

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 374

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

MARCH 2017

Academics or Socio-Emotional Re-education?

As students in third-world countries surpass the United States in achievement in actual academic subjects like math, reading, and the sciences, American students are being urged to grab a “calm-down bottle” filled with water and glitter, then “shake it hard, take deep breaths, and watch the glitter swirl.”

A recent article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* tells the story of educators from Minnesota visiting Chicago to examine the great success of that district’s use of “social and emotional learning” techniques, including calm-down bottles.

The article says, “Research shows that kids schooled in reading as well as responsibility and equations along with empathy do better in class and get into less trouble.” Frontal lobotomies were once used to stop disruption but that wasn’t a good idea either.

Star Tribune readers learn that “Illinois was the first state to implement standards for social-emotional learning.” According to the March 29, 2017 article, “Chicago officials tout their commitment to teaching the skills with an assist from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a group based in Chicago that’s advising districts like Minneapolis.”

Chicago schools are in deep trouble. The school district has a \$129 million deficit in a \$5.41 billion budget. All that money spent yet students still fail to learn basic math and reading skills. Could it be because they’re spending time shaking bottles of glitter or learning empathy?

The social-emotional learning (SEL) movement is multifaceted. SEL includes indoctrinating students to support various

“social justice” causes. Children should not be re-educated at school through the use of emotional manipulation when a progressive school district’s tenets differ from the values the child learned at home.

Another aspect of SEL involves making children weak and emotionally stunted, preferring to run to safe spaces instead of learning to face and overcome adversity. Children should be protected and cherished but low expectations, cossetting them, and refusing to allow them to face consequences isn’t emotionally healthy.

A Closer Look at Chicago

In the 2014-15 school year, Chicago Public schools spent \$11.7 million on their Social and Emotional Learning program. Of that, \$9.5 million came directly from local district funds, meaning taxpayers. That cash could have been used to support academic subjects in public schools (or possibly an enhanced police presence in the city to stem Chicago’s high murder rate).

The balance of SEL’s funding was made up of federal and state dollars (more taxpayers). A paltry \$250,000 was granted to the district by the NoVo Foundation, an organization started by the son of multi-billionaire Warren Buffett which promotes social and emotional learning.

The CASEL website claims that in Chicago, “third graders in 21 schools demonstrated significant increases (according to teacher reports of students’ skills) in social awareness and respon-

sible decision-making. Some might question that result. On what expertise or data did teachers rely to determine the supposed “increases”? And what were the “responsible” decisions that those students made?

CASEL also boasts that “seventh graders in 17 schools demonstrated sig-

**DIVERSE
INCLUSIVE
ACCEPTING
WELCOMING
SAFE SPACE
FOR EVERYONE**

nificant increases (according to student self-reports) in social awareness.” Again, what expertise do seventh-grade children possess that might give them the ability to “self report”? And what exactly is the “social awareness” that CASEL is so happy about? Did all their parents agree to have the school district instill those values into their children?

Social-justice based SEL re-training of students could include forcing students to accept that America is a racist nation, that policing means police brutality, that sexual identity is fluid instead of biologically based, and anti-Christian cultural indoctrination, which includes praise of Islam in schools where students aren’t allowed to study Christianity.

The CASEL website says of Chica-

go, “District suspensions were reduced 65% in a recent two-year period.” But the same page mentions “a progressive discipline policy that limits the use of exclusionary discipline practices and encourages all schools to respond to misbehavior using supportive, restorative discipline practices to promote social and emotional development.”

If CASEL leadership had the critical thinking skills needed for analysis of hard things, they would realize that if discipline policies purposely limit “exclusionary practices” like expulsion, the result will be fewer expulsions regardless of the SEL bottle-shaking mumbo jumbo to which CASEL wishes to attribute the decrease.

Meanwhile, students in Minneapolis might soon be imitating those in Chicago. They’ll head for the “classroom Peace Center”; teachers will encourage them to strike “a yoga pose during circle time”; and everyone will pretend that these are necessary “skills they need to be successful in life.”

No workplace encourages that sort of behavior. Bosses prefer that employees buckle down and get their work done. Those blessed with talents that could enable them to think critically or create fantastic new products are being taught to retreat to safe spaces in the face of opposition instead of developing perseverance.

For more about the dangers of social and emotional learning and the CASEL organization, see the January 2017 issue of *Education Reporter*.

Don’t Let Kids Skip Recess

Only eight states require recess for public school students during the school day, yet evidence-based research points to the need for students to have breaks in their day in order to learn.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) have issued guidelines that encourage recess and physical activity for students.

At some schools, restricting recess has been used as punishment for unacceptable classroom behavior. This sort of restriction is the opposite of what children with too much energy need or deserve.

Some of today’s children remain indoors because their parents have fears about stranger abductions. And sometimes children become accustomed to watching television, playing video games, or otherwise engaging with screens instead of being outside and active.

The CDC and SHAPE offer case studies and suggestions for schools to follow. The most important information gleaned from their work is that children who are active do best. The report says:

A growing body of evidence suggests a relationship between physical activity and the structure and functioning of the brain. Time spent in physical activity is related to enriched cognitive development and lifelong brain health. In the school setting, active and fit children consistently outperform more inactive, unfit counterparts academically in

both the short and the long term.

The report states that higher activity levels result in students with “higher scholastic achievement, better classroom behavior, greater ability to focus, and less absenteeism.”

Recess and physical activity are available to all students, regardless of school funding or zip code. The senior program manager at SHAPE who helped develop the guidelines says the following:

You don’t need equipment to have recess. If you have a place for them to go and you have adult supervision and this plan in place, you can have recess for students.

(NPR.org, 2-1-17) (ShapeAmerica.org)

Resurrecting Handwriting

New York state Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis attended a voter registration event where she encountered an 18-year-old student. She asked him to please sign his name instead of using the block letters he’d put on the signature line of his form. But the young man replied, “That is my signature. I never learned script.”

Emily Ma is among the 2.7% of students accepted by New York City’s Stuyvesant High School, out of roughly 30,000 who take an annual exam they hope leads to admission. Emily, who is now a senior, believes handwriting is important but had to teach it to herself because it was never taught to her before she started high school.

Thanks to Common Core English standards, many students are no longer taught handwriting. They can only print or type.

The people who wrote the Common Core standards did not include handwriting because they believe that “keyboard-ing” alone is the way to prepare students

for “college and career.”

Student Achievement Partners, consisting of David Coleman, Susan Pimentel, and Jason Zimba, were lead writers of the Common Core standards. Even the chief architect of Common Core, Coleman, admitted that his group was unqualified.

Coleman said about the group in 2011:

[W]e’re composed of that collection of unqualified people who were involved in developing the [Common Core] standards. And our only qualification was our attention to and command of the evidence behind them.

Although he told the truth about being unqualified, Coleman still prevaricated because Common Core is in no way evidence-based. One result of that is the failure to teach students handwriting.

Trying to defend handwriting’s exclusion from the standards, Susan Pimentel said, “One of the things we heard
(See *Handwriting*, page 4)



FOCUS: Five Things We Must Tell Our Children & Stop Doing These 8 Things for Your Teen

A Special Double Focus

by Amy Carney

Five Things We Must Tell Our Children was originally published on March 8, 2016 at AmyCarney.com. Reprinted with permission.

Amy Carney is a former journalist and Redirecting your Children's Behavior parent educator who currently writes about intentional parenting and family life on her blog AmyCarney.com, as well as for various online and print outlets. Amy and her husband Keith are busy raising their teenage triplet sons, teen daughter, and their newly adopted son. Amy tries to inspire parents to courageously cultivate a family of significance.

We parents today are fantastic at telling our babies how wonderful they are at everything they do. We slap stickers of their sports team logos and the schools they attend on the backs of the cars that we shuttle them around in. We happily tout their sports victories and weekend wins on social media for all to see.

As parents, we are proud of our kids, but perhaps what our kids need from us more than constant pats on the back is a healthier dose of reality. Along with telling Johnny what a gift to the world he is, we need to also make sure he understands these things...

1. Life is hard and full of disappointment

Don't shield your child from this harsh reality. It's best our kids begin to understand now that not everyone gets a medal. Suck it up buttercup, because sometimes you will win and sometimes you will lose. Sometimes we get what we want and sometimes we don't. Difficult things happen to good people.

Let's raise some mentally tough kids who don't fold at the first sign of struggle. I want my young adults resilient enough to work through their disappointments before seeking out a crying room at college because their feelings are hurt. Sometimes the truth is painful.

Parents, pay attention to how you are modeling life when it gets difficult for you. How you handle life's ups and downs will rub off on your kids.

2. You are not special

Okay, that may be a little harsh for this generation to handle, but life is not supposed to revolve around you, kid. In our mission to raise children of high self-esteem, we have mistakingly placed our wee ones as top priority in our lives.

Be mindful of how you are praising and building your children up because it can actually be to their detriment. The more we put our children on a pedestal, the tougher it's going to be to get them down.

I believe in unconditionally loving my offspring and placing high value on their hearts and minds, but I never want to raise them to believe they are better than the next guy.

3. Life must not be lived in comparison to others

Who cares if everyone's doing IT or that so and so has IT? I tell my kids I don't care what the Joneses are up to or what they possess. More power to them, but it doesn't mean IT fits in with our family plan.

I want to raise children who understand the importance of running their own race. People who don't need to post their acquired material items on social media to gain approval. I want them to be confident in who God made them to be as original, interesting, one-of-a-kind human beings.

Talk to your kids about not believing the hype they see on social media and how to strive to live a better life off screen than the one portrayed online.

4. NO... to things we adults can afford

Why are kids without jobs walking around in designer shoes, ordering gourmet coffees with expensive iPhones in their back pocket? Few teens earn a paycheck these days, yet they have all the perks of hard-working, wage-earning adults. It blows my mind.

Remember back in the day, if we didn't have the cash in hand, we weren't doing it or buying it, period. Let's channel some of that old school mentality, shall we?

Kids use phone apps to catch rides from strangers and even have meals or iced coffee drinks delivered to them, all on their parents' dime. I've seen it with my own eyes.

Begin saying no to wants that you can afford but that your child cannot. Perhaps that may just catapult them into wanting to get a job and learning the value of hard work through earning their own cash.

5. You can do hard things

Encourage areas that challenge your children to grow and learn instead of letting them take the easiest path. I've heard parents say they don't have their kids take certain classes at school because they're too hard. Others have teenagers who are scared or don't see a need to obtain their driver's licenses — so parents continue to shuttle their capable child around. What happened to pushing kids a bit outside their comfort zones?

Don't be so quick to allow your child to quit when life gets challenging. Know your kid well enough to know when to push them in areas which may benefit them in the long run. Our son wouldn't be enjoying playing high school baseball today if we'd let him quit the sport when he thought he wanted to a few years ago. That same son is surprising himself earning "A"s in a tough honors language arts class that he was adamant he didn't want to take.

Let's continue to pat little Johnny on the back while we explain to him how reality works. Our kids must understand and learn from us that the world can be a tough place and that they are going to be just fine.



Stop doing these 8 things for your teen

First published Sept. 19, 2016, at AmyCarney.com. Reprinted with permission.

How do we raise competent adults if we're always doing everything for our kids?

Don't judge me if you happen to see my kids eating packaged Ritz crackers for school lunch. Don't judge me if they're on the sidelines of physical education class because they forgot their uniform. Don't judge me if they didn't turn in their homework because it's still sitting home on their desk.

What some may view as a lack of parenting is what I deem parenting on purpose, as we work to build necessary life skills in our children.

I stopped making daily breakfasts and packing school lunches long ago.

I don't feel obligated to deliver forgotten items left behind at home.

School projects and homework are not any part of my existence.

Just walk away from doing these 8 things for your teen:

1. Waking them up in the morning

If you are still waking little Johnny up in the mornings, it's time to let an alarm clock do its job. My foursome have been expected to get themselves up on early school mornings since they started middle school. There are days one will come racing out with only a few minutes to spare before they have to be out the door. The snooze button no longer feels luxurious when it causes you to miss breakfast.

I heard a Mom actually voice out loud that her teen sons were just so cute still, that she loved going in and waking them up every morning. Please stop. I find my sons just as adorable as you do, but our goal is to raise well-functioning adults.

2. Making their breakfast and packing their lunch

My morning alarm is the sound of the kids clanging cereal bowls. My job is to make sure there is food in the house so that they can eat breakfast and pack a lunch.

One friend asked, yeah but how do you know what they're bringing for school lunch? I don't. I know what food I have in my pantry and it's on them to pack up what they feel is a good lunch. It will only be a few short years and I will have no idea what they are eating for any of their meals away at college. Free yourself from the PB and J station now.

3. Filling out their paperwork

I have four kids, which equates to a lot of beginning of the school year paperwork. I used to dread this stack, until the kids became of age to fill all of it out themselves. Our teens are expected to fill out all of their own paperwork, to the best of their ability. They put the papers to be signed on a clipboard and leave it for me on the kitchen island. I sign them and put them back on their desks.

Hold your teens accountable. They will need to fill out job and college applications soon and they need to know how to do that without your intervention.

4. Delivering their forgotten items

Monday morning we pulled out of the driveway and screeched around the corner of the house when daughter dear realized she forgot her phone. "We have to go back, Mom!" Another exclaimed that he left his freshly washed physical education uniform in the laundry room. I braked in hesitation as I contemplated turning around. Nope. Off we go, as my recollection surfaced of both of them playing around on their phones before it was time to leave.

Parents, don't miss opportunities to provide natural consequences for your teens. Forget something? Feel the pain of that. Kids also get to see that you can make it through the day without a mistake consuming you.

We also have a rule that Mom and Dad are not to get pleading texts from school asking for forgotten items. It still happens, but we have the right to just shoot back "that's a bummer."

5. Making their failure to plan your emergency

School projects do not get assigned the night before they are due. Therefore, I do not run out and pick up materials at the last minute to get a project finished. I do always keep poster boards and general materials on hand for the procrastinating child. But, for other needed items, you may have to wait. Do not race to Michaels for your child who hasn't taken time to plan.

This is a good topic to talk about in weekly family meetings. Does anyone have projects coming up that they're going to need supplies for so that I can pick them up at my convenience this week?

6. Doing all of their laundry

"What? YOU didn't get my shorts washed?" This response always back-



fires on the kid who may lose their mind thinking that I'm the only one who can do laundry

around here. Every once in awhile a child needs a healthy reminder that I do not work for them. The minute they assume that this is my main role in life, is the minute that I gladly hand over the laundry task to them.

Most days I do the washing and the kids fold and put their clothes away, but they are capable of tackling the entire process when need be.

7. Emailing and calling their teachers and coaches

If our child has a problem with a teacher or coach, he is going to have to take it to the one in charge. There is no way that we, as parents, are going to question a coach or email a teacher about

(See FOCUS, page 4)

FOCUS (Continued from page 3)

something that should be between the authority figure and our child.

Don't be that over-involved parent. Teach your child that if something is important enough to him, then he needs to learn how to handle the issue himself or at least ask for your help.

8. Meddling in their academics

Put the pencil down parents. Most of the time, I honestly couldn't tell you what my kids are doing for school work. We talk about projects and papers over dinner, but we've always had the expectation that our kids own their work and grades. At times they've earned principal's lists, honor rolls, and National Junior Honor Society honors on their own accord. At other times, they've missed the mark.

Apps and websites where parents can check to see every detail of children's school grades and homework are not helping our over-parenting epidemic.

Every blue moon I will ask my kids to pull up their student account and show me their grades, because I want them to

know I do care. I did notice our daughter slacking off at the end of last year and my acknowledgement helped her catch up, but I'm not taking it on as one of my regular responsibilities and you shouldn't either.

Is your parenting goal to raise competent and capable adults?

If so, then let's work on backing off in areas where our teens can stand on their own two feet. I know they're our babies and it feels good to hover over them once in awhile, but in all seriousness, it's up to us to raise them to be capable people.

I want to feel confident when I launch my kids into the real world that they are going to be just fine because I stepped back and let them navigate failure and real life stuff on their own.

So please don't judge me if my kids scramble around, shoving pre-packaged items into that brown paper lunch bag, before racing to catch the bus.

It's all on purpose, my friends.

Abstinence (Continued from page 2)

iors include saying no, being firm, and walking away.

Breaking Free

The third chapter of *Quest* helps students understand various pressures exerted through media. By examining different forms of media, students can better focus on the ways sexual activity outside of marriage and other destructive messages are communicated to them daily. The workbook says, "Teens are exposed to about 3,000 media messages per day." This includes emails, pop-up ads, trick links, chat rooms, television, video games, and more.

In this chapter students meet Jonathan, a young man who was addicted to video games. He says the games controlled his thoughts, actions, and desires. Students take a quiz to determine to what extent they are involved with media. The workbook then suggests ways to break free from "the strong pull of the media."

Because this curriculum pursues family involvement, the end of each chapter has a parent interview page. The questions for students to ask their parents in this chapter include:

1. What do you think are the best parts and the worst parts of the media?
2. Review the [workbook] definition of the word entertainment. From what kinds of things would you say the entertainment media seeks to divert young peoples' attention?
3. What are some things that we can do as a family to balance out the influence of the media in our lives so that our lives don't revolve around the media?

Finding Your Way

The fourth chapter tells the true story of Luis, a young man who says he didn't have a good role model or anyone to tell him that abstinence was the best lifestyle choice. He engaged in sex outside of marriage and fathered three children by three different women, paid child support for children he rarely saw, and ended up very unhappy.

Luis says, "If I could go back to my

teen years and start over, I would definitely choose to save sex for marriage."

Luis failed to make a plan for his life or to determine any goals in the first place, which is exactly what this curriculum seeks to have students avoid.

The workbook says, "Although it is commonly thought that 'sex will be great,' the reality is that outside of marriage it is often a major detour taking your life in a very different direction than you wanted."

After reading Luis's story, questions students are asked include "What caused the aching in Luis' heart?" and "What was he longing for?"

Luis finally broke out of his pattern and decided to take an active role with his children. He now speaks to teens about abstinence and helps them make better choices than he did.

Staying On Track

The fifth chapter of *Quest* offers specific ways that choosing abstinence is the best path. The workbook asks students whether finishing high school, going to college, getting a good job, or getting married would be challenging while caring for a baby. The answer is obvious but something too few teens consider. There is a blank spot for students to fill in "some of the things a child would need to be well cared for."

If that isn't sobering enough, the workbook quotes the *Wall Street Journal*, which compares the poverty rates of children born to married parents (8%), those born to people living together (40%), and those born to single parents (35%).

The workbook says:

According to media and popular culture, it may not seem to make much difference whether or not a couple is married. However, researchers find that marriage provides benefits

Handwriting (Continued from page 1)

from teachers around the country—in some cases, obviously not all—was that sometimes cursive writing takes an enormous amount of instructional time." It also takes an enormous amount of time to teach students to read; luckily Pimentel *et al.* didn't drop that from Common Core.

Many parents and watchdog groups saw immediately the gaps in the federally promoted set of standards. But many school bureaucracies are still slow to understand the great disservice they have done students.

About 16 states have chosen to add handwriting back into their curriculum. New York City is adding handwriting

for couples and especially for their children.

The real life individuals in chapter five are Debbie and Matt, a couple who chose abstinence and are now happily married. Here is something they say: "We were kept accountable by our friends and didn't put ourselves in situations where we were alone and could get into trouble. ... We have been richly rewarded for our decision and perseverance."

Future Focus

In the sixth chapter, students meet Joel and are reintroduced to Sofia from chapter two. Joel's parents split up in an ugly manner and left him scarred, with a poor attitude toward relationships. When he met Sofia, who by that time had her life back on track, Joel became hopeful and began to see a positive future for himself and Sofia.

Joel says he and Sofia became friends, then decided to date. He says, "As we continued to grow closer to each other, I found myself signing an abstinence promise card with Sofia. It was that day I knew we would spend the rest of our lives together."

Although both of them came from divorced families, this couple has a strong commitment to each other and to making their marriage work.

This chapter shows what it takes to create a good marriage. Students are asked if they know a family they admire, and to identify some characteristics of what a family should be. Some of the benefits of marriage mentioned in the workbook include help with parenting, finances, and help around the house; someone to care for and someone to be caring; a safe place for sexual activity; a sense of security; and commitment and companionship.

In an exercise called Preparing for a Good Marriage, students list good and bad things that come to mind when they think about marriage.

The workbook says, "Having a good marriage requires that both husband and wife work together in partnership to help, support, and encourage each other." Students then answer the question, "If your desire is to have a happy, healthy marriage, what are some things you could do to prepare for this?"

Road Blocks

In the seventh chapter, Karen tells students that she had early sexual experiences and that "It wasn't like they always show it in the movies." Karen didn't

thanks to the efforts of Bronx Assemblywoman Malliotakis.

Brain research shows that many people retain more information or learn better when they write on paper, as opposed to when they type. Individuals who can't read handwriting are unable to decipher documents like the original Constitution or do "research with literary papers and archival collections." Letters from their grandparents will remain mysterious and they'll be unable to sign contracts or voter registration forms.

(CBSnews.com, 3-5-17) (*Education Week*, 10-10-16) (TruthInAmericanEducation.com, 12-13-13)

have any abstinence classes and didn't even know what abstinence was. She got pregnant, had an abortion, got several cases of the STD chlamydia, and says "her feelings just went numb." Karen will never be able to have children because her STDs resulted in pelvic inflammatory disease, which made her infertile.

Karen says, "I know I can't go back and change the decisions that I made as a teenager, but I hope that by telling my story I can help young people understand how important their decisions are regarding sexual activity and how these decisions can affect their future."

Workbook activities include answering these questions:

Why does Karen say that birth control pills didn't solve her problems?

In what way could contracting an STD affect your future?

What can you learn from Karen's story?

The workbook informs students about specific curable and incurable STDs and states that in the U.S. there are 20 million new STD infections each year; that the Dept. of Health and Human Services says, "The best way to prevent STDs is to practice abstinence"; and that the Centers for Disease Control says, "Condoms cannot provide absolute protection against any STD."

Journey's End: Finding True Love

In the eighth and final chapter, students meet Jen and Eric. Jen shares the actual letter she wrote to her future husband when she was 20 years old and tired of getting hurt in dating relationships. Her letter says, "By the time that you read this, we will be married." The list of 14 things that Jen desires in the man she will marry includes integrity, strong character, hard worker, a strong faith, and that he will "love me as I am."

The workbook details the courtship of Jen and Eric, which is romantic and sweet, ending with their wedding day. For students unfamiliar with what a good dating experience is like, this couple's story could be life-changing.

Students are encouraged to write a letter to their future spouse in this chapter, and the last page of *Quest* is an abstinence pledge which students can sign, making a commitment to save sexual activity for marriage.

For more information or to order *Quest*, contact Renate Ferrante the executive director of CCAP at RenateCCAP@gmail.com or call 239-272-5092.

