Short Subjects

President Clinton proposes a voucher plan that allow low-income tenants to rent from landlords of their choice, escaping substandard and unsafe public housing projects. In July, the president unveiled a similar voucher plan for low-income students in Washington, D.C., public schools. The plan would weaken public education and...shorten our children’s lives.

Meanwhile, Michigan voters favor a tuition voucher proposal by 53 to 23 percent, according to a January survey done by M. Itchel Research & Communications, Inc., poll. Kids First! Yes!, the group pushing the proposal, says it now has enough petition signatures to place the issue before voters November 7. See related story on page 3.

The National Education Association’s legislative agenda would increase federal spending by 60 percent annually, according to a report by the National Taxpayers Union Foundation. The $906 billion boost would mean a tax hike of $12,874 for every American family, with only three percent of the new spending dealing with education. The report is available at www.ntuf.org.

Michigan’s academic standards earn a grade of D-minus for their lack of clarity and effectiveness, says a report released in January by the Dayton, Ohio-based Fordham Foundation. The report notes the national average grade was a C-minus, and 23 states’ standards are so weak as to be “irresponsible.” The full report is available at www.edexcellence.net.

More Cleveland voucher students attend privately diverse schools than do their non-voucher public school counterparts, notes the Ohio-based Buckeye Institute. A survey of students in the Cleveland Scholarship Program found that 19 percent attended integrated schools, while only 5.2 percent of public school students did so.

An audit of the federal Department of Education for fiscal year 1996 was unable to account for nearly $32 billion in expenditures. The department “can’t tell Congress or the taxpayers where the money went,” said Michigan Congressman Pete Hoekstra.

The theme of education took front and center as Governor John Engler reviewed a host of past accomplishments and outlined new proposals in his annual State of the State message before a joint session of the Michigan legislature on January 19.

In the 1990s, one important lesson we learned was that the state with the best schools wins. In the worst schools I want Michigan students to be the best—in the world!” To achieve this goal, Engler said, “we need full freedom, full choice, and full funding in Michigan public schools.”

Governor Engler asks the legislature for “full funding” of Michigan public schools. Government spending on education has increased more than 51 percent since Engler took office in 1990.

Winter 2000 Michigan Education Report

Governor: $800 Million for Schools

But Reforms Also Needed to Improve Public Education, Engler Says in State of the State Address

The Michigan legislature in December acted on two pieces of legislation aimed at effectively de-unionizing Detroit school administrators and boosting the number of charter schools that state universities can authorize.

Over the protests of lawmakers representing Detroit, both chambers passed bills that would prohibit school principals and administrators in Detroit from engaging in collective bargaining activities. Meanwhile, the state House failed to pass legislation to lift the 150-school legislative cap on university-sponsored charter schools, despite earlier passage in the Senate as well as the strong support of Governor John Engler.

Under the collective bargaining bill, the chief executive officer of Detroit’s public schools would have the discretion to prevent school superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and chief business officers from unionizing. Engler signed the bill in late December.

Detroit schools inter CEO David Adamyans has been a vocal supporter of the bill, arguing that unionization among Detroit school administrators hinders efforts to hold them accountable or dismiss them if necessary.

“This is an essential step for the reform of Detroit’s public schools,” Adamyans told The Detroit Free Press. “It will allow the district to place substantial additional authority in the hands of the principals to handle their Legislature’s wish list in an accountable manner.”

Collective Bargaining Curbed for Detroit Administrators

But Measure to Increase Number of Charter Schools Fails in House

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 Poor Children’s Education Doesn’t Have to Be Poor National ‘No Excuses’ Campaign Highlights Detroit School

Is lack of money a good excuse for a school’s failure to provide its students with a quality education?

The answer is no, according to the Heritage Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based research and educational institute that in 1999 launched its national “No Excuses” campaign to highlight low-income schools that are providing quality education with fewer resources.

The nonpartisan campaign of self-described liberals, centrists, and conservatives insists that “there is no excuse for the academic failure of most public schools serving poor children.”

A Heritage Foundation study by Samuel Casey Carter entitled, “No Excuses: Seven Principals of Low-Income Schools Who Set the Standard for High Achievement” focuses on several school leaders who are succeeding in their efforts to improve education for low-income students.

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Competition Will Break Education Status Quo

Thank you for printing the hypocrisy of the ALCU on school choice ("ACLU Hypocritical on School Choice, Critics Charge," Fall 1999). The Michigan ALCU's Wendy Wagenheim should be reminded why private security systems are bought for homes in the first place—because of people's feelings of insecurity in their communities. Are those feelings "fair" when the public funded police force should be protecting them? No. Neither is the "double payment" feeling fair when writing a private check towards education on top of property and sales taxes for public schools.

I love public education, but without competition in education and a continued bureaucratic monopoly, it will remain status quo!

Rank Pargen Teacher
CASMAN Alternative Academy

Failing Public Schools? Yes and No

I compliment M.E.R for its balanced feature, "Are Public Schools Failing?" (O'Leary Viewpoints, Fall 1999). My response is "no." In fact, most public schools only succeeding, but they now educate more students of all backgrounds at higher levels than ever before.

Now do public schools have an obligation to continue to improve? Yes. Public education is undertaken for the public good. The measure of success is the lowest in the school system, and productivity is at all-time high, and crime is declining. These are to a significant degree the effects of a highly educated society.

Dr. Robert D. Brien Superintendent
Huron Valley Schools
Anyhd, Michigan

Public schools are not doing the best job educating our kids. An article from the public schools is usually the lowest in achievement in one or more of our public school systems. They have never made it to their own.

With my parents' help, I taught myself at home for the last year and a half of my high-school career. I learned more about myself and about the world, and in that last year and a half I learned discipline and how to figure things out on my own, without the public schools' pressures and time constraints.

The public school system is not completely wrong, but it is failing fast, and it is up to us—parents, teachers, and students—to do something about it.

Nancy Tyler
Jaffrey, New Hampshire

Enjoyable Read

My mother-in-law received the latest issue of Michigan Education Report and passed it along to me. I enjoyed reading it cover to cover. Congratulations on a balanced, informative publication. Please add my name to your mailing list.

Maureen Dalton
466 West 8th Street
Midland, Michigan 48640

Legislature

Continued from page 1

The narrowing of the bill to what ended up being approved (H.R. 259, sponsored by Rep. Doug Rowe-P.Huron) was done reluctantly by the House Education Committee. Republican leaders were cautious due to the large number of Democrats in the House who would most likely vote against the bill.

Engler also asked for more power to territorially micromanage the city of Detroit from Lansing. He said his state and local government idea is less than convincing because it would do little to improve school districts. "The toughest proposal to pass will be raising the charter school cap," Senate M- atinee President John D. Deubert, R-Detroit, told The Detroit News. "We've already had trouble with that.

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Michigan Education Report
Continued from page 1

No Excuses

Well academically: Last year's third graders, for instance, scored in the 69th percentile in math on the Stanford-9 Achievement Test, while the kindergartners and first graders scored in the 81st and 74th percentiles in reading, respectively.

M.E.R. has highlighted that we're making progress while helping our faculty realize where improvements are necessary. Principal Sanders told M.E.R. Education Report.

Cornerstone's curriculum emphasizes both the moral and academic development of the child and "works in concert with a child's family and community to make good American citizens," Carter writes.

For her efforts at Cornerstone, Sanders earned the 1999 Salvationist Prize for American Citizenship, which is given annually by the Salvation Army to recognize and reward citizens who are helping others and are making problems in the community free of potential serious problems government has failed to solve.

Obedience these seven schools, Carter outlines the "seven common elements of effective teaching..." which include greater autonomy for principals, superintendents, outstanding performance in their schools.

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Michigan Education Report
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Engler called for a team of experts to provide guidelines to public school districts on laptop computers and $1,000 bonuses to employees at elementary schools whose students do well on standardized tests or make improvements in scores.

But new money for education should come from tax breaks instead of school performance, Engler argued. "I've often said that money alone is not the answer," he said. "The answer is fund- ing and reform. We will not have one without the other." Reform, he said, requires "rigorous accountability from elected board members and superintendents, outstanding performance from principals and educators, and full freedom for children and their families."

The governor's other proposals included abolishing the cap on university-authorized charter schools, granting principals greater autonomy in running their schools, and requiring children to attend summer school if they don't show reading proficiency in the fourth grade.

"If by fourth grade a child still has not mastered reading, he said, "Do not fail their children in failing districts."

Democrats responded positively to Engler's remarks, but expressed a hope that the proposals would not "kill the goose that lays the golden egg." Republican leaders were cautiously optimistic about the proposals.

The toughest proposal to pass will be raising the charter school cap, Senate M- atinee President John D. Deubert, R-Detroit, told The Detroit News. "We've already had trouble with that.

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**“New Democrats” Call for School Choice Party-Affiliated Group Urges “Total Transformation” of Public Education**

The issue of school choice has for years caused fissures in the Democratic Party, which has in the past taken a more conservative stance on education policy, particularly in comparison to the Republican Party. The problem is often characterized by a struggle between traditional public schools and newer forms of educational institutions, such as charter schools. The Democratic Party has, at times, been divided over the issue of accountability.

Researchers, Administrators Divided over Issue of Accountability

But Researchers, Administrators Divided over Issue of Accountability

**Michigan should take active steps now, before a crisis occurs, before a school district fails,** warns Plank. Quisenberry disagrees again, noting that state law requires charter schools to act responsibly and to meet the challenges of the “new economy.”

**Charters often open with a set number of grades, work to have those running smoothly, and then add grades as students progress,** Quisenberry says. “This 70-per-cent figure on the books proves that the naysayers are grossly exaggerating.”

**Charter school administrators also serving students with special needs (see related story on page 6).**

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Detroit Teachers Not Paying Paychecks

Privatization of Payroll Service Could Fix Problem, Say Observers

Aaron C. W. wants what is owed and he wants it now. Or at least at some point during his lifetime.

Daniel Albright, at King High School, is just one of 20,000 employees of the Detroit School district who is having difficulties receiving pay.

Carr works overtime to prepare the school field for games. He told 104.7 WHB that the district still owes him $5,000 in overtime pay and that he will not work overtime until he receives his pay.

Any Detroit teacher and other staff who have received their paychecks late, have been underpaid, or have failed to receive a check at all. In response, the Detroit Federation of Teachers has sued the district, demanding any pay raises and back pay that teachers have yet to receive.

The payroll problem has persisted for nearly six years but has created additional tension in the wake of the recent teachers’ strike. But such problems are not unique to Detroit. They have become common across the district itself and in other large school districts, including Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

The recurring troubles in Detroit have reviled calls for the privatization of the district’s payroll service, a move that interim Chief Executive Officer Dari Adaman has considered.

“A problem persistent problem should be addressed,” Adaman says in a proposal to outsource or contract out the payroll function, “A) the division and redesign the payroll function,” holds that one of the areas that many ISDs, including his, typically serve.

One area involves the accounting and auditing of student numbers for each district. Since Michigan counts students twice each year (in September and February) for funding purposes, the ISD provides auditors who visit each district to review student enrollment numbers. The auditors report each school district’s K-12 student count to the state government. The data are then used by each ISD and by local districts.

Another area is the oversight of special education for local school districts. ISDs help to relieve individual school districts of the responsibility of operating individual special education programs.

ISDs’ third area of responsibility focuses on career technical education and career preparation programs. In Kent County, approximately 2,500 students benefit from various vocational courses offered at the Kent Career and Technical Education Center.

The emphasis is on hands-on education in courses ranging from agri-science to computer aided design.

Koehler adds that his ISD also provides general educational services in professional development activities, such as inservices for teachers, and staff. In addition, various advisory committees consisting of representatives from local school districts meet to determine district needs.

The Bay-Arenac ISD — composed of seven school districts with a student population of 30,000 — in Michigan’s “thumb area” offers its local districts career technical education programs, curriculum development assistance, grant writing expertise, and pupil accounting.

“Our mission is formed by what our school districts want, says Geraldine Allen, supervisor of communications for the Wexford ISD in Ann Arbor, which encompasses 10 school districts with a student population of 43,000. “It is a fine line between service and leadership.”

More sparsely populated areas in Michigan also enjoy the benefits of ISDs. The Northern Regional Service Agency serves four school districts with a student population of 6,500.

Superintendent Thomas Caldwell says that some of his ISD’s services may be provided by consortiums, collaborations with other ISDs, or other cooperative ventures.

He points out that there is a cooperation between the Pure Michigan Education Foundation and Science City for students in ISD 139 as a proposed consortium for interactive television that would link the O-Sco-Gam-Roscommon ISD in Roscommon and the Alpena ISD in Alpena.

“Overall, we provide general education support, curriculum support, career-technical education, and serve as a liaison between the schools and the Michigan Department of Education,” Caldwell says.

For more information, contact the Mackinac Center for Public Policy at 1-800-22-ZEEQUIAZ or on the Internet at www.mackinac.org

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Vouchers Spark Controversy, Make Strange Bedfellows

Reformers, Democrats Both Split on Kids First! Yes! Ballot Proposal

N ovember 2000 is many months away, but apophasized school voucher ballot initiative is already causing controversy and sparking uncertainty.

The Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB), a lobbying and advisory organization, has assisted several local school boards to pass resolutions against the Kids First! Yes! voucher proposal, prompting mixed reactions. A "I'd be very wary of using a public school to promote a political agenda," M. M. Latimer, communications director for Kids First! Yes, told the Traverse City Record-Eagle. "That is very questionable, at best." According to All Kids First!, a coalition of groups that opposes vouchers, several school boards have approved formal resolutions opposing the voucher plan, including Bloomfield Hills, Livonia, and Monroe. The Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency has also adopted a similar resolution.

"I would suspect you will see schools all over the state doing this," Greg Williams, president of the Traverse City School Board, told the Record-Eagle. The Traverse City Board of Education has adopted such a resolution.

"It is clear that this proposal will divert scarce resources from public schools while it subsidizes private and religious schools which are not subject to any oversight from any elected officials," a model resolution drafted by M. M. Urry says.

The proposal also has opened rifts within the Michigan Republican Party, whose candidates generally have been more supportive of vouchers. Republican Governor John Engler is at odds with Aramark President Dick De Vos, co-chair of Kids First! Yes! and husband of state GOP chair Betsy DeVos. Engler, who has announced his opposition to the voucher proposal, asked the Michigan Republican State Committee to delay a vote that could endorse the proposal. The committee honored Engler's request.

However, a state GOP subcommittee already has endorsed the proposal by a unanimous vote.

Engler appointed a special committee to study the issue and make a recommen- dation. He asked the Republican State Committee to postpone any vote until after the special committee completes its work.

"Even among those who advocate school vouchers, there is disagreement on whether or not the specifics of the Kids First! Yes! ballot initiative is the correct strategy," Engler wrote to the State Committee.

Betsy DeVos responded, "There is nothing productive gained by this commit- tee taking a vote that would embarrass our governor."

Dick De Vos has publicly criticized Engler for not supporting the initiative.

To many of John Engler's supporters it would be frightening if he was in arm with the Michigan Education Association) against the voucher effort," De Vos said.

Engler's opposition to the proposal has him aligned with a number of organizations that traditionally oppose his positions. Among these are the ACLU of Michigan, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Michigan Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, People for the American Way, the Detroit Branch of the NAACP, and the Advancement of the Colored People, and the Michigan Education Association.

Meanwhile, Kids First! Yes has gained support from many traditionally Democratic constituencies, including inner-city pastors and civil rights leaders.

If the proposal wins in November 2000, it would repeat the state constitutional ban upon indirect aid to parents for tuition at private and parochial schools. Voters in Michigan approved a prohibition on both direct and indirect aid in 1970.

Detroit Reform Board Fails to Select New CEO

Detroit Reform Board Fails to Select New CEO

And then there were none. After whittling a field of 320 candidates down to two finalists, the new Detroit school reform board now must restart the process of locating a permanent chief executive officer.

The seven-member board found five votes in support of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Public Schools Superintendent John W. Thompson, but were looking away the support of Mark Urry, the state's representative on the board. The law that replaced Detroit's elected school board with the reform board allows at least five members to hire a CEO, but requires the state's representative to be one of the seven who vote.

The seventh board member, Glenda Price, abstained from voting.

Urry supported the other finalist, J. Jerome Harris, a school consultant who has served as a superintendent in the districts of Atlanta, Brooklyn, and Compton, California.

Three members of the board— including Urry, Detroit Deputy Mayor and Board Chairman Freman Hendrix, and Damon/Craven executive W. Frank Foun- dan—voted for Thompson. The board searched for additional candidates, possibly focusing upon applicants with backgrounds in the military. Hendrix has called for the board to make a decision within six weeks.

Mark Urry's veto of the board's decision prompted some to call for revisions in the law that governs the reform board. Not mentioned by name in board's decision, Archbar called for more control over the process. "If you don't want to amend the legis- lation, then you have to give me the responsibility," Archbar said at a news conference. "Give me the responsibility for appointing all of the school board officials," Archbar said. "Give me the responsibility for appointing the CEO and the relevant officers that will be necessary." Republican lawmakers dismissed these changes as unnecessary, but have hinted that additional gridlock on the board may prompt them to grant Governor John Engler the power to hire a CEO. Gubernatorial intervention, however, remains unlikely, according to John Truscott, press secretary for Engler.

Board members also expressed frustra- tion both at their failure to hire a CEO and at the law that requires Urry's vote.

"But for this law, we had a super-major- ity of the board that was ready on a candi- date," Hendrix told the Detroit Free Press. "Anyplace else in America, that would have been enough."

The board has been under pressure to make a decision as quickly as possible so that the new CEO can begin implementing reforms by the start of the new school year in the fall.

The 5-1 vote—particularly Urry's veto—also angered many in the 100-person crowd that attended the public decision.

"Mark Urry doesn't understand a community that fought for its rights," said Wayne County Commissioner Bernard Parker. "I feel like a slave. I feel like my master just told me what to do."

Explaining his decision not to support Thompson, Urry stressed the importance of test scores and stated that Thompson's record of improving scores was not satisfac- tory.

"I've said from the beginning that the right candidate needs to be able to demon- strate improved academic performance," Urry said.

The board's failure to hire a CEO has added an element of uncertainty to the search. Some believe that the vote will deter candidates from considering the job in Detroit. Additionally, qualified candidates are becoming more difficult to secure, as at least 12 other urban districts are presently searching for new leaders.

Hendrix also intimated that the vote could disrupt the fragile relationship be- tween Detroit and Lansing.

"There has been a gulf that has existed between Lansing and Detroit, and tonight I'm afraid that gulf broadened," he said af- ter the vote.

The new CEO will replace former Wayne State U. vice president David Adamany, who has served since May on an interim basis. Adamany says he will con- tinue in his position at least until his contract expires in mid-May of this year.

Parents Seek Education Alternatives Before Turn to Private and Home School Options

A growing number of Michigan parents are looking beyond traditional public schools to private and home school options for the education of their children.

Private schools in Metro Detroit— some with tuition costs as high as $16,000 per year— have reported significant increases in inquiries from parents. Some parents with means have been able to contact private high schools even before their children are born. The Detroit Free Press reported.

"I would call it interest and curiosity," Jorge Prosperi, director of admissions at Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hills, told the Free Press. "They use the word shopping. We're shopping around." I no- ticed that they want to compare and contrast."

Over the last decade, nationwide enrollment in private schools has increased by nearly 17 percent, according to the National Association of Independent Schools.

As a result, many private schools have compiled waiting lists for admission. Greenhills School, a preparatory school serving grades 6-12 in Ann Arbor, has a wait- ing list for grades six and nine, for instance. Many parents say their interest in pri- vate schools stems from the schools' reputa- tions for high quality, but also cite con- cerns over public school safety and an in- creasing interest in the possibility of tuition vouchers. Parents also point to small classes and college preparatory curricula as reasons why they consider private schools.

Other parents have gone as far as to educate their children themselves at home, helping to fuel a growing nationwide move- ment. Although home schools are diffi- cult to track, the National Home Education Research Institute estimates that as many as 100,000 children receive their education at home.

Kathy DePree of Midland knows what many studies have shown: Parenting involvement is crucial to a child's educational success. Above, daughter Kathy DePree and son Kurtis learn their lessons from mom.

1.7 million children receive their education at home. The average number grows by as much as 15 percent per year.

Home schooling advocates estimate that roughly 50,000 children in Michigan participate in home schooling. Brad Wurfel of the Michigan Department of Education

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Michigan Education Report 5
Nervous “Squeakers” to Public Speakers

When it comes to students with special learning needs, frustration is an emotion often felt by both child and parent. “We definitely understand that emotion!” says Diana Jorgenson, whose two sons struggled through school with special learning needs.

“Instructional assistant Lyndal deo also understands frustration. “If you haven’t lived in a dyslexic family, then you can’t understand,” she says. “How do these students go for help? Parents of children with special learning needs have often been relegated to the local public school. But for the Jorgensens and Howe families, it was the Crossroads Charter Academy in Big Rapids where they finally found their children’s needs being met.

Crossroads—which occupies the middle school building vacated by Big Rapids Public Schools when it built a new facility—has established a relationship with the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District to provide special education services on the charter school site.

And for A.J. Jorgensen was part of the inaugural class at Crossroads last year and is now in the fourth grade. After A.J. struggled through first and second grade in a parochial school, the Jorgensens decided to place him in a third-grade “resource room” at the local public school. “But by the end of the year, the school told me he had made very few gains,” recalls A.J.’s mother, Diana Jorgenson. “When I signed the papers to enroll him in Crossroads, I was pretty distraught. I felt like I had run out of options for my child.”

D. Ormand Hook, principal of Crossroads, was a bit concerned that his school would not be able to meet the needs of A.J. However, after discussing what his school could offer, the Jorgensens decided to enroll their son in the third grade again for the 1998-99 school year. “Dr. Hook worked with us and helped us make the best decision for A.J.,” Mrs. Jorgensen says. “And with lots of hard work including summers, A.J. is now steadily improving his reading skills.

Lynda was “extremely impressed” by Crossroads’s commitment to students with special learning needs and not only enrolled her daughters, but also joined the staff. And for the past two years, Lynda has been helping A.J. deal with his learning disabilities. “Understanding and helping children with learning disabilities has become my passion,” she says.

According to Lynda, A.J. has continued to improve his reading skills through countless hours of hard work and parental support. “He’s still working at it,” Diana Jorgenson says. “He probably won’t be up to level for some time, but I see that he’s gaining. I can see a progress.”

Corporate Consultant Takes Students from Nervous “Squeakers” to Public Speakers

Doris Reese, a public speaking expert, has been helping home-schooled children polish their skills, but public school students cannot benefit from her 20 years of experience unless they take college education courses to become state-certified. Public speaking expert Dorris Reese helps home-schooled children polish their skills, but public school students cannot benefit from her 20 years of experience unless they take college education courses to become state-certified.

She radiates passion for her subject and love for her students. They respond with enthusiasm, confidence, and sharpened pencils: the signs of thought and of learning.

When she starts her classes, this class is the beginning of something greater than improved speaking, something more persuasive than a heated debate. It is the birth of their self-confidence.

Pray, Prepare, Practice: Public Speaking Lessons for Beginners

According to their evaluations of Reese’s classes, students find topics such as “making eye contact,” “how to write your presentation” and “gestures” to be extremely useful information that they can use in many ways throughout their lives.

“I see my role as assisting in the development of the teen,” says Reese. “I want to help them develop further discussions. I want them to see the bigger picture.”

According to Reese, students need to be good stewards of their God-given talents. To this end, she urges each of them to remember and practice what she calls the “4 P’s” of public speaking: “Pray, Prepare, Practice, and Present.”

Reese has been a corporate consultant with Dior for 20 years, and while she says she has always enjoyed her work, she began about 10 years ago to feel a desire to “give back to the faith-based community.”

An opportunity to do so came when a friend, Debbie Rossi, suggested that Reese offer her public speaking workshops to a group of homeschool kids. According to Reese, Rossi said, “I’ll find the students if you’ll agree to teach them.”

Reese enthusiastically agreed, and since that time, over 200 homeschool students have benefited from her expertise.

For such an opportunity Reese is humbly grateful. Of her students she says, “I hope they see Christ in me. I hope they will have God be a part of who they are.”


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America Takes Top Honors in 1999 Nobel Prizes

Foreign-Born Winners Demonstrate Need for K-12 School Reform, Say Critics

The awarding of most of 1999’s Nobel Prizes to researchers at U.S. universities has prompted a number of observers to cite this event as proof of the quality of American higher education. But some think the current crop of Nobel laureates only illustrates serious problems with the U.S. public school system.

“While Americans won the lion’s share of Nobel Prizes again this year, not one of these winners was actually trained in the United States,” notes economist and Hoover Institute Senior Fellow Thomas Sowell. “This is not a vindication but an indictment of our educational system.”

The 1999 recipients include Robert M. Mundell, a Canadian-born professor at Columbia University, who received the Nobel Prize for economics; Ahmed Zewail, an Egyptian-born scientist at the California Institute of Technology, who won the Nobel Prize for chemistry; and Günter Blobel, a German biologist at New York’s Rockefeller University, who won the prize for medicine.

Two Dutch scientists—the University of Utrecht’s Gerardus’t Hooft, who won the Nobel Prize for physics; and L.J. van der Meer, who won the prize for medicine—were born in the Netherlands. The University of Utrecht’s Gerardus’t Hooft, who won the Nobel Prize for physics; and Günter Blobel, a German biologist at New York’s Rockefeller University, who won the prize for medicine.

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The year 1999 marked a virtual monopoly on education at the lower levels, so the low quality of education is predictable.

The competition breeds competence, and higher education is extremely competitive and therefore has reached an extremely high level of competence and quality,” he adds. “I think the American system is one of the best in the world.”

But why are American universities so prestigious if American public education has this problem? According to Mark Perry, an assistant professor of economics at the University of Michigan, the answer concerns the competitive market in higher education.

“Given the antecedence of math competency to any hard-science curriculum, it’s not surprising that fewer and fewer American students choose these tracks,” he adds.

Sowell also indicates that there is an inverse relationship between the difficulty of a subject and the proportion of American students that have chosen that field. The decline of American students in comprehen- sive subjects over the past 20 years coincides with a drop in test scores among American children, he says.

Our current world leadership in science and technology, like our leadership in Nobel Prizes, owes much to people who never won through...American schools and colleges,” he says. “Any move from those countries which spend far less per pupil than we do but get far better results for their money...”

Boysville originated over 50 years ago, when Edward Cardinal Mooney, the archbishop of Detroit, invited the Brothers of Holy Cross to run an orphanage in Clinton. The orphanage began to serve court-appointed youth in the 1980’s. Today, about 70 percent of Boyville children have faced adjudication.
Coffee, a morning staple in the United States, is enjoyed by millions for its rich flavor and energizing effects. The process of caffeine production is a complex one, involving several steps from the harvesting of coffee beans to the final product. The following is a brief overview of the traditional coffee production process:

1. **Harvesting:** Coffee beans are harvested from the coffee tree, which is grown in tropical regions around the world. The beans are picked when they are ripe, and the process is labor-intensive, requiring skilled workers to handpick the beans.

2. **Drying:** The harvested beans are then dried in the sun or in specialized drying equipment. This process helps to remove moisture and develop the beans' flavors.

3. **Sorting:** The dried beans are sorted to remove impurities and defects before further processing.

4. **Fermentation:** In the coffee process, beans are often fermented to enhance flavor. The beans are placed in water, and yeast and bacteria break down the sugars and proteins, producing a range of chemical compounds.

5. **Washing:** After fermentation, the beans are washed to remove the remaining pulp and mucilage, which is a mixture of sugars, proteins, and other compounds. This step is critical in determining the final flavor of the coffee.

6. **Drying Again:** The washed beans are then dried again to remove any remaining moisture, ensuring they are ready for sale.

7. **Roasting:** Coffee beans are roasted to develop their characteristic flavor and aroma. The roasting process involves heating the beans in a drum or a fire to a specific temperature, which can vary depending on the desired flavor profile.

8. **Grinding:** Finally, the roasted beans are ground into the desired size for brewing. The grind size can be coarse, medium, or fine, affecting the brewing time and the flavor profile.

This traditional coffee production process results in a product that is enjoyed worldwide, with variations in processing methods and equipment providing a wide range of coffee flavors and experiences.
**Blowing the Whistle on Dumbed-Down Math**

Vin Suprynowicz

Vin Suprynowicz is assistant editorial page editor of the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

What do you do if your middle-school students’ math scores are falling, and you’ve got to put a better face on things? Why, teach them something else—something much easier, like playing with blocks or cutting out pictures—and simply call it math.

Yes, our educators should remain open to new methods for putting across hard-to-call blocks or cutting out pictures—and simply something much easier, like playing with blocks or cutting out pictures—and simply call it math.

But if the decisions are best made at the local level (as is certainly true) and the DOE is not to be held accountable for any of its “recommendations” since they’re only “advisory,” then why continue dumping millions each year into this useless, counterpro-ductive federal ant farm?

Not that Secretary Riley is telling the truth, anyway. The Times also reports that in 1977, a foundation official threatened to cut off federal funds unless California education officials reversed a state mandate that third-graders memorize multiplication tables.

Professor Klein and his colleagues are to be congratulated for finally pointing out that the federal emperor has no clothes. Perhaps 20 years of the DOE has been enough.

A collection of Vin Suprynowicz’s nationally syndicated essays is available in book form for $24.95 from Uniling Press at 1-800-244-2224 or on the World Wide Web at www.theSpiritof76.com.

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**The Biggest Consumer Fraud In America**

NEARLY 60 PERCENT of today’s high school graduates enter college—an impressive number considering the fact that tuition rates have grown nearly three times as fast as inflation and twice as fast as the economy. A college education is, in essence, no longer a four-year expense; it is a lifetime mortgage.

What kind of return do students receive for their investment? According to national surveys, tens of thousands of college seniors do not know when Columbus sailed to the New World, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, or why the Civil War was fought. In one recent test, half of the graduates could not even interpret a simple high school schedule.

No wonder higher education has been called “the biggest consumer fraud in America.”

One second-grade exercise in “MathLand” pretends to teach division by using pattern blocks and cubes. Such programs supposedly sidestep the development of such important skills as dividing fractions and multiplication of multi-digit numbers, the scholars warn. And without those skills, the students will have trouble ever mastering such advanced understanding as calculus, algebra, and physics, which in turn form the foundation for any professional career in engineering.

Those signing the ad and letter include the heads of the math departments at Stanford and the California Institute of Technology, four Nobel laureates in physics, and two recipients of the Fields Medal— the world’s top honor in mathematics. “Many of us felt they were among the worst programs in existence,” Professor Klein says of the 10 programs endorsed by the DOE. “It would be a joke except for the damaging effect it has on children.”

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Phonics, “Whole Language,” and Literacy: The Alphabet and American Education

For decades, American educators have been engaged in debate over how to teach children to read. That such a debate would even take place is rather strange, since there has never been any particular mystery about it. At least not since man devised history’s most supreme innovation in language, the alphabet.

It was the systematic nature of an alphabet that transformed ancient Greece more than 2,500 years ago. Following this development, the Greeks quickly came up with systematic philosophy, mathematics, and science—all things that did not develop without the alphabet.

The historian of Greek literacy, Eric Havelock, suggests that the systematic nature of alphabetic writing taught the Greeks to reorient their entire thinking on a systematic basis, and that the regularity suggested by consistent phonetic and grammatical rules inspired them to investigate the phenomenon of regularity elsewhere, in politics and nature, for example.

The steps by which one becomes literate in an alphabetic society are invariably, since they are intrinsic to the alphabet itself. Greek schoolchildren began their education by memorizing the sequence of letters; they learned the rules of combination so as to be able to sound out written words and write their own words correctly. After they had mastered these basic steps, they began to read—simple texts at first, then more sophisticated ones.

At the same time, they studied grammar. Roman children underwent the same process as the Greeks, except following Havelock, they did so with systematic philosophy, mathematics, and science—all things that did not develop without the alphabet.

The alphabet that transformed ancient Greece more than 2,500 years ago.

Before we begin, I would like to refer to the United States of the twenty-first century. Something called “Whole Language” has appeared in the teaching of the education professors and has become enshrined in the public schools. “Whole Language” is bound up with a host of other ideas, all of which have the same general tiling. Rules are “oppressive,” order is “arbitrary,” memorization “destroys spontaneity,” and freeing students from discipline and form will enable them to “construct knowledge” all by themselves, without expert intervention or help.

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In practice, “Whole Language” enthusiasts abolished the tried and true “break-it-up-and-sound-it-out” approach to basic spelling and word comprehension. By surrounding primary and elementary pupils with literature, by encouraging children to guess at meanings on the basis of pictures in the books or to treat words rather than letters as basic units, and by accepting “invented spelling” as the equivalent to the rule-regulated norms of orthography, the “Whole Language” teachers are expert that children will, by a magical osmosis that defies explanation, acquire the same literacy as their parents and grandparents, who got theirs in the old-fashioned way.

Not surprisingly, “Whole Language” does not work. California discovered this when the state made it the mandatory universal method in their public schools in the early 1980s, with little public debate. Within five years, California’s third-graders tested as low as those in Mississippi, academically America’s most backward state. The decline alarmed state legislators that they promptly changed the law to reinstate phonics, the “classic and popular” teaching the teachers how to teach the teaching the teaching teachers how to do it. But “Whole Language” does not, and cannot, produce literacy.

Meanwhile, the indices of literacy among American school children decline or remain unacceptably low. Almost half of college freshmen need remedial courses in English.

For these reasons, re-establishing phonics as the core of the primary school curriculum should be of primary importance to anyone truly concerned about the welfare of our children and the future of our nation.

Thomas F. Bertonneau
Tomas F. Bertonneau is executive director of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics.

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Tenure Protects Good Teachers, Too

Dirk Koorstra

Dirk Koorstra is a math teacher in Zeeland Public Schools and has been in education for more than 18 years.

From time to time people bring up the idea of eliminating teacher tenure as a part of education reform. While some think tenure protects incompetent teachers, my experience has been that tenure has been in education for more than 18 years. High school teachers begin the year with about 140 students. Each student has a unique background. The definition of success can vary dramatically from student to student. This makes it difficult to evaluate teacher performance. There is a need for broader and more objective criteria for evaluating teachers. Teachers need protection because reports published in the press only give a small and often misleading picture of the job a teacher (or district) really does. These public reports put a lot of pressure on administrators. They often end up with a “bottom line” mentality. The quick way to reduce failure and dropout rates is to lower standards. The quick way to raise MEEP scores is to focus on the test and sacrifice other curricula. The pressure to look good on paper produces strategies that hurt real learning and student achievement. Teachers are forced to play along or face bad evaluations.

I was a victim of this process just a couple of years ago. I had a class where, despite my best efforts, 25 percent of the students failed. All the students had failed the class at least once before and all of them had the accompanying behavior problems. I put far more time and effort into that class than my “normal” classes. I was determined to get them to learn while others encouraged me to just lower the standards or add to the grades. I kept pushing and by the end of the year 75 percent of the students passed a real class. I was given an unsatisfactory evaluation for not coming up with a way to get more students to pass.

Some of the students that I have the most impact on may only get Cs or Ds in my class. I recently ran into a student I had several years ago. She showed me a picture of her friends as her “math, moral, and all-around-life” teacher. I thought the buttons were going to pop off my shirt and I had nothing to do with a bunch of geometry theorems. Teachers do much more than just prepare kids for state tests.

Another situation calling for some form of protection is encounters with parents. Research strongly indicates that the number-one factor in student achievement is positive parental involvement. I believe this is true and do several things to encourage communication. However, teachers need protection from the occasional zealot.

I have had two such zealots attack me over the past 18 years. A few years ago I had my students write a paper on honesty. Shortly after the assignment was given I was called to the principal’s office to explain why I was teaching values. The parent admonished me to do this teaching in private. If you are a tutor, an enterprising teacher, an organizer, or an educator who wants to turn our network.

The AEPP is dedicated to the idea that educators should have as many career choices as professionals in other sectors. AEPP seeks entrepreneurial educators in pre-K, K-12, post-secondary, and adult education to join our network. If you are a tutor, an enterprising teacher, a private or contract provider, a charter-school organizer, or an educator who wants to turn teaching into a business, then private practice is for you! Private practice can open up new opportunities for teachers. It provides greater choices for teachers who don’t want to leave the field in order to grow professionally.

The AEPP seeks entrepreneurs seeking new opportunities with the rapidly changing face of education.
Will Vouchers Leave Some Children Behind?

Vouchers Will Benefit a Few at the Expense of Many

From the moment the doors of any private school open, students are left behind. This is their nature: enrollment is selective and exclusive. With private funding this is an option, but with public funds, a crucial question must be asked: Will the common good be served?

For public schools the answer is yes, for they are inclusive. They hold all persons of equal worth and offer equal opportunity. They protect each and every student from private interests of both a religious and non-sectarian nature.

For voucher schools the answer is no, for they serve private interests. Free public education system alone serves the proud notion of the common good, an ideal fundamental to our democracy dating back to our birth as a nation.

The American experience began with Revolution-era leaders formulating a government that would best serve its future citizens. Through compromise, a system was agreed upon and a constitution ratified. The debate was contentious; at its center was the common good. The purpose of every law justly written has been to promote the common good, from the Bill of Rights onward. Though our laws at times place controversial restraints upon individuals, our present society could not endure without this notion of the common good. It is a core democratic value and a benchmark of the social studies curriculum taught to all public school students in Michigan. These values are the tie that two centuries ago brought together millions of people from many directions, in the direction of greatness, the modern American state, the leader of the free world.

These core democratic values have passed through generations, transmitted through the public, private, religious, and non-religious, by public school students. These core values are vulnerable to those who hold personal interests over the common good. We must protect this ideal and our public schools from any compromise.

There is no question as to the quality of America’s free and public system of education. It is a monumental success. Our nation has the greatest economy in the world. We lead the world in many areas of technology, medical research, industry, and countless other fields. We finance freedom and humanitarian causes around the globe. Americans win Nobel prizes and other honors at a noteworthy rate. These are not signs of a failing educational system.

It is true public education faces great challenges. Through public discourse, by the family, and, perhaps most importantly, by public schools, the answer is no, for they serve private interests.

state with it. If the state fails to do the job, then parents can reclaim their education. If our public school system was failing, if options were unavailable, the clamor for vouchers would be understandable. But this is not the case. Many private and religious schools-as well as publicly sanctioned charter schools presently exist. What vouchers will provide is public money for private education—perhaps a re-opening of the public school system alone serves the proud notion of the common good, an ideal fundamental to our democracy dating back to our birth as a nation.

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The American experience began with Revolution-era leaders formulating a government that would best serve its future citizens. Through compromise, a system was agreed upon and a constitution ratified. The debate was contentious; at its center was the common good. The purpose of every law justly written has been to promote the common good, from the Bill of Rights onward. Though our laws at times place controversial restraints upon individuals, our present society could not endure without this notion of the common good. It is a core democratic value and a benchmark of the social studies curriculum taught to all public school students in Michigan. These values are the tie that two centuries ago brought together millions of people from many directions, in the direction of greatness, the modern American state, the leader of the free world.

These core democratic values have passed through generations, transmitted through the public, private, religious, and non-religious, by public school students. These core values are vulnerable to those who hold personal interests over the common good. We must protect this ideal and our public schools from any compromise.

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