that previous startup to whom Klein had guaranteed \$12 million a year. ARIS was junked in 2015.

The revolving door between education technology and bureaucrats exists at the local, state, and federal levels.

Glow Kids also explores the ugly connections between tech and curricular changes provoked by the institution of Common Core standards in states.

The damage that occurs when children use technology is being understated and people aren’t properly alarmed.

FOCUS: White Kids Can't Read Either — and Other Unacknowledged Truths

'The preoccupation with measurement of student performance by race and income level essentially crowds out any other key demographic measure—most notably family structure.'

by Ian Rowe

Adapted from an article first published by The Thomas B. Fordham Institute on March 22, 2017. See EdExcellence.net for a complete version that includes additional statistical data. Reprinted with permission.

"Son. As a boy growing up in Jamaica, I learnt to be a mon. I was a mon, full stop. It wasn't until I came to this country that I realized I was a black man."

Speaking in the patois of his beloved Caribbean nation, my now deceased father, Vincent, would often share with me some of the struggles he experienced emigrating to America. He described what it was like to grow up in an island country where success or failure was seen as a result of your individual effort rather than racial group identity, given that virtually everyone in Jamaica was black. He contrasted that to his life in the United States, where he was constantly reminded of what he could not or should not do because of his race.

Indeed, he marveled at how Americans, black or white, obsessed over skin color. There was a certain way to "talk black and act black," or "talk white and act white." (Other races didn't seem to matter.)

My father found it maddening how frequently certain negative behaviors—like committing crime or living in poverty—were equated with being black, even though the raw numbers of non-Hispanic whites in prison or on welfare far exceeded any other racial category.

My dad was also shocked at how frequently positive behaviors—like studying hard, being smart, or being a good father—were associated with being white and specifically being *not black*. As if aspiring to obtain these traits would be a betrayal to the race.

This tendency to primarily see the world through a prism of race, and to associate bad outcomes with being black and good outcomes as exceptions to one's blackness, is a phenomenon I see regularly repeated by leaders, funders, and researchers in the education reform community.

Like baseball fans who religiously track home runs and RBIs, education reformers slavishly evaluate academic progress by disaggregating student performance into narrow groupings of race and income level. For example, results provided by NAEP, the Nation's Report Card, are divided by "groups of students defined by shared characteristics—gender, race/ethnicity, eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch, students with disabilities, English language learners, type of school and location, and highest level of parental education."

Fair enough. It is important to track

student performance by certain groupings, especially for those that have experienced discrimination. Thus the often reported and debilitating mantra of the black-white student achievement gap.

But data that shows differences in black-white achievement doesn't explain why those differences exist. The mere existence of a racial achievement gap between blacks and whites doesn't prove that the gap is caused by structural racism against black students, nor does



it support the repulsive notion that black students are inherently inferior to whites.

Yet leaders in education reform consistently make the error of mistaking correlation (differences by race) for causation (differences due to race or racism), completely ignoring other demographic factors—like the explosion in unplanned, out-of-wedlock pregnancies and births—that are too taboo to discuss.

As a result, education reformers and entire networks of public charter schools fixate on closing the "racial achievement gap," even though the white student standard of accomplishment is itself mediocre at best. To understand the implications of an overemphasis on racial gaps, consider these data from the 2013 and 2015 NAEP reading exams:

- On the 2013 NAEP exam in West Virginia, the Schott Foundation Black Boys Report shows that the percentage of black male eighth graders reading at proficiency was 18.7%, while the white male eighth grader proficiency rate was 19.7%. It would be a Pyrrhic victory if that whopping 1-percentage-point racial achievement gap were closed, but the tragedy still remained that less than one in five black *and* white eighth grade boys were reading at proficiency.
- On the 2015 NAEP exam nationally, fewer than half (46%) of all white fourth grade students read at proficiency. The correlating African American proficiency rate was 18%.

My father would no doubt scratch his head to see that children of *all* races are not succeeding at reading.

Meanwhile, this obsession with closing the racial achievement gap masks the needs of high-achieving black students who must endure the low expectations of teachers whose growth mindsets have undoubtedly been pummeled by this unrelenting message of black student failure.

These staggering numbers of failed reading proficiency underscore our nation's massive collective failure to effectively teach literacy and build verbal pro-

ficiency across all races. It also shatters the accepted truth that racism is the sole or even primary cause of low proficiency rates among all Americans.

According to the 2015 NAEP, only 34% of all American fourth grade students of all races performed at or above the Proficient achievement level in reading. This is as much a crisis now as when *A Nation at Risk* was published more than three decades ago, warning that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."

What else could be a plausible causal factor to explain why so many American students of all races cannot read at grade level? Notice in the litany of NAEP tracking demographics a glaring omission: the preoccupation with measurement of student performance by race and income level essentially crowds out any other key demographic measure—most

their children, engaging 6,072 individuals, spanning thirty-one cohorts of children born between 1954 and 1985.

In this case, a picture is worth a thousand words. As the authors of the study state, "the negative relationship between living with a single parent and educational attainment has increased markedly since [1965]. In other words, American children raised in single-parent homes appear to be at a greater disadvantage educationally than ever before."

Moreover, we would start to see that the underlying conditions undermining academic success and mobility in the black community are now doing the same in the white community. As the *New York Times* just reported, the recent increase in dysfunctional behavior among non-college white men correlates with the substantial increase in the rate of white nonmarital births, up from 22.2% in 1993 to 35.7% in 2014. In 1965, the white non-marital birth rate was 3.4%.

Conclusion

I hope my father would be proud of

Children who live with a single parent between the ages of 14 and 16 have consistently completed less schooling than children from two-parent families, with the gap widening over time.

Figure 1a
Schooling completed

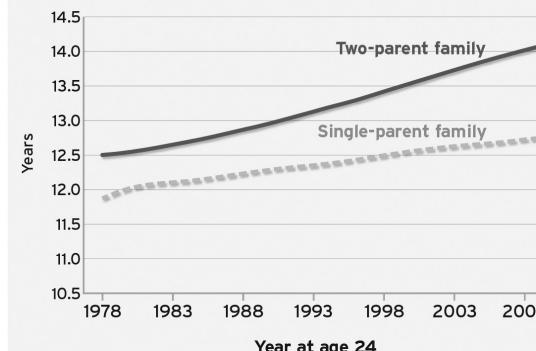
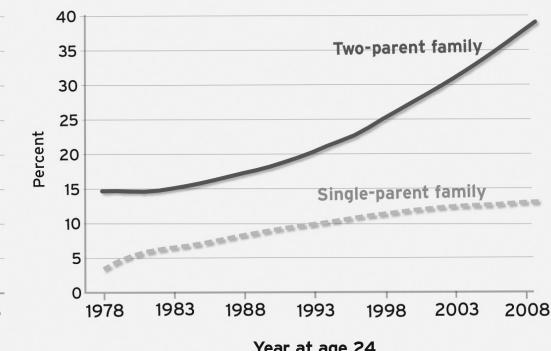


Figure 1b
Rate of college completion



NOTES: Children from single-parent families are those who lived with a single parent for at least one year between the ages of 14 and 16. Years of completed schooling and college graduation are measured at age 24.

Figure 1. Source: Ariel Kalil, Greg J. Duncan and Kathleen M. Ziol-Guest, "One-Parent Students Leave School Earlier," *Education Next* (Spring 2015)

notably family structure, despite its overwhelming correlation to a wide range of positive or negative child outcomes, including the number of words heard, vocabulary acquisition, and literacy.

Consider a 2016 MIT research study that assessed the family characteristics and academic, disciplinary, and high school graduation records for more than one million children born in Florida between 1992 and 2002. One of the report's key conclusions was that "a sizable portion of the documented minority-white difference in educational and behavioral gender gaps is attributable to higher degrees of family disadvantage among minority families."

Imagine if the National Center for Education Statistics and other researchers were bold enough to begin disaggregating academic outcomes by family structure as loyally as they do by race.

If they did, we would see revealing results like those in Figure 1 (above), which come from a powerful longitudinal study that used data from a nationally representative sample of families and

the job my wife and I are doing to raise a beautiful five-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter. We are neither naive nor delusional enough to not prepare them for a world in which they will likely face some form of racial discrimination.

But whatever racial discrimination any child may face pales in comparison to the likely consequences for their life if they were to have an unplanned child out of wedlock before the age of twenty-four, or were to leave a child fatherless.

There are well-meaning political and cultural analysts who make weak arguments that family structure matters not so much, and that money and power are most important to ensure positive outcomes for kids. Moreover, there are serious researchers who make the case that there is nothing immoral about having kids young and not graduating from high school. But after reviewing reams of data and invoking common sense, I side with those that rightfully claim the family-structure "deniers" are wrong.

Yet, while researchers bicker and the
(See FOCUS, page 4)

FOCUS (Continued from page 3)

rest of the education reform community remains pathetically mute on the explosion in out-of-wedlock birth rates, an estimated 1.2 million unmarried women under the age of twenty-four will have unplanned pregnancies in 2017, with near certain negative consequences for themselves, their babies, and their babies' babies, catalyzing another multi-generational cohort of despair.

It does not have to be this way.

While many of us fight to dismantle all barriers of racism, the lives of our children cannot wait. In a world with no guarantees, the greatest power to control their own destiny lies within the personal choices they make every day. The empowering message we must instill in our children is that no one of any race holds dominion over them.

To do our jobs as educators and parents, we must have the courage to turn away from our existing pattern of willful blindness. We must teach our students of all races that there is a sequence of life choices—college, job, marriage, chil-

dren (in that order)—that will give them and their future children the greatest likelihood of life success.

Ian Rowe is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a social entrepreneur and leader who has worked for more than 20 years in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. He is CEO of Public Prep, a non-profit network that develops tuition-free PreK and single-sex elementary and middle public schools with the mission to put students on a path to college completion. Rowe graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School; he earned a BS in Computer Science Engineering from Cornell University and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He was the first black Editor-in-Chief of the Harvard Business School newspaper.



Ian Rowe

is sure, is that teachers in Hawaii are entitled to 18 days of sick leave, which is more than any other state.”

Unions Weigh In

The Fordham analysis is based on the most recent statistics available from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Council on Teacher Quality, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Education Week reported the reaction of the presidents of the two largest national teachers unions. National Education Association (NEA) union president Lily Eskelsen García said “Fordham

is using corrupted assertions to draw misguided conclusions.” Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers union, said, “Leave policies exist to ensure kids can learn

in a safe and healthy environment. ... The reality is that charter schools need better leave policies, not worse ones, a fact ignored by Fordham.”

Frederick M. Hess, director of Education Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote in *National Review* that a spokesman for the NEA in New Mexico said, “This failed attempt to link collective bargaining and teacher absenteeism by an extremist group is junk science.” The well-respected Fordham Institute is all of a sudden an “extremist group”? Their analysis of teacher absenteeism is based on facts.

Research Director Raegen T. Miller of FuturEd, an independent, nonpartisan think tank at Georgetown University’s public policy school reviewed Fordham’s research and called the analysis

Harvard (Continued from page 1)

Both Morell and Bill Kristol indicated that their problem with Manning’s Harvard fellowship was not transgenderism. *Weekly Standard* founder and editor Kristol earned his undergraduate and doctoral degrees at Harvard. He tweeted on September 13 that while he would remain “loyal” to his alma mater, he would skip Institute of Politics events this year. Kristol also indicated that he’d “feel the same way if Chelsea Manning were still Bradley Manning.”

After public outcry, Dean of the Harvard Kennedy School Douglas Elmendorf said, “I now think that designating Chelsea Manning as a Visiting

Fellow was a mistake, for which I accept responsibility.” He explained the concept of visiting fellow by saying that “... we do not view the title of ‘Fellow’ as conveying a special honor; rather, it is a way to describe some people who spend more than a few hours at the School.”

Elmendorf said he hadn’t meant to “honor” Manning or to “endorse any of her words or deeds, as we do not honor or endorse any Fellow.” Elmendorf said Manning will still be allowed to speak to Harvard students without the title of Visiting Fellow.

(*Washington Times*, 9-14-17 and 9-15-17) (HKS.Harvard.edu, 9-15-17)

A Personal Note from the Editor...

This issue marks the beginning of the sixth year that I have edited the *Education Reporter*. I was privileged to work for Phyllis Schlafly. She provided newspaper clippings about subjects and events she thought we should cover.

Without Phyllis’s direction, sifting through issues in education from preschool through university is a different and larger task. The news is often unpleasant but we must remain attentive to what is happening to our children, and as a result, our nation. It is important to not only search out so-



Phyllis Schlafly

Solutions but also to celebrate progress. Phyllis believed in the mission of the *Education Reporter*. That is why it has been continuously published since the first issue debuted in February of 1986.

I greatly appreciate readers who reach out to me to discuss issues or to encourage our efforts. All who wish to suggest topics they would like covered or who have questions are welcome to contact me at Education@PhyllisSchlafly.com.

Thank you for reading!

Sincerely,
Virginia Barth, Editor

Hess appreciates teachers for the difficult job they do. He recognizes long hours on their feet, various duties that keep them busy and unable to take breaks throughout the school day, and other “realities of the teaching day.” But he adds:

That said, the reality is that teachers typically work a 190-day year, compared to the 230 or so worked by most Americans. They already possess a full panoply of school breaks and federal holidays, as well as summer vacation. When nearly one-fourth of teachers are missing another two weeks of school a year on top of all that, it’s a problem. But it’s an even bigger problem that those who speak for the profession respond to the news as the children they teach might do—with anger at being busted—rather than like responsible adults. It will be hard for teachers to earn the esteem they seek until those who claim to speak for the profession start to grow up.

(EdExcellence.net, 10-20-17) (*Education Week*, 10-20-17) (*National Review*, 10-25-17)

IN THEIR OWN (GOOD) WORDS

Educate your children to self control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies to an upright and reasoning will, and you have done much to abolish misery from their future and crimes from society.

— Benjamin Franklin



sent at a greater rate than those at traditional public schools, all teachers work under collective-bargaining agreements.

While it can’t be stated that union membership makes teachers miss more school, there is a correlation between collective bargaining and more absenteeism. It could be simply a function of human nature that when employees are allowed more sick leave and a greater number of personal days, they take them.

An example of that would be Hawaii; data show that in that state, 79% of traditional public school teachers are chronically absent, compared to 23% of charter school teachers. Griffith says, “I don’t think that Hawaiian teachers [in public schools] are that much more likely to take maternity leave or get sick. What